University of Cincinnati

Date: 7/1/2013

I, Matthew Cohen, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Studies.

It is entitled:
Culturally Responsive Teaching in the 21st Century: Elementary School Teachers’ Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching and Their Characterizations of its Implementation Process

Student's name: Matthew Cohen

This work and its defense approved by:

Committee chair: Vanessa Allen-brown, Ph.D.
Committee member: Darwin Henderson, Ed.D.
Committee member: Stephen Sunderland, Ph.D.
Culturally Responsive Teaching in the 21st Century: Elementary School Teachers’ Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching and Their Characterizations of its Implementation Process

A dissertation submitted to the
Graduate School
of the University of Cincinnati
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

in the Department of Educational Studies
College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services

2013

by

Matthew S. Cohen

Bachelor of Science
Family Studies
Miami University, 2005

Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
University of Cincinnati, 2010

Committee Chair: Dr. Vanessa Allen-Brown, Ph.D.
Abstract

Educational reform efforts have yielded new data, which clearly indicate continued: (1) increases in diversity within US public schools and (2) concerning disparities in US academic achievement levels. As a result, elementary school, junior high school, and high school teachers are charged with uniquely difficult and dynamic tasks. Culturally responsive teaching, one pedagogical approach of multicultural education, is capable of meeting and fulfilling many of the current and future dynamic needs of our education system.

The purpose of this study was to collect information from elementary school teachers in order to characterize phenomena related to culturally responsive teaching, and to use that information to illuminate methods and mechanisms currently employed by these teachers in modern educational practice. The data were collected through the use of phone interviews and a Web based survey, formulated to address: How do 21st century elementary school teachers perceive culturally responsive teaching and characterize its implementation process?

The results characterize 21st century culturally responsive teaching; and although it is merely an initial exploratory study, the data indicate the need for teachers to acquire knowledge, skills, and desire to (a) design culturally relevant curricula, (b) withhold racializing students’ identities, (c) be cognizant of overgeneralizing, and (d) use technology in culturally responsive teaching.
Dedication

To my family. I love you more than the world. Keep smiling.
Acknowledgements

To my committee members, thank you for your support and guidance. To K and D, thank you for sacrificing so much and giving so much. To B, D, A, and M, thanks for loving and supporting me. To N, the most dynamic lady in the world, I couldn’t have done it without you. To G, P, and P[?], I love you all so very much. To all my family and friends, thank you for supporting me and allowing me to allocate so much time away from each of you during this academic pursuit.
Table of Contents

Page

Abstract ............................................................................................................................. ii
Copyright Notice ........................................................................................................... iii
Dedication ...................................................................................................................... iv
Acknowledgments ......................................................................................................... v

I. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1
   Statement of the Problem ............................................................................................ 12
   Purpose of the Study ................................................................................................... 14
   Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions ............................................................ 15
   Definitions ................................................................................................................... 16
   The Researcher’s Position ........................................................................................... 19
   Personal Orientation ................................................................................................... 19
   Differing Perspectives on “Culture” ............................................................................ 25

II. Review of the Literature ............................................................................................ 27
   Multicultural Education: An Approach to Close the Academic Achievement Gap and Beyond .......................................................... 27
   Critical Race Theory .................................................................................................. 38
   2014: Multicultural Education Meets the Common Core Standards ..................... 41
   Best Practice Pedagogies ......................................................................................... 42
   From Equity Pedagogy to Cultural Responsiveness ................................................. 50
   Culturally Responsive Teaching ............................................................................ 52
   21st Century Culturally Responsive Teaching ......................................................... 65

III. Methodology ............................................................................................................ 69
   Theoretical Framework of the Research Design ....................................................... 69
   Homogenous Teaching Force .................................................................................... 70
   Demographic Divide .................................................................................................. 71
   Problems and Purposes Overview ............................................................................ 73
   Sample and Population .............................................................................................. 73
   Instrumentation and Data Collection ......................................................................... 75
   Data Analysis ............................................................................................................. 81
   Summary .................................................................................................................... 83

IV. Results ....................................................................................................................... 85
   Organization of Data Analysis .................................................................................... 85
   Presentation of Descriptive Characteristics of Participants ....................................... 86
   Overview of Instruments ............................................................................................ 89
   Overview of Findings .................................................................................................. 93
   Analysis and Evaluation ............................................................................................. 109
   Summary of Findings ................................................................................................. 134
V. Discussion .................................................................................................................. 136
Summary of Study ........................................................................................................ 136
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................... 137
Discussion ...................................................................................................................... 142
Recommendations from the Study ............................................................................... 144

References .................................................................................................................... 146

Appendices .................................................................................................................... 161
A. Survey: Recruitment & Consent Form ................................................................. 161
B. Survey: Web-based Content Form ......................................................................... 164
C. Interview and Survey: Recruitment & Consent Form ............................................ 168
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Usefulness of Questions Questionnaire</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Guiding Interview Questions</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Demographic Coding Symbols</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Participants’ Demographics</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Participants’ Students’ Demographics</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Survey Questions Coded</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Interview Questions Coded</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Page

1. Teacher Profile and Classroom Profile................................................................. 79
2. Five Essential Components of Culturally Responsive Teaching .............................. 82
Chapter I: Introduction

The 21st century has ushered in new educational paradigms and reinvented old ones. This was made possible by three synergistic agents that both generated and facilitated these changes: technology, public policy, and educational leadership based on years of dedicated work. The result is evident at every level of the United States (US) educational system today. Consequently, new methods of accountability have been forged within the public educational system, which have resulted in increasing demands upon the educators for accountability.

In this chapter, I will discuss and outline the emergent, synergistic relationship between the technological, political, and educational leaders that dates back 35 years. This historical perspective will provide insight into the current political underpinnings in education and form the basis of the 21st century zeitgeist of US education.

Over the last 35 years, the number of computers in schools has increased significantly and steadily, from a mere 250,000 in 1983 to 8.6 million in 1998 (Becker, 2000). Concurrently, both software and hardware technologies have improved (Molnar, 1997), accompanied by a demand for higher educational standards and greater accountability. Notably, in 1983, the Nation at Risk Report warned that “US preeminence on the world stage was being eroded by the mediocre performance of its educational institutions” (Banks, 2003, p. 61). In a background paper commissioned by the Policy and Program Studies Service within the US Department of Education (USDE), Means (2005) summarized this new emphasis on accountability and concern over the quality of US public education, noting that, since the 1990s, both school districts and states put great emphasis on improving accountability. Further, because of the increasing attention
that quality of education (or the lack thereof) has received—including threats of legal action if schools fail to perform—government and commercial entities alike have initiated efforts to develop data systems to store measures of student performance and other indicators of school effectiveness and student success (e.g., attendance, disciplinary actions, promotion, and retention; Means, 2005).

These efforts culminated in 2001 when President George W. Bush enacted the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), whose goal was to offer equal access to quality public-school education to all children. The act required each state to implement an integrated system for reporting data on student achievement. In 2005, then US Secretary of Education Rod Paige submitted the National Education Technology Plan (USDE, 2004). This plan was built upon the recommendations that Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley had made in 1996 and 2000, as well as the requirements of NCLB. In his plan, Paige reflected, “While the development of educational technology was thriving… we have not realized the promise of technology in education” (USDE, 2004, p. 10).

There was both enthusiasm and optimism among the authors of NCLB. They believed that improved protocol and availability of student data would facilitate the collection of benchmark data, which they could then integrate with demographic data (and other relevant data). Such a database would inform the design and management of instructional programs. These measures instigated by NCLB were undertaken to achieve what they believed to be dramatic improvements in student achievement. The authors of the report noted that “from being a Nation at Risk we might now be more accurately described as a Nation on the Move” (USDE, 2004, p. 7).
Paige believed that in order for the US to be a “Nation on the Move,” the Department of Education must develop and implement educational technology on a broader and more in-depth scale. To this end, Paige devised “Seven Main Action Steps and Recommendations” in the National Education Technology Plan, which he presented to school administrators. One such step placed emphasis on data systems:

Integrated, interoperable data systems are the key to better allocation of resources, greater management efficiency, and online and technology-based assessments of student performance that empower educators to transform teaching and personalize instruction. (USDE, 2004, p. 44)

Soon, following Paige’s recommendations, additional reporting requirements were implemented within NCLB.

In 2009, 5 years later, President Barack Obama implemented Race to the Top, a component of his economic stimulus package, which required “a national data system to record student test scores and to track student progress through the educational system” (Spring, 2011, p. 455). Using Race to the Top funds, the federal government offered financial incentives for states that addressed reform in four specific areas:

1. Adopting new teaching methods to prepare secondary students for both college and the workplace with an emphasis on preparing them to compete in the global economy.

2. With respect to handling of data, efforts were needed to improve existing—and create new—data systems (similar to NCLB) for a more comprehensive manner of measuring student growth and success, as well as informing teachers and administrators about what works (or does not) in school instruction.
3. Recruiting and retaining effective teachers and principals, and in addition, working to develop their effectiveness and reward them for their successes, especially where the need was greatest.

4. Finally, emphasis was placed on effecting marked improvement with—in essence turning around—the lowest-achieving schools (USDE, 2012).

Out of these four areas for reform, the data system component is of particular importance to this paper. The goals for the data systems of NCLB and the Race to the Top are arguably similar in that each aims to better the overall educational experience for all students; although the aim or paths to reach this goal and other additional subgoals are quite different.

A primary aim of the data system used in NCLB was to ensure that equal public school education was being offered to all children with a requirement that states develop and use an integrated system to publicly report student data. Somewhat contrarily, the primary aim of the Race to the Top data system was to delineate the qualities of a “good teacher” and to extract program pedagogies from the college programs from which those “good” teachers graduated. Arne Duncan, the US Secretary of Education, articulated the goals of the data system, stating:

We need comprehensive data systems that do three things. One, track students throughout their educational trajectory. Secondly, track students back to teachers so we can really shine a spotlight on those teachers that are doing a phenomenal job of driving student achievement. And third, track teachers back to their schools of education so … over time we’ll really understand which schools of education are adding value with their graduates. (Spring, 2011, p. 455)
After briefly comparing these two data systems within each respective political program, it is clear that, although the approaches differ, the end goal of each is to improve the overall educational experience for all students. So, then, is one of these politically charged education plans better than the other? It is not only impossible to answer this question, as Race to the Top will not be fully implemented until 2014, but its potential theoretical answer is also beyond the scope of this paper. Not beyond this dissertation’s purview, however, is an analysis of the 21st century zeitgeist of US education with respect to the following two demographic disparities: the “achievement gap” and the “culture gap.”

These disparities, fully documented with data, are not new to the students and scholars who have personally observed them, past and present (Wilson, 2011). However, new is the evidence and stage upon which it is being presented (Honda, 2011). According to James Banks (2010), a multicultural education scholar and advocate, “The academic achievement of students of color such as African Americans, Latinos, and American Indians … lags behind that of White mainstream students” (Banks & McGee-Banks, 2010, p. 3). In recent years, demographic disparities such as these have been widely illuminated with the help of technology and educational reform efforts.

Zorn, Ludwig, and van den Hoogenhof (2010) have examined the achievement gap paradigm and summarized its evolution within the social cognition of society’s educational and political systems. First, they noted that this is not a new focus, as educational research has been tracking and studying the academic achievement gap between African American and Caucasian American students for nearly 50 years (Coleman et al., 1966). In fact, one goal of NCLB was to bring all subgroups to parity.
with the dominant Caucasian American students by 2014. This was an ambitious plan, because discrepancies between racial groups have been observed in school children as young as 2 years of age and continue to increase and widen as the student ages (Smith, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1997; Fryer & Levitt, 2004, as cited in Zorn et al., 2010).

These gaps are measured through standardized testing and enrollment in advanced placement classes, as well as both high school and college graduation and dropout rates.; and in all areas, Caucasian Americans have outperformed African Americans, Hispanics, and other subgroups (Cook & Evans, 2000; Fryer & Levitt, 2004; Jones, 1984; Haycock, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2006). However, one leading scholar, Joseph Murphy (2009a), contended that the critical factor is not race, but rather, socioeconomic status.

Thus, the current stage on which the achievement gap paradigm is being played out (NCLB and Race to the Top) is larger than ever before, and the amplification of the data (both public data and report cards) has never been greater. Various leaders from across the country are analyzing the data, curious as to why such a disparity exists and how might it be ameliorated. Some hypotheses to explain the gap are:

- school and teacher quality, tracking and enrollment patterns (Cook and Evans, 2000; Haycock, 2001), racial bias in teacher perceptions of children’s intellectual potential and subsequent expectations for achievement (Delpit, 1995; Haycock, 2001; Ferguson, 2003), racial bias in testing or inappropriate uses of testing (Jencks, 1998), and differences in culture and socialization and resulting child behavior (see, for example, Ogbu, 1983; Ogbu, 1992). (Zorn et. al., 2010, p.2)

All of these works are sensible and statistically viable explanations that ultimately stem from a cultural disconnect between learner and teacher. In other words, the learner
and teacher have been heavily socialized to and connected with a particular set of beliefs that make finding a common cultural path to academic success difficult.

Some researchers contend that as much as 50% of the achievement gap can be accounted for by gaps in experiences and conditions affecting children prior to entering school, and another 25% by differences in experiences during the summer when school is not in session (Murphy, 2009b). (Zorn et al., 2010, p. 2)

This researcher challenges this presumption, and instead, inverses the subjects with whom a gap exists. In other words, the gaps already exist, even before school begins. In order to fill these gaps, teachers and school systems must recognize that not all students are socialized to and within the same environment outside of school. Educators must fully recognize the influence and impact of culture. Moreover, when attempting to fill these gaps, teachers and school systems must recognize that the common patterns of socialization that define one group’s culture are not bound by racial identity alone. To this point, Zorn et al. asserted:

Certain researchers warn that disaggregated achievement data can mask important differences within subgroups (Carpenter, Ramirez, & Severn, 2006; Murphy 2009a). Murphy cites a variety of research that illustrates social and economic distinctions among cultural groups within Asian, Black, and Hispanic racial categories that correlate with differential academic achievement. Economically disadvantaged White students who tend to demonstrate lower achievement are also masked by the White demographic. Therefore, caution must be taken not to over-generalize about any of the NCLB subgroups, particularly when planning
interventions and supports for addressing the achievement gap. (Zorn et al., 2010, p.1)

Rick Hess, resident scholar and director of education policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute, holds a similar stance to Zorn and colleagues. It is his belief that NCLB’s disaggregated achievement data are inaccurately framed by racial subgroups. In fact, Hess (Goodwin, 2012) finds household income levels to be better predictors of achievement gaps.

However it has arisen, the achievement gap still must be addressed. Hess stated, “NCLB has, in significant ways, moved our attention to racial achievement gaps and away from income achievement gaps” (Hess, as cited in Goodwin, 2012). Hess summarized the static nature of the racial achievement gaps by stating, “We know in lots of cases what we should do, and in most cases, it's a matter of political will, not know-how, that's holding us back” (Goodwin, 2012).

From here, one can glean the new metaphorical platform from which educational scholars and politicians debate the roots and existence of the achievement gap. Still, today, the debate continues, incorporating new, refined, and readily available data into the debate. Only time will tell if the debaters will eventually agree upon the definition and roots of the achievement gap. Such a consensus would likely synergistically advance the debate toward a focus on immediate solutions. However, whatever ground is achieved in the larger societal debate, the issue remains front and center and a challenge for classroom teachers throughout the nation. Hence, the question remains, What can be done in the here and now on the individual classroom level to impact the achievement gap?
In order for an individual teacher to contribute to fixing this problem, he or she must firstly acknowledge that the achievement gap indeed exists, and that, regardless of its origins, the teacher’s aim must be to provide the best possible education to each child. In other words, the teacher must see beyond the postulations and prognostications of the varying theorists to identify the crux of the matter: the alarming extent to which nonwhite students are marginalized.

The second problem claiming the attention of educators is the culture gap. While “‘over next 10 to 12 years, the nation’s public school student body will have no one clear racial or ethnic majority’ (Frey, 2011, p. 1), the same trend cannot be gleaned from the nation’s teacher workforce” (Boser, 2011, p. 1). Boser (2011) made the statistical case for the existence of the culture gap between teacher and student, stating:

Students of color—students who are not classified as non-Hispanic whites, for purposes of this analysis—will constitute more than half of our primary and secondary students. This demographic trend is already manifest in some of the nation’s most populous states, including California and Texas, where the majority of students are students of color. But the makeup of the nation’s teacher workforce has not kept up with these changing demographics. At the national level, students of color make up more than 40 percent of the public school population. In contrast, teachers of color—teachers who are not non-Hispanic white—are only 17 percent of the teaching force. This is a problem for students, schools, and the public at large. Teachers of color serve as role models for students, giving them a clear and concrete sense of what diversity in education—and in our society—looks like. (p. 1)
Boser defended his case for the culture gap by citing Villegas and Lucas’ (2004) review of empirical studies that indicated that “students of color do better on a variety of academic outcomes if they’re taught by teachers of color” (Villegas & Lucas, 2004, as cited in Boser, 2011, p. 1). Boser’s argument aligned with the assertion (stated above) that the achievement gap exists primarily due to a cultural disconnect between learner and teacher. However, Boser neglected to control for the masked similarities in nonsubgroups. Had Boser validated the Villegas and Lucas (2004) study as one in which the economically disadvantaged White students’ data were statistically controlled, published, and not masked, his argument would have been strengthened.

Nevertheless, the case to close the culture gap, which calls for an increase in the representation of minorities in teaching, is still statistically grounded in strong evidence, such as the work of Foster (1993), who found “that the personal insight minority teachers have into racial and ethnic inequalities in the United States allows them to establish special relationships with minority students” (p. 74). Villegas and Lucas (2004) continued:

According to Foster, the trusting nature of these relationships enables minority teachers to challenge minority students to invest in learning, despite the many academic and social barriers these youngsters experience along the way. Because teachers of color are apt to have more credibility with students of color than would most White teachers, they are better positioned to help minority students understand the social and political consequences of choosing academic achievement or failure. Without this critical dialogue, many minority students would not engage in school learning. (p. 74)
Dilworth (1990) offered up more evidence for the existence of the culture gap, arguing for increasing the number of minority teachers among the ranks of the profession:

Minority teachers can use the inherent understanding of minority cultural backgrounds and experiences that they bring to the profession to help their White colleagues bridge the cultural gap separating them from a growing number of racial/ethnic minority students. (Villegas and Lucas, 2004, p. 74)

Although Dilworth’s argument is flawed because it assumes all minority students’ backgrounds are inherently the same as minority teachers’, and that by simply hiring several minority teachers, their White colleagues will bridge the cultural gap that separates them from their nonwhite students, the overall intention of her implicit message, if not explicitly stated, is valid; and although the logic of her argument for diversifying the teaching gap contains some dangerous cultural assumptions about White people, it still has merit. Her argument for increasing the numbers of minority teachers is validated by the understanding of the implicit messages occurring between teacher and student. Villegas and Lucas (2004) summarized the arguments of Mercer and Mercer’s (1986) notion of implicit messages by stating:

The racial/ethnic makeup of the teacher workforce communicates a strong message to children about the distribution of power in society. These scholars contended that the absence of minority teachers conveys to school children that White people are better suited to hold positions of authority in society. This
implicit message contrasts markedly with the promise of equality espoused in the
United States, a theme promoted within the formal school curriculum. (p. 72)

Rooted within this implicit message being transmitted to young people in US
schools, and rooted within the potential barriers that develop as a result of this message,
the culture gap between students and teachers must be addressed. However, the culture
gap must be discussed concurrently with the achievement gap, whose ideology
discourages a rise in nonwhite persons entering the teaching field. In this way, the
achievement gap becomes a byproduct of the culture gap, leading to a continuation of the
cycle.

Throughout the many educational levels existing in the US, from the classrooms
all the way to the Department of Education, educators are now making data-driven
decisions informed by student test scores (Hamilton et al., 2009). The emerging data have
clearly indicated gaps in achievement levels, and now, educators are attempting to close
them. However, the task at hand is complicated and positivistic, and thus, a data-driven
approach alone is not enough to aid the students most in need. When considering the new
data-driven reform paradigm, educators must remind themselves that students are not
merely numbers and that equally important qualitative data on students exists.

Statement of the Problem

Popular best-practice pedagogies attempt to address this issue but do so in a
watered-down manner (c.f. Daniels, Hyde, & Zemelman, 2012). Undeterred, this
researcher, as well as proponents of multicultural education and culturally responsive
teaching, continue to develop and publish literature that further validates the greater need
to focus on student culture and advocate for its inclusion in mainstream best-practice
pedagogies. However, this literature expounding how to best implement culturally responsive teaching in the 21st century is scant and merits deeper exploration—which is the greatest aim of this researcher.

There is a renewed call for this kind of research as it has become clear that diversity within US public schools is rapidly increasing, and this urgency is driving educational reform despite political challenges. The upward diversity trend is especially alarming in light of the increasing class sizes within many schools. As a result, elementary school, junior high school, and high school teachers are charged with uniquely difficult and dynamic tasks. Educational reform efforts have yielded new data, which clearly indicate a continued, concerning disparity in academic achievement levels.

Culturally responsive teaching, one pedagogical approach of multicultural education, is capable of meeting and fulfilling many of the current and future dynamic needs of our education system. However, culturally responsive teaching has two formidable obstacles:

1. The current literature does not thoroughly address practical, best-practice techniques for collecting and learning about each student’s culture;

2. Nor does it thoroughly address culturally responsive teaching within the educational paradigms unique to the 21st century.

Firstly, a thorough discussion of the notion of how teachers acquire student cultural information is notably absent from the current literature. The problem is important to researchers because (a) the new research data may illuminate the most effective and time-efficient methods employed by teachers who aim to learn about each student’s unique culture, and (b) new potential collection methods may help to minimize
the teacher’s risk of stereotyping and overgeneralizing when attempting to respond to each student’s unique culture.

Secondly, the current literature offers little documentation of the various methods and mechanisms utilized by 21st century teachers who are employing culturally responsive teaching practices. The problem is important to research because (a) the new research data may illuminate new characterizations of culturally responsive teaching which are reflective of the ever-increasing demands of and pressures placed on 21st century teachers, and (b) the potentially new characterizations of culturally responsive teaching may lead to adjustments being made in the form of its best-practice implementation strategies.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to collect information from elementary school teachers in order to characterize phenomena related to culturally responsive teaching, and to use that information to illuminate methods and mechanisms currently employed by these teachers in modern educational practice. To that end, data were collected through the use of phone interviews and a Web-based survey, formulated to addressed the following research questions:

1. How do teachers’ understandings of culture influence their pedagogy?
2. How do teachers develop greater cultural competency?
3. How do teachers enact culturally responsive teaching?

The exploratory design of this research positioned these three questions to examine the greater question: How do 21st century elementary school teachers perceive culturally responsive teaching and characterize its implementation process? After the
initial data collection, data were analyzed within the context of Geneva Gay’s (2002) five essential components of culturally responsive teaching: (a) developing a cultural diversity knowledge base, (b) designing culturally relevant curricula, (c) demonstrating cultural caring and building a learning community, (d) implementing effective cross-cultural communication, and (e) facilitating cultural congruity in classroom instruction.

**Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions**

The study had several limitations, although attempts were made to control them. One limitation was the scope of geographic locations of the teachers being interviewed. This study was conducted in inner-city, urban, and suburban parts of a large Midwestern region of the US where diversity is not nearly as prominent as in other major cities. Interviews with teachers working in the vicinity of cities with greater diversity would likely yield additionally unique data (e.g., New York City, San Francisco, San Diego, Miami).

Another limitation was the teacher variable that pertains to teachers’ beliefs, knowledge, and understanding of culturally responsive teaching. A teacher with a limited understanding of culture may generate little valuable data compared to culturally aware teachers.

A third limitation of the study is the sample size and nonrandom sampling method. Although a small sample size resulted in nonrandom convenience sampling, attempts were made to control for race, gender, and school site demographics by way of nonrandom judgmental sampling.

This study was delimited to teachers in three inner-city, two urban, and one suburban school. Omitted from the study were elementary school teachers in private or
charter schools and teachers at other levels besides elementary school. Furthermore, the qualitative nature of this study included the potential for researcher bias, so audio recordings were requested. However, none of the participants consented to the recording of their interviews, and thus verbatim transcriptions were not available.

**Definitions**

The following terms are directly related to this paper and its research, and are used throughout.

**Achievement gap.** The disparity in average academic achievement levels between certain racial groups.

**Best-practice pedagogy.** “A shorthand emblem of serious, thoughtful, informed, responsible, state-of-the-are teaching” (Daniels et al., 2012, p. 2).

**Common core standards.** A 45-state-adopted, nationalized, English, language, arts, and mathematics curriculum, the result of Race to the Top (Daniels et al., 2012).

**Critical race theory.** An ideology that places emphasis on “prioritizing ‘the Voice of people of color,’ … a voice framed by racism and at variance with the mainstream culture” (Cole, 2009, pp. 7, 9).

**Culture.** The “learned patterns of thought and behavior that are [sometimes] passed from one generation to another and are experienced as distinct to a particular group” (Carter, 2000, p. 865).

**Culture gap.** The notion of incongruent cultural frames of reference that exist between White teachers and students of color.

**Culturally responsive teaching.** A teaching approach that uses “cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically
diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (Gay, 2000, p. 29).

**Demographic disparities.** Gaps that occur within “the diverse student population, the homogenous teaching force, and the ‘demographic divide’ (Gay & Howard, 2000), or the marked disparities in educational opportunities, resources, and achievement among student groups that differ from one another racially, culturally, and socioeconomically” (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004, p. 933).

**Equity pedagogy.** “When teachers use techniques and methods that facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups” (Banks, 2004b, p. 5).

**Inner-city neighborhoods.** Neighborhoods “characterized by high concentrations of families living in poverty (greater than 40%), high crime rates, low rates of owner-occupied housing, more public housing, and a higher proportion of single-headed households” (Gorman-Smith, Tolan, & Henry, 2005, p. 139).

**Multicultural education.** “An idea or concept, an educational reform movement, and a process. Multicultural education incorporates the idea that all students—regardless of their gender, social class, and ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics—should have an equal opportunity to learn in school” (Banks & McGee-Banks, 2010, p. 3).

**No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001.** An act aimed to provide equal educational opportunities to all students that emphasized high-stakes testing with a stated goal of closing the achievement gap by 2014.

**Pedagogy.** Matters of or related to teaching.
**Race to the Top.** An economic stimulus package component that required “a national data system to record student test scores and to track student progress through the educational system” (Spring, 2011, p. 455), which also offered financial incentives for states that addressed reform in the four areas of:

- adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy; building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction; recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and turning around our lowest-achieving schools. (USDE, Office of Implementation and Support Unit, 2012)

**Suburban neighborhoods.** Communities that surround a major city that distinguish themselves from suburban and inner-city neighborhoods, characterized by low levels of social problems, inhabited by mostly middle- to upper-class income earners with owner-occupied housing.

**Urban neighborhoods.** Those that are “economically impoverished compared with most communities (e.g., 20% to 40% of the population lives below poverty) and have elevated levels of most social problems, but they are distinguished from inner-city neighborhoods by the range of income levels, the extent of owner-occupied housing, business investment levels, and greater access to resources for social and economic problems” (Gorman-Smith et al., 2005, p. 139).
The Researcher’s Position

Like Stake (1995), I believe that “all researchers have great privilege and obligation: the privilege to pay attention and the obligation to make conclusions drawn from those choices meaningful to colleagues and clients” (Stake, 1995, p. 49). To this end, I understand that my position as a researcher has been both knowingly and unknowingly influenced by previously endured and learned life experiences. Referring to one’s own position as a researcher, Madison (2005) stated, “Positionality is vital because it forces us to acknowledge our own power, privilege, and biases just as we are denouncing the power structures that surround our subjects” (p. 7).

In this section, I will discuss my own positionality as it pertains to my personal, academic, and professional experiences, as well as my characterizations as an advocate and researcher of culturally responsive teaching.

Personal Orientation

My choice to become an elementary school teacher was driven by my desire to help all young people pursue their passions. Motivated by emerging 21st century paradigms occurring across the educational landscape and the potential for culturally responsive teaching to dissolve educational disparities, I am a practitioner of culturally responsive teaching. As such, I continually use my students’ cultures to inform my instruction and curricular design. I believe that being a culturally responsive teacher is a continual process, and that some teachers are better implementers than others. Due to the nature of defining and understanding culture as a unique, ever-changing phenomenon, practitioners must continually evaluate and redefine the variables that exist within culturally responsive teaching (see Chapter 2).
I believe that an individual’s interruption of his or her pursuit of culturally responsive teaching results in the decomposition of his or her teaching craft in this modality. To this end, my pursuit of culturally responsive teaching has led me to become its fervent advocate and researcher, an endeavor reinforced by my personal, academic, and professional experiences.

**Early educational experiences.** From first grade through high school, I attended elite private schools. In high school, I was a member of the “financially diverse” student population, as I received financial aid to attend the school. Although difficult at times, I found myself embracing being a part of this financially diverse group. My teachers were excellent, and regardless of categorical classifications, they lovingly demanded the best of each student.

During these high school years, appreciation for all forms of diversity was clearly scheduled and integrated into the curriculum. The focus on recognizing, understanding, and appreciating diversity took form in many different ways. From recognizing various religious and ethnic groups’ holidays on the school calendar to regularly hosting special programs that were themed to different types of diversity (racial, ethnic, disability, leadership styles, musical, cultural, and religious), my high school teachers and curriculum helped to instill in me a passion for valuing and helping others. Concurrently, my parents taught me to value individual differences and would often remind me: “You are lucky to be attending the school, and the school is lucky to have you.”

For me, this mantra framed my understanding of and value of my position within the school. Over time, this understanding and value for diversity has transcended into my life today. As an individual, professional, advocate, and researcher, I aim for nothing
short of a constant appreciation and value of others. Although, admittedly, I often fall short of this goal, I continually strive to fulfill its ideals nonetheless.

**Technology in education.** In addition to teaching me a way of understanding and appreciating varying forms of diversity, my high school education illuminated the possibilities of integrating technology into the curriculum. In partnership with Microsoft, my high school was one of the first schools in the country to pilot laptops in the classroom. Additionally, my high school was one of the first to employ wireless networks within a school. As a result, I have been surrounded by technology in the classroom since high school. I experienced first-hand the evolution of technology as it progressed in classrooms across the country.

From a student’s and a teacher’s perspective, I realize the potential that technology offers toward enriching the curriculum. I also recognize technology’s potential distractions for students and complications for teachers. Additionally, I understand the potential for using technology in the classroom—not just as an enrichment of the existing curriculum, but also as a component in and of itself. Lastly, I understand that technology is ever changing. Having been a student through these nascent years of technological integration, and now as a classroom teacher, I believe that teachers today have an additional professional role to fulfill in that they must keep abreast of technological developments.

**Academic qualifications.** My academic background includes the following credentials: Bachelor of Science degree in Family Studies, two different state teaching licenses, Master of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction, and a Gifted Intervention Specialists certificate. These academic credentials have positioned me to
approach culturally responsive teaching with specific consciousness for the interconnected relationships between family, pedagogy, curriculum design, and differences among learners. Thus, my consciousness of the cultural aspects of teaching is continually informed by way of my lived, professional experiences.

**Professional experiences.** Professionally, I have been involved in two different educational capacities. I served for 2 years as the director of a year-round leadership program for inner-city youth. This role involved designing the program’s leadership curriculum throughout the school year, overseeing daily operations of the 4-week summer camp, and regularly communicating with students, parents, teachers, and principals. In my second and current capacity, I am a classroom teacher, having taught in both inner-city and urban schools for over 5 years.

Currently, I teach students who have been identified as “gifted” in a public urban elementary school where I serve on the school’s instructional leadership team and am the school’s curriculum innovation specialist for mathematics, grades K-6. In the past, I was a member of the school’s local decision-making committee. Although a public school, students in my school must meet certain requirements to qualify for admission into the school. More specifically, in order for a student to be considered for the school, he or she must either: a) rank at the superior cognitive level (128 or 95th percentile or higher) on a cognitive abilities test, or b) score at the 95th percentile or higher on at least the mathematics and/or reading section of the Terra Nova, plus score at the 95th percentile or higher on a different section of the Terra Nova.

Over the past 7 years in education, I have experienced many different types of classrooms, schools, learners, families, and cultures in my professional work. Although I
have taught students in grades K-8 over these years, a majority of my experiences have been in public schools, grades three through six. As a full-time elementary school teacher during the school year and an aspiring advocate of culturally responsive teaching during the summer months, I am situated precisely between the theory and practice of culturally responsive teaching.

As a classroom teacher in widely diverse settings, I understand the increasing pressures on and expectations of teachers and the obstacles they face. I have taught in a school where only three out of 60 of my students’ parents attended conferences. I have taught in a school where nearly all 100 of my students’ parents attended conferences, and it was still necessary to schedule additional time for conferences. I have taught in a school where my life was threatened several times, and in the same school, had been told several times that I was a favorite teacher. I have taught in a school where, when it snowed outside and school was still in session, very few students attended for unspecified reasons. I have taught in a school where, when it snowed outside and school was canceled, parents and students e-mailed me, asking for snow-day schoolwork.

I have taught in a school where I have had verbal altercations with both parents and students. For example, once I telephoned a mother several times throughout the quarter regarding her son’s academic progress, and during one phone call, she said, “It’s not my problem you gave him an “F.” You need to fix it… That’s why you’re the teacher. Fix it!” before she disconnected the call.

I have taught in a school where I have been praised and thanked by both parents and students. For example, once, when I called a mother regarding her daughter’s grade, I was thanked by the mother for taking the time to call and was told that her daughter
would complete the incomplete assignment—although she asked me to not give her
daughter any credit for the assignment because “she needs to learn.” The following day, I
received an apology and thank-you note from the student.

I have taught in a school where many of the parents and guardians did not have
working telephone numbers, and conversely, in a school where all parents and guardians
had both working contact numbers and electronic mail addresses. I have taught in a
school where guardians did not return phone calls or emails, and another where I spoke
with guardians via the phone for an hour or more, and on several occasions, have
received three- to four-page e-mails.

I have taught in a school where “data meetings” occur instead of planning periods.
I have taught in a school where teachers were assigned time to plan, communicate with
staff, communicate with guardians, grade student work, enter student work into the
digital report card, and plan for dynamic lessons and units. I have taught in a school
where I was the only White male teacher in the entire school. I have taught in a school
where I was the only male teaching a core subject. I have taught in a classroom where I
was the only White individual among all African American students, and I have taught in
a classroom where all of the students were White. I have taught in a classroom where
every single student was identified as being academically gifted, and a classroom with no
such gifted students. I have taught in a classroom with students that were twice
exceptional—meaning they were identified both as gifted and as having a learning
disability. I have taught in a classroom with several students who were English language
learners and English as a second language learners. I have taught in a classroom with a
class size of 12 students, and a classroom with 34 students.
Role as an advocate and researcher. Many of my experiences are not unique among teachers across the country. Unique, however, is the fact that I am currently a full-time, elementary school teacher who is also an advocating for culturally responsive teaching by way of this dissertation. Additionally unique is my experience as an advocate and researcher who has been surrounded by technology and laptop computers since high school. Although not as technologically knowledgeable as a computer programmer, my vision of the possibilities of advancing culturally responsive teaching through technological advances is rooted in my past. Thus, my personal, academic, and professional experiences have allowed my consciousness of culturally responsive teaching to deepen and grow, culminating in this research undertaking.

Differing Perspectives on “Culture”

For researchers in this milieu, a clear and concise conception of “culture” is instrumental to building and validating theoretical scholarship (Jahoda, 2012). Yet, despite acknowledging its importance, a unifying definition of “culture” has eluded social scientists for nearly a century (Jahoda, 2012). In fact, Alfred Lang (1997) concluded that “attempts at defining culture in a definite way are futile” (p. 389). Gustav Jahoda (2012) recently revisited this idea in his paper, entitled “Critical Reflection on Some Recent Definitions of ‘Culture,’” when he critically examined and compared various cross-cultural publications that defined “culture.” In accordance with Lang (1997), Jahoda (2012) concluded, “There can be no generally agreed definition of culture” (p. 289). He continued:

Much of the time it is quite practicable and defensible simply to use the term without seeking to define it. However, if either for a theoretical or empirical
reason clarification is essential, then the author should explain the specific manner in which she employs the term “culture” in that particular context. Similarly, students should not be presented with a rigid formula or a smorgasbord of definitions, but given some insight into the ways the concept is useful in spite of the impossibility of pinning it down. (p. 300)

Hence, I will not attempt to define “culture,” “multicultural,” or “culturally responsive teaching” in my research, being satisfied with the definitions stated earlier in this chapter from expert social scientists in the field of educational studies as well my own understanding of culture as being founded in one’s identity. A theoretical discussion regarding the meaning of culture is beyond the scope of this paper; however, it is important to operationalize each of these terms by discussing each term’s supporting empirical evidence, which will be further discussed in Chapter 2.
Chapter II: Review Of The Literature

This chapter will examine the existing body of literature on the subject of multicultural education and its relevant components as they pertain to the achievement gap and present a cross-analysis of literary works that include the central concepts of critical race theory, mainstream best practice pedagogy, equity pedagogy, culturally responsiveness, and culturally responsive teaching. In addition, it will address the researcher’s position and understanding of culture, multicultural, and culturally responsive teaching.

Multicultural Education: An Approach to Close the Achievement Gap and Beyond

Multicultural education is a theoretical concept in educational literature that, among other things, is concerned with the achievement gap and culture gap paradigms. 21st century multicultural education theorists utilize the multicultural education theory paradigm as a means to address both these gaps, and thus, the injustices occurring within our society that are rooted therein.

Defining multicultural education. There are various definitions of multicultural education. Drawing from multiple of these scholarly conceptions, Banks and McGee-Banks (2010) distilled it to the following simple idea: “Multicultural education incorporates the idea that all students—regardless of their gender, social class, and ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics—should have an equal opportunity to learn in school” (p. 3). Gay (2004) wrote in detail about multicultural education as both a concept and a reform movement, stating:

As a concept … multicultural education is a set of beliefs and explanations that recognize and value the importance of ethnic and cultural diversity in shaping
lifestyles; social experiences; personal identities; and educational opportunities of individuals, groups, and nations…. [Multicultural education as] a reform movement emphasizes the revising the structural, procedural, substantive, and valuative components of the educational enterprise to reflect the social, cultural, ethnic, racial, and linguistic diversity of the United States. (p. 33)

Continuing on the point of the reform movement agenda, Banks and McGee-Banks (2010) asserted that multicultural education is a broad movement, not a static one, involving “changes in the total school or educational environment,” not restricted to mere changes in curriculum, and that it “must be viewed as an ongoing process, not as something that we ‘do’ and thereby solve the problems that are the targets of multicultural educational reform” (p. 4). In its capacity as a reform movement, Gay (2004) defined it as a “process” rather than an end in and of itself; thus, it encompasses “ways of thinking and behaving in educational settings that are pervasive and persistent,” requiring “long-term investments of time and resources, and carefully planned and monitored actions” (pp. 33-34).

Multicultural education was chosen as the theoretical framework upon which this paper is based because of its dynamic and far-reaching implications for improving the educational milieu. Another compelling aspect is the theory’s potential to remedy situations in which some students “have a better chance to learn in schools as they are currently structured than do students who belong to other groups or who have different cultural characteristics” (Banks & McGee-Banks, 2010, p. 3). That is, the root of the inequality existing within our educational institutions stems from cultural disconnects within the classroom.
Learning is, by its very essence, cultural in nature and rooted in the cultural context in which it takes place. This plays out in the classroom as students are continually in the process of reconciling the new information they are constantly receiving with their “prior knowledge and experiences—both individual and cultural” (Villegas & Lucas, 2004, p. 73). As a theoretical framework, multicultural education and its endeavors align with the overall aims of this paper and its research.

Emergence. Emerging out of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, multicultural education was spearheaded by some of the very same African American activists seeking to eliminate discrimination in various public and private sectors of American society. Scaffolding on the social influence and advances of the civil rights movement, over time the nascent multicultural education movement amassed enough political strength to significantly impact education in the US. Although the movement was initiated by African Americans, it has since spread to be championed by individuals from other ethnic groups signaling for educational equality who demanded that the schools and other educational institutions reform curricula to reflect their experiences, histories, cultures, and perspectives. Ethnic groups also demanded that the schools hire more Black and Brown teachers and administrators so that their children would have more successful role models. Ethnic groups pushed for community control of schools in their neighborhoods and for the revision of textbooks to make them reflect the diversity of peoples in the United States. (Banks & McGee-Banks, 2010, pp. 5-6)

Since its inception as a movement for equality, multicultural education has developed into its own field of study, marked by three significant events, beginning in
1985 with the publication of the first journal dedicated to multiculturalism, the Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development (Gay, 2004).

The second significant event occurred during the annual Association for Teacher Education (ATE) conference in 1990. During the ATE conference, the National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME) was formed as “a new professional organization to serve as a forum for educators committed to and actively engaged in the pursuit of multicultural education” (Gay, 2004, p. 36). The organization released its first journal in 1993 under the name Multicultural Education, which was later changed to Multicultural Perspectives (Gay, 2004).

The third significant event that advanced multicultural education as a field of study occurred in 1995 with the publication of the Handbook of Multicultural Counseling (Gay, 2004). Multicultural education is now a commonly used umbrella term to “describe a wide variety of programs and practices related to educational equity, women, ethnic groups, language minorities, low-income groups, and people with disabilities” (Banks & McGee-Banks, 2010, p. 7).

Culture. Within the core of multicultural education ideology lies the notion that culture—powerfully and simultaneously—stimulates society. The recurring stimulation process is multidimensional, as each individual within society makes decisions that are based upon the unique stimuli he or she has been socialized to since birth. Consequentially, society overall is stimulated by each individual’s actions and beliefs, which, in turn, informs other individuals’ actions and beliefs. When a commonality of actions or beliefs exists between individuals, the group is said to have the same culture.
Bullivant (1993) referenced these commonalities as a type of program guide by which to live in the group. Multicultural education promotes and values societies’ different program guides or cultures but challenges them when they unfairly or negatively impact persons of other cultures. Multicultural education aims to provide and promote fair and equal educational opportunities for all.

Renowned multicultural education theorists Banks and McGee Banks (2010) outlined their understanding of culture thusly:

Most social scientists today view culture as consisting primarily of the symbolic, ideational, and intangible aspects of human societies. The essence of a culture is not its artifacts, tools, or other tangible cultural elements but how the members of the group interpret, use, and perceive them. It is the values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives that distinguish one people from another in modernized societies; it is not material objects and other tangible aspects of human societies (Kuper, 1999). People in a culture usually interpret the meaning of symbols, artifacts, and behaviors in the same or in similar ways. (p. 8)

Indeed, the essence of culture can be defined by the commonalities of its peoples’ interpretations; moreover, consideration must also be given to the individual assigning the culture label to a group. Since an individual assigning a group to a particular culture is doing so based on his or her own unique life experiences, the assignment of culture is dynamic in nature. Motivated by this recognition and its potential pitfalls, some multicultural education theorists focus their research primarily in the field of culturally responsive pedagogies, which emphasize the concept of culture within education. In
order to better understand culturally responsive pedagogies, further analysis of multicultural education as a framework for analyzing culture in the US is warranted.

**Culture in the US.** The US, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia are all multicultural societies with broad common core cultures that include different subcultures (Banks & McGee-Banks, 2010). Banks and McGee-Banks (2010) referred to the broad common culture as the “macroculture” and the subcultures as the “microcultures” (p. 7). Expanding on these notions, they stated:

It is important to distinguish the macroculture from the various microcultures because the values, norms, and characteristics of the mainstream (macroculture) are frequently mediated by, as well as interpreted and expressed differently within, various microcultures. These differences often lead to cultural misunderstandings, conflicts, and institutionalized discrimination. (p. 7)

In the classroom setting, the existence of such varying microcultures found within the greater macroculture can lead to cultural disconnects, which are the product of the teacher and student being socialized to different norms. This can result in a cultural duality where teachers and students “who are members of certain cultural, religious, and ethnic groups are sometimes socialized to act and think in certain ways at home but differently at school (Lee, 2006)” (Banks & McGee Banks, 2010, p. 7).

In a study on the usage of language in school, Heath (1983) identified a disconnect between a pattern of language used in the home and at school. Specifically, Heath found that “at home, most of the children’s interaction with adults consisted of imperatives or commands. At school, questions were the dominant form of interactions between teachers and students” (Banks & McGee-Banks, 2010, p. 8). Heath’s study is
one example of communication being both important and a potential area of cultural disconnect in the classroom. Multicultural education challenges all agents within education to be able to:

- acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function effectively in each cultural setting. They should also be competent to function within and across other microcultures in their society, within the national macroculture, and within the world community. (Banks & McGee-Banks, 2010, p. 8)

**Theory.** Multicultural education theory falls within the conceptual parameters of educational theory’s subgroup, curriculum theory (Gay, 2004, p. 30). As a theory, multicultural education is “an expression of belief” (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998, p. 173) rooted within “three generic types of curriculum theory: descriptive, prescriptive, and critical” (Gay, 2004, p. 31). Gay (2004) asserted that multicultural education stretches within and across all of these types:

*Descriptive* analyses of educational systems and conditions that ignore or deny the importance of cultural diversity are frequently used to establish a baseline point of reference for changes. *Critical* explanations are then used to determine why these systems should be changed to be more representative of and responsive to ethnic and cultural diversity. *Prescriptive* recommendations suggest what the changes should embody in order for education to be maximally beneficial to an ever-increasing variety of culturally, ethnically, racially, socially, and linguistically pluralistic individuals, institutions, and communities. (pp. 31-32)
Gay defended multicultural education’s dynamically rooted theory by referencing “Beauchamp’s notion (1968) that multiple approaches to defining a discipline are natural and need not impede its theoretical development” (p. 32). She continued:

All the individuals and groups involved are seeking basically the same goals: a more equitable society in which there is much greater equality, freedom, and justice in all spheres of life. They also agree that the achievement of these goals is dependent upon changes in knowledge, attitudes, values, and human relationships among diverse groups, as well as fundamental structural changes in social, political, economic, and educational institutions (Banks, 1990; Darter, 1991; Nieto, 2000; Suzuki, 1979, 1984). (Gay, 2004, pp. 39)

**Framework.** To this end, multicultural education theory is not only dynamically and theoretically rooted, but so, too, is its framework. Banks (2004b) studied the framework of multicultural education by listing five different categories that are used as tools to organize and understand multicultural education: “(a) content integration, (b) the knowledge construction process, (c) prejudice reduction, (d) an equity pedagogy, and (e) an empowering school culture and social structure” (p. 4). Each of these will be briefly discussed as they relate to closing the achievement gap and the cultural gap.

**Content integration.** The content integration category in concerned with the extent that “teachers use examples, data, and information from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations, and theories in their subject area or discipline” (Banks, 2004, p. 4). Multicultural education is primarily viewed in this context within the realms of school districts and popular literature publications (Banks,
2004b). Scholars of multicultural education pedagogy often launch their scholastic endeavors from this category.

**Knowledge construction.** The knowledge construction process is concerned with the “procedures by which social, behavioral, and natural scientists create knowledge, and the manner in which the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence how knowledge is constructed within it (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Gould, 1996; Harding, 1991; Hartsock, 1998; Kuhn, 1970; Myrdal, 1969)” (Banks, 2004b, p. 4). The teacher in the classroom implements these concepts, and by doing so, he or she challenges “students to understand how knowledge is created and how it is influenced by the racial, ethnic, and social-class positions of individuals and groups” (Banks, 2004b, p.4). This process is especially important to this researcher’s objective, which is to address the culture gap between teacher and student. By employing the knowledge construction process in higher education teacher preparation programs, new teachers will be better positioned to understand their diverse students and thus better positioned to employ the process in their classrooms.

**Prejudice restriction.** By employing this notion of knowledge construction into K-12 classrooms and higher education programs, the third category, prejudice reduction, is also being implemented. Banks wrote, “The prejudice reduction dimension of multicultural education describes the characteristics of children’s racial attitudes and suggest strategies that can be used to help students develop more democratic attitudes and values” (2004b, p. 5); however, the practice of prejudice reduction should not be limited to “children.” As is evident by the culture gap between students and teachers, the prejudice reduction dimension is necessary at all levels of education.
**Equity pedagogy.** Following these three dimensions, equity pedagogy can then be implemented: “An equity pedagogy exists when teachers use techniques and methods that facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups” (Banks, 2004b, p. 5). In the context this current research, equity pedagogy refers to the idea of culturally responsive teaching as a tool to close the achievement gap and improve the culture gap.

According to Rick Hess, resident scholar and director of education policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute, NCLB has “moved our attention to racial achievement gaps and away from income achievement gaps” (Goodwin, 2012). Although Hess argued that, in fact, income achievement gaps should be the real focus, multicultural education advocates argue that this newfound emphasis on racial achievement gaps is only new to the data-driven era. As previously mentioned, multicultural education’s standard bearers have been addressing these gaps and inequalities in education since the 1960s (Banks & McGee-Banks, 2010), since which time “progress in narrowing the gaps in achievement between subgroups of students was made … slowly.” However, it has “nearly halted in the last two decades—at a time when the demographics of our nation and region are rapidly changing” (Zorn, Ludwig, and van den Hoogenhof, 2010, p. 1). For these reasons, multicultural education theorists suggest that we reinvigorate the use of equity pedagogies as a tool to continue to narrow the existing achievement and culture gaps.

The ideals of equity pedagogy arose in the 1960s alongside attention being given to poverty in the US, brought to the nation’s attention in Michael Harrington’s 1962 book entitled The Other America. As a result of his work and others’, social scientists began
developing theories and concepts to aid in the process of illuminating the experience of the impoverished from an academic standpoint (Lewis, 1965). In educational literature at this time, “this concept became known as cultural deprivation or the disadvantaged” (Banks, 2004b, p. 18). Bloom, Davis, and Hess (1965) traced the in-school problems of “culturally deprived” children to their “experiences in homes which do not transmit the cultural patterns necessary for the types of learning characteristics of the schools and the larger society” (p. 4). Then, in the 1970s, another group of theorists emerged who challenged the underpinnings of cultural deprivation theory.

This group, called cultural difference theorists, believed that the cultural deprivation theorists undervalued the cultural experiences and systems that differed from the mainstream school culture. Put another way, this new school of thought held that the nonmainstream cultures of low-income and racially and ethnically diverse students were equal in value to their mainstream counterparts (Hale-Benson, 1987; Shade, 1982). Banks (2004) handily summarized the cultural difference theorists’ contribution:

In developing their concepts and theories about the rich cultures of low-income students and students of color, the cultural difference theorists make far more use of ethnic culture than do cultural deprivations (Ramirez & Castaneda, 1974). The cultural deprivationists focus on social class and the culture of poverty and tend to ignore ethnic culture as a variable. The cultural difference theorists emphasize ethnic culture and devote little attention to class (Boykin, 2000; Gay, 2000). Ignoring the ethnic cultures of students has evoked much of the criticism of the cultural deprivationists. (Banks, 2004b, p. 19)
In the 1980s, “the cultural deprivation/disadvantaged conception was exhumed and given new life in the form of the novel concept of at-risk (Richardson et al., 1989; Slavin, Karweit, & Madden, 1989)” (Banks, 2004b, p. 20). The designation of being “at risk” is a hazy one, but it is used widely, particularly notably as “a funding category for state and federal educational agencies” (Banks, 2004b, p. 21). The term is equally popular among educational interest groups who use it “to refer to any populations of youths experiencing problems in school” (Banks, 2004b, p. 20).

Another broadly-used term resurrected in the 1980s is “disadvantaged” (Banks, 2004b, p. 20). Since then, equity pedagogy has continued to develop among certain groups of teachers, who have taken it upon themselves to modify “their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, gender, and social-class groups” (Banks, 2004b, p. 23).

Hence the question has arisen: How can the equity pedagogy dimension of multicultural education be used most effectively to close both the achievement and culture gap? Before this question can be addressed, a deeper understanding of the underlying problems of inequity in education will be addressed by discussing them within the context of critical race theory.

**Critical Race Theory**

Distinctively different than multicultural theorists, critical race theory identifies race as its central tenet. This theory was another product of the era in the 1980s when new theories arose to promote social transformation. Grounded in the works of several Frankfort School scholars, social transformation theories explained social phenomenon and then promoted types of social change to address the particular phenomenon’s
injustices and inequalities (Cole, 2009). At the vanguard of these transformative social theories was critical theory. It entered into education in the 1980s and continued to gather momentum over time.

In the most general terms, critical theory is “an approach to the sciences” which holds a certain “conception of society” and “a vision for realizing certain values” (Morrow, 1994, p. 7). Yet, while many critical theories focus on differing social injustices and inequalities, all critical theories share the central aim of empowering and liberating the suppressed.

Among critical theory lies critical race theory. It had a notable beginning in the form of a student boycott at the Harvard Law School in 1981 (Cole, 2009) when a number of students collectively took issue with the low “number of tenured professors of color in the faculty” (p. 13) and feelings of racial disconnection. The students’ efforts motivated the Harvard administration to offer a new course entitled “Race, Racism, and American Law” (Cole, 2009, p. 13).

Leading critical race theory scholar Kimberle W. Crenshaw (1995) described this course as “in many ways the first institutionalized expression of Critical Race Theory” (p. xxi). Crenshaw credited herself and fellow colleagues with sparking another key event, the 1989 CRT workshop, which developed a nascent critical race theory out of critical legal studies (CLS; Cole, 2009): “The organizers, principally Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, and Stephanie Philips, coined the term ‘Critical Race Theory’ to make it clear that their work was located in the ‘intersection of critical theory and race, racism and the law’” (Cole, 2009, p. 14).
Similar to postmodernism and transmodernism, critical race theory is concerned with the “voice of the other,” aiming to empower and liberate the suppressed. Its specific critiques of CLS dealt with its overemphasis on “class and economic structures” to the detriment of what they saw as the crucial factor of race. This failure of omission is of particular interest to critical race theorists, who are noted to “have a total distrust of Eurocentrism” (Cole, 2009, p. 9). Thus, critical race theory championed “the Voice of people of color … a voice framed by racism and at variance with the mainstream culture” (Cole, 2009, p. 7, 9). This departure from CLS signified a new beginning for individuals seeking to theoretically ground their efforts in raising racism consciousness and equality across society.

Since its inception in 1989, like many of its counterparts, the framework of critical race theory has been cemented through various dialogues, critiques, and contributions in the academic realm. In one fascinating instance, critical race theory’s academic validity was strengthened after being critiqued from within its own ranks. Although unfairly popularized as a “Black-White paradigm,” critical race theory does indeed move beyond Black and White social constructs. Juan Perea challenged this notion of binary race, calling it “Black Exceptionalism,” at the 1997 LatCrit Conference (Cole, 2009, p. 15). At the conference, calls were made for critical race theorists to give voice to all marginalized groups in the US: African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans alike (Cole, 2009). Ultimately, this widening of the lens of critical race theory served to strengthen it and advance its agenda. And so, after several decades of shoring up its academic footing in theory and in education, critical
race theory matured to recognize and encompass equality for all (and by all, only) marginalized groups.

Leading critical race theory scholar Gloria Ladson-Billings critiqued liberalism and argued “that Whites have been primary beneficiaries of (the) civil rights legislation” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 7). She challenged the current state of school curriculum, instruction, assessment, funding, and segregation “as a culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a White supremacist master script” (1998, p. 18). In true critical theory fashion, after her critique, Ladson-Billings offered advice and words of caution toward corrective measures in schooling. She expressed excitement “about the potential of CRT for illuminating our thinking about school inequity” but challenged “scholars such as James Banks, Carl Grant, and Geneva Gay” to readdress and outline proper implementation of watered-down multicultural education (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 22).

To this end, multicultural education is a socially transformative approach to learning by way of teaching holistically.

**2014: Multicultural Education Meets the Common Core State Standards**

Created by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association, the Common Core State Standards are currently being adopted by 45 states (Daniels et al., 2012) made possible by Race to the Top funds and set to begin in 2014. Moving toward such a national educational curriculum has caused the national conversion on education to be lauded by most educators. However, the more rigorous curriculum has developed many new challenges for the classroom teachers who are left to wonder, “What do I do?” (Daniels et al., 2012, p. 4). Interestingly enough, the developers of the Common Core State Standards intentionally withheld the do—or
pedagogical—component from published documents. In fact, this wholesale omission of pedagogy is addressed in the document, stating:

The best understanding of what works in the classroom comes from the teachers who are in them. That’s why these standards will establish what students need to learn, but they will not dictate how teacher should teach. Instead, schools and teachers will decide how best to help students reach the standards. (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers, 2012)

What, then, dictates how a teacher should teach? The answer to this question is best practice teaching, or pedagogies.

**Best Practice Pedagogy**

Culturally responsive pedagogy is best understood by first introducing the popular (historically mainstream) literature of best practice pedagogies. The difference between the two is the emphasis, or the lack thereof, on culture. To take one broadly-used example, Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde’s (2012) book entitled Best Practice: Bringing Standards to Life in America’s Classrooms (4th ed.) suggested, “Put students in classrooms where teachers get to know kids personally and invite their interaction, and test scores rise (Newmann 2001)” (p. x). Surprisingly, however, no mention is made in this and other mainstream best practice teaching publications of acquainting oneself with a student’s culture. The closest Daniels et al. (2012) came to cultural pedagogy was the statement that one thing teachers should be facilitating more of in the classroom is the “development of students’ curiosity and intrinsic motivation to drive learning” (p. 7).

The use of the Western ideologically-themed “America” instead of “United States” indicates limited cultural scope at the outset. Further, Daniels et al. (2012) wrote
that “teachers can learn to overcome these cultural differences” (p. 250) in the classroom. This statement is at odds with their later passage:

Teaching is a unique profession. No matter what happens on the macro-national-political level, the real work always comes down to a group of young people and one grown-up, a teacher. Once that classroom door is closed, everything depends on the knowledge, planning, artistry, and heart of that special adult. (Daniels et al., 2012, pp. x-xi)

This author would argue that, not only is it impossible to have “knowledge, planning, artistry, and heart” without culture, but culture is the crux to informing each of these central aspects of teaching. Ergo, before culturally responsive pedagogies can be properly discussed, a review of best practice pedagogies must be conducted.

**A near consensus of best practice pedagogies.** The following section offers an analysis and synthesis of best practices that have been “developed over many decades of research, study, experimentation, analysis, and documentation” (Zemelman, et al., 2012, p. 5). The renowned authors who published these best practices have defended their claims by acknowledging that, “despite differing perspectives and opinions, the major stakeholders in education have agreed upon a family of practices, a broad instructional consensus, that informs” best practices (Daniels et al., 2012, p. 5). However, as is reflected in their reference list, the authors do not consider multicultural educational organizations as “major stakeholders in education.” Of the 27 “organizations, reports, and other works” cited (pp. 5, 23-25), not one source specifically addressed the cultural disconnect within schools.
One finds that, intertwined with the following best practice analyses are antidotal interpretations from a multicultural theorist’s perspective. Here, it is argued that, while the best practices put forth align with multicultural education’s endeavors, the practices clearly lack an emphasis on culture. As a result, one can easily say that popular (mainstream) education authors in the US are, in fact, facilitating “not-so-best” practices, which, sadly, may be actually serving to perpetuate the achievement and culture gaps.

Defining “best practice.” In education, a best practice is:

a shorthand emblem of serious, thoughtful, informed, responsible, state-of-the-art teaching…. Virtually all the authoritative voices and documents in every teaching field are calling for schools that are more student-centered, active, experiential, authentic, democratic, collaborative, rigorous, and challenging. (Daniels et al., 2012, p. 2)

This definition was expounded upon in Daniels et al.’s (2012) fourth edition of their tome, wherein they included a chart that represents what teachers should do “more” and “less” of in class:

LESS:
LESS whole-class, teacher-directed instruction (e.g., lecturing)
LESS student passivity: sitting, listening, receiving, and absorbing information
LESS solitude and working alone
LESS presentational, one-way transmission of information from teacher to student
LESS rigidity in classroom seating arrangements
LESS prizing of silence in the classroom
LESS classroom time devoted to fill-in-the-blank worksheets, dittos, workbooks, and other “seatwork”

LESS student time spent reading textbooks and basal readers

LESS focus on “covering” large amounts of material in every subject area

LESS rote memorization of facts and details

LESS reliance on shaping behavior through punishments and rewards

LESS tracking or leveling of students into “ability groups”

LESS use of pull-out special programs

LESS emphasis on competition and grades in school

LESS time given to standardized test preparation

LESS use of and reliance on standardized tests

MORE:

MORE experiential, hand-on learning

MORE active learning, with all the attendant noise and movement of student doing and talking

MORE student-student interaction

MORE flexible seating and working areas in the classroom

MORE diverse roles for teachers, including coaching, demonstrating, and modeling

MORE emphasis on higher-order thinking, on learning a field’s key concepts and principles

MORE deep study of a smaller number of topics, so that students internalize the field’s way of inquiry
MORE development of students’ curiosity and intrinsic motivation to drive learning
MORE reading of real texts: whole books, primary sources, and nonfiction materials
MORE responsibility transferred to students for their work: goal setting, record keeping, monitoring, sharing, exhibiting, and evaluating
MORE choice for students (e.g., choosing their own books, writing topics, team partners, and research projects)
MORE enacting and modeling of the principles of democracy in school
MORE attention to affective needs and varying cognitive styles of individual students
MORE cooperative, collaborative activity; developing the classroom as an interdependent community
MORE heterogeneous classrooms where individuals needs are met through individualized activities, not segregation of bodies
MORE delivery of special help to students in regular classrooms
MORE varies and cooperative roles for teachers, parents, and administrators
MORE use of formative assessments to guide student learning
MORE reliance on descriptive evaluations of student growth, including observational/anecdotal records, conference notes, and performance and assessment rubric. (pp. 6-7)

Daniels et al. (2012) grouped this vast and deeply dynamic collection of best practice principles “into three main clusters: student-centered, cognitive, and interactive”
These clusters will now be briefly elaborated upon, but from a multicultural education theorist’s perspective.

**Student-centered education.** The designation student centered aims to activate the student’s “intrinsic motivation” (p. 8) with a curriculum and style of teaching that is authentic, holistic, experiential, and challenging. Daniels et al. suggested that “schooling should be STUDENT-CENTERED, taking its cues from young people’s interests, concerns, and questions” (p. 10), while “drawing on a deep understanding of children’s developmental needs and enthusiasms to design experiences that lead students into areas they might not choose, but that they will enjoy and engage in deeply” (p. 11). They continue to explain the student-centered component by stating, “student-centered education begins by cordially inviting children’s whole, real lives into the classroom; it solicits and listens to their questions; and it provides a balance between activities that follow children’s lead and ones that lead children” (Zemelman, et al, 2012, p. 3). Although these aims are closely aligned with those aims of multicultural educational theorists, this researcher argues that, in order to implement them for every student, consideration must be given to the students’ cultural influences away from school.

Teachers must be self-reflective of their own cultures, as they affect the “cues” that the teachers are “taking” from young people. Moreover, teachers should not be “taking cues”—rather, they should be systematically collecting student cultural information. Kris Gutierrez (2011) of UCLA stated, “Although an understanding and appreciation of culture is essential for culturally relevant teachers,” by “taking cues,” teachers risk overgeneralizations and stereotyping, which would ultimately cripple best practice pedagogies.
Cognitive education. The cognitive component encourages teachers to “explicitly model the characteristic thinking processes and strategies of each subject area, apprenticing their students to the field’s way of knowing” (Daniels et al., 2012, p. 8). Such modeling considers each student’s developmental stage, with additional thought given to the construction process, expression, and reflection of the student. Daniels et al. offered the following inspiration: “The children do not just receive content: in a very real sense, they re-create and reinvent every cognitive system they encounter, including language, literacy, and mathematics” (p. 9). Again, however, by not acknowledging and cautioning of the different cultures existing within the classroom, teachers may be setting up their students for failure. If a teacher in some way indicates that he or she is expecting her students to complete an assignment that “re-create(s) and reinvent(s) every cognitive system they encounter, including language, literacy, and mathematics” (Daniels et al., 2012, p. 9), that teacher must be cautioned to consider potential cultural conflicts in his or her assessment criteria.

In other words, when creating a pedagogical approach to constructing and assessing an assignment, the teacher must not negatively assess (i.e., grade) the students’ assignments on the basis that the work conflicts with the school’s (or the teacher’s own) cultural expectations. Ladson-Billings (1994) recommended that teachers:

honor and respect the students’ home culture…. The typical experience in the schools is a denigration of African and African American culture. Indeed, there is a denial of its very existence. The language that students bring with them is seen to be deficient—a corruption of English. The familial organizations are
considered pathological. And the historical, cultural, and scientific contributions of African Americans are ignored or rendered trivial. (p. 138)

Through this example, illuminated are the cautionary tale’s byproducts of implementing the cognitive component with no consideration of culture.

**Interactive education.** The third and final component, that of an interactive education, encourages teachers to “tap the power of young peoples’ social energy to advance their thinking” (Zemelman. et al, 2012, p. 9). Again, similarly to the aims of multicultural education advocates, these best practices fall short in their lack of emphasis on raising cultural awareness within the classroom. In order for a teacher to tap into her students and the overall atmosphere of the classroom, teachers must move beyond facilitating and modeling the oversimplified rationale that “people must learn to work effectively in small groups” (p. 9) because that is what they will find in the “real world.” Rather, teachers must respect and value the notion of a genuine connectedness of everyone within the classroom. Students and teachers must gain an authentic understanding of each other as individuals; and in doing so, they will be taking the steps necessary to create a “safe, comfortable, and energizing classroom,” as Daniels et al. suggest (2012, p. 9).

By promoting these democratic values of everyone’s equal cultural validity and classroom interconnectedness, teachers will be facilitating a classroom that is collaborative and sociable. For these types of interactions to occur, all agents within the classroom must respect and value the roots of each student’s unique cultural roots. By uniquely respecting each student’s cultural roots, a synergistic effect on classroom
interactions occur, creating a classroom with “lively conversation(s), discussion(s), and debate(s)” (Zemelman. et al., 2012, p. 9).

Multicultural education theory reminds us that truly powerfully positive dynamics can exist within classrooms, similar to the ones previously noted, but only when students and teachers value all students’ cultural backgrounds—essentially the idea that Daniels et al. (2012) are circling but not explicitly stating. When the pedagogies are not student-centered and cognitively cognizant of varying student cultures, the classroom environment is stifled, resulting in nonoptimal classroom interactions.

This, then, begs the question: If these are broadly acknowledged in the field to be best practices, and many of them do address the idea of getting to know the student and making individual culture relevant, then why does there remain this gaping disparity, or achievement gap, between different demographics of students?

Some multiculturalists would attribute the achievement gap partially to the culture gap existing in schools, stressing the difficulty of a teacher implementing these best practices if she or he is inadequately familiar with the alternate culture in question. The solution to this dilemma is rooted in equity pedagogy, which emphasizes the cultural contextualization of educational methods.

**From Equity Pedagogy to Cultural Responsiveness**

The current body of literature does contain research addressing the best practices of equity pedagogy—the active effector of multicultural education. Such researchers have concluded that best-practice strategies are those that are uniquely culturally situated.

However, there is still a deficit of culturally situated schools and classroom environments, leaving a cultural gap in the relationships between teachers and students,
and students and their peers, and lastly, the curriculum itself, which is often not culturally sensitive.

Multicultural theorists advocate appending the standard pedagogies with conceptual precedents consistent with multicultural endeavors. Banks (1993) “developed a knowledge typology that might facilitate the process of multiculturizing school curricula. It includes five types of knowledge” (Gay, 1995, p. 32). These types are:

1. Personal/cultural knowledge, in which “the concepts, explanations, and interpretations that students derive from… experiences in their homes, families, and community cultures … act as reality screens through which school knowledge is made personally meaningful” (Gay, 1995, p. 6, 32).

2. Popular knowledge, consisting of “facts, images, values, beliefs, and interpretations that are transmitted through and institutionalized in mass media” (Gay, 1995, p. 32).

3. Mainstream knowledge, consisting of “the presumed objective truths—the disciplinary canons—generated by Western-centric research and scholarship. It constitutes the dominant fund of knowledge in the various disciplines, from which the content taught in school is extracted” (Gay, 1995, p. 32).

4. School knowledge, or “the information that appears in textbooks, curriculum guides, and other instructional materials routinely used by classroom teachers, as well as the teacher’s mediation and interpretations of this information” (Gay, 1995, p. 32).

5. And finally, transformative academic knowledge, which is the crux of multicultural education. Transformative knowledge consists of:
concepts, paradigms, perspectives, and explanations that challenge mainstream assumptions about knowledge being neutral and devoid of particularistic human interests… This type of knowledge provides alternative interpretations of ethnic, gender, and social groups’ history, life, and culture, and expands disciplinary cannons to encompass the cultural pluralism that is endemic to societies and the human story. (pp. 32-33)

From here, multicultural theorists have developed a more honed approach to this type of instruction in the classroom, known as culturally responsive teaching.

**Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Originally coined by Cazden and Leggett (1981) and later popularized by Gay (2000), culturally responsive teaching is:

- culturally relevant, sensitive, centered, congruent, reflective, mediated,
- contextualized, [and] synchronized [teaching that uses] cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them.

(Gay, 2000, p. 29)

Ladson-Billings (1994) expounded on these ideas, stating that it is “a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 17-18). She also suggested that “this kind of moving between the two cultures lays the foundation for a skill that students will need in order to reach academic and cultural success” (p. 18).

Culturally responsive teaching is based on the premise that the relationship between the teacher and student is crucial:
Students, particularly disadvantaged students, tend to learn more and have fewer disciplinary problems when they feel that their teachers take them seriously. One explanation is that positive teacher-student relations help foster social relationships, create communal learning environments and promote and strengthen adherence to norms conducive to learning. (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2011, p. 41)

Gay (1990, 2000) explained why today’s changing school demographic trends are creating a significant “social distance” between students and teachers, and how this may further complicate making schooling relevant to the personal lives of ethnically, culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse students. She predicted that these social, cultural, and experiential gaps will make “achieving educational quality even more unlikely in the existing structure of school” (1990, p. 61).

Through research, theory, and practitioner experiences, Gay (2002) suggested that by preparing preservice teachers with guidance on implementing culturally responsive teaching, ethnically diverse students will experience greater academic success. Gay (2002) made a case for educating preservice teachers in culturally relevant practices through the examination of five culturally responsive teaching elements: “developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity, including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum, demonstrating caring and building learning communities, communicating with ethnically diverse students, and responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction” (p. 106).

Gay believed that knowledge of students’ culturally diversity “goes beyond mere awareness of, respect for, and general recognition of the fact that ethnic groups have
different values or express similar values in different ways” (p. 107). She continued to emphasize the importance of “detailed factual information about the cultural particularities of specific ethnic groups” (p. 107).

However, this researcher finds Gay’s prognostications flawed in that she discusses only three types of classroom curricula: formal, symbolic, societal. She draws attention to the potential form improper usage of cultural knowledge, which may perpetuate stereotypes, etc. This potential misapplication of culture into the curriculum is especially important to consider when teaching, especially if the teacher wrongly presumes to know his or her student’s culture outside the classroom.

**Theory.** Strong, fully-developed theories have at least five main characteristics: (a) accuracy—“i.e., consistent with known data”; (b) breadth—“it clarifies a broad range of data”; (c) consistency, “both internally … and with other accepted theories”; (d) simplicity—”i.e., it brings order to a variety of isolated phenomena”; and (e) generativity—“i.e., it generates new results” (Korthagen, 2010, p. 102). A number of studies speak to these aspects of the foundational theory of culturally responsive teaching.

**Accuracy.** Outlined below is evidence which Villegas & Lucas (2004) articulated that culturally responsive teaching is an accurate means to its stated goals:
The importance of establishing cultural links between home and school for students was supported by landmark studies in educational anthropology and cognitive science in the 1970s and 1980s that transformed our understanding of the learning process in cross-cultural settings (Cazden, John, & Hymes, 1972; Heath, 1983; Vygotsky, 1978). This research showed that learning, far from being a passive act of merely receiving new information, actually involves the active construction of ideas. It further showed that, whether inside or outside schools, learning takes place in a cultural context. In their attempts to make sense of new input, learners continuously strive to connect their prior knowledge and experiences—both individual and cultural—with the new information (Tharp & Gallimore, 1990; Tobin, 1998). (p.73)

Thus, children’s prior knowledge and experiences are recognized as essential resources for learning. Effective teaching, by extension, has been redefined to mean helping learners build connections between what is familiar to them and the new content and skills to be learned. (Villegas & Lucas, 2004, p. 73)

**Breadth.** With respect to breadth, culturally responsive teaching clarifies a broad range of data through different types of cultures:

Scholars in anthropology have produced literature that addresses culturally specific pedagogy. A variety of terms falls under the rubric of culturally specific pedagogy, including culturally responsive (Cazden & Legett, 1981; Mohatt & Erickson, 1981), culturally appropriate (Au & Jordan, 1981), culturally compatible (Jordan, 1985; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1987), cultural synchronization (Irvine, 1990), and culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992b). The literature
describes teachers’ attempts to make the school and home cultures of diverse students more congruent. However, the preponderance of this literature has dealt with small-scale, isolated communities. (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 754)

Thus, an objective of this current research was to expand culturally responsive teaching into one that can be recognized as a best practice for all students from all cultures.

**Consistency.** Culturally responsive teaching is both internally consistent and consistent with the popularly accepted theory that Marzano et al. put forth in their (1997) study, which focused on the various dimensions existing when learning takes place. This type of theory is similar to multicultural education theory. As previously stated:

The dimensions of multicultural education used to conceptualize, organize, and select the literature for review in this chapter are (a) content integration, (b) the knowledge construction process, (c) prejudice reduction, (d) an equity pedagogy, and (e) an empowering school culture and social structure. (Banks, 2004, p. 4)

From here, culturally responsive teaching is rooted in the knowledge construction process. The knowledge construction process:

- describes the procedures by which social, behavioral, and natural scientists create knowledge, and the manner in which the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence how knowledge is constructed within it (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Gould, 1996; Harding, 1991; Hartsock, 1998; Kuhn, 1970; Myrdal, 1969). When the knowledge construction process is implemented in the classroom, teachers help students to understand how knowledge is created and how it is influenced by the racial, ethnic, and social-class positions of individuals and groups. (Banks, 2004b, p. 4)
There is little different between the knowledge construct of the multiculturalist theory and the nonmulticulturalist theory. In Robert Marzano’s et al. (1997) *Dimensions of Learning* teacher’s manual, the authors address why culturally responsive teaching works. In the manual, the authors aimed to translate theory and extensive research on learning and cognition into a “practical framework that K-12 teachers can use to improve quality of teaching and learning in any content area” (p.1). The framework was put forth by way of the “five dimensions of learning.”

The first dimension is *attitudes and perceptions*, which places emphasis on ensuring that positive attitudes and perceptions exist within the classroom. This is essential in order for effective instruction and learning to take place. The second dimension is to *acquire and integrate knowledge*, asserting that teachers must scaffold new knowledge with “what they already know, organizing that information, and then making it part of their long-term memory” (Marzano et al., 1997, p. 4). The third dimension is to *extend and refine knowledge*, and it calls for students to “rigorously analyze what they have learned by applying reasoning processes that will help them extend and refine the information” (Marzano et al., 1997, pp. 5-6). The fourth dimension is to *use knowledge meaningfully*, which challenges teachers to meaningfully apply the newly learned content through actual real-life experiences. The fifth dimension, *habits of mind*, outlines the healthy habits of effective learners: critical, creative, and self-regulated thinking. Marzano et al. (1997) asserted:

When positive attitudes and perceptions are in place and productive habits of mind are being used, learners can more effectively do the thinking required in the
other three dimensions, that is acquiring and integrating knowledge (Dimension 2), extending and refining knowledge (Dimension 3), and using knowledge meaningfully (Dimension 4). (p. 7-8)

Yet again, a popularly respected framework in education is weakened by its lack of focus on culture.

**Simplicity and generativity.** Culturally responsive teaching brings order to an isolated phenomenon in that it addresses the manner in which successful educators teach to the other, and in doing so, generate new pedagogical results. Recent scholars have posited theoretical, conceptual, and research possibilities for situated pedagogies that consider race, class, and gender (c.f. Ellsworth, 1989; Hooks, 1989; King, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; McLaren, 1989). Through this type of research, it is now accepted that multicultural education “can improve the academic achievement of culturally diverse students” (Gay, 2004, p. 39). Many narratives and accounts have been published validating Ladson-Billing’s (1995a) version of culturally responsive pedagogy and “its centrality in the academic success of African American and other children who have not been well served by our nation’s public schools” (p. 159).

In summary, with the absence of cultural awareness, and respect, and connectedness between student and teacher, mainstream best-practice pedagogies may not necessarily be best practice—they are missing the cultural component. When culturally responsive teaching is implemented, cultures are validated and connections are made between the student and the teacher through having something in common, or at a minimum, an appreciation of the difference of other. This mutual regard is the crucial component for best practices in culturally responsive teaching.
Implementation literature. In Ladson-Billings’ (1994) book entitled *The Dreamkeepers: Successful teaching for African-American students*, she describes the success of eight teachers modeling the culturally relevant practice. From these stories, she extrapolated a best practice pedagogy specific to African American students. While embodying the same qualities of Gay’s (2000) culturally responsive teaching, Ladson-Billings described her “culturally relevant teaching … (as) a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (pp. 17-18). She further suggested that “this kind of moving between the two cultures lays the foundation for a skill that students will need in order to reach academic and cultural success” (p. 18).

In an article the following year, Ladson-Billings (1995a) extended the discussion of culturally relevant teaching. Here, her main objective was to “consider the needs of African American students” (p. 160). In doing so, she lauded culturally relevant pedagogy for “its centrality in the academic success of African American and other children who have not been well served by our nation’s public schools” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 159). Specifically referring to the concept of meeting the needs of the students and speaking to the notion of culturally relevant teaching, Ladson-Billings stated:

It has attempted to locate the problem of discontinuity between what students experience at home and what they experience at school in the speech and language interactions of teachers and students. These sociolinguists have suggested that if students’ home language is incorporated into the classroom, students are more likely to experience academic success. (p. 159)
However, Ladson-Billings stopped short of offering a method for teachers to better understand their students and limited the application of her pedagogy to African Americans, and in doing so, the breadth of culturally responsive teaching literature. In this respect, she is not alone.

In 2008, Croatt published a case study of a school-wide implementation of Madeline Hunter’s essential elements of effective instruction (EEEI) lesson design in a high-performing urban school. The study “sought to identify what organizational systems and structures support effective school-wide instructional approaches that foster high student performance” (p. vii). Interestingly enough, one of the systems that allowed the urban school to perform was “school-wide instructional techniques that reflect a culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy” (p. vii). Gleaned through this case study is the value of culturally responsive teaching pedagogy in a high-performing urban school.

More recently, Gant (2010) “found that teachers who work within” a so-called “culturally relevant collective responsibility framework” work tirelessly to “ensure academic success for all students,” exchange in dialogue with students that promotes connectedness, and strive to be equally fair to all African-American students (p. iii).

While both studies validate the positive effects of culturally responsive teaching, and Croatt (2008) does give voice to the non-students within a school community, neither study validates culturally responsive teaching’s effects on White students.

Brander (2011) attempted to fill in the gaps with a study that documents the experiences of four White teachers at a Latino majority multicultural school. It examined how the teachers enacted and reflected on culturally responsive teaching. The 9-month case study was conducted through classroom observations, actual participation in
classroom activities, and interviews with teachers, students, the principal, a secretary, and
the school janitor. One of the five main successful conceptual themes that was found to
produce success was the instructional strategy of “adapting curriculum to the students”
(p. 55). Although not conducted under the term “culturally responsive teaching,” the
described approach aligned with it in that it adapts the content to the students. This is an
important piece of the body of work validating culturally responsive teaching as it offers
credence from an unbiased scholar outside the critical race theorist realm. However, it
does not address the effects of culturally responsive teaching on White students, be it
positive or negative.

Civil and Khan (2001) documented the implementation process of an element of
culturally responsive teaching style—culturally relevant instruction—through a unit on
mathematical concepts from everyday experiences. The study began with a
middle-childhood teacher and university researcher collaborating to develop the project
design. The major goal of the project was to incorporate “‘students’ and families’
knowledge and experiences’ into a rigorous mathematics unit…. The teacher, Leslie
Khan, had developed a relationship with many of her students’ families and knew that
gardening was a commonly shared family activity” (Civil & Khan, 2001, p. 400). Kahn
used this knowledge to collaboratively design the garden-themed unit with a special
evening forum called “Curriculum Night and Open House” (Civil & Khan, 2001).

During the forum, the facilitators solicited parents for ideas that could be used to
strengthen the garden-mathematics theme. As a result of the meeting, the parents became
connected stakeholders in the unit, offering insight, advice, and even gardening supplies,
thus validating the students’ parents’ “knowledge and expertise” (Civil & Khan, 2001, p.
The initial parental “buy-in” created a bond that lasted throughout the unit, and as a result, strengthened the lesson’s overall effectiveness. Most notably, on a postmathematical assessment, the garden themed unit’s participants scored higher than students that did not participate in the unit.

Civil and Khan’s (2001) study offers a glimpse into the possible efficacy of expanding culturally responsive teaching practices to all students, not just nonwhite students. However, it must be noted that the authors did not describe the demographics of their student participants. Therefore, although this study offers empirical evidence of the strengths of culturally relevant instruction, it does not address the hole in the literature on the effects on White students.

Although culturally responsive teaching is widely accepted as best practice in African American classrooms and for other nonwhite students, still, there is little empirical evidence documenting unit/lesson development and implementation from beginning to end. Khan’s knowledge of her students’ families’ love of gardening is unique, and recent shifts in the educational realm are making such informal connections difficult to achieve.

In a Black History Bulletin article entitled “Respecting the traditions of our families: Cultural reference as academic motivation for diverse learners,” Perez and Judson (2007) made the case for developing a culturally referenced curriculum in general education classrooms. This call for a cultural reference was intended to increase motivation and engagement for culturally and linguistically diverse students, but it diverged from other studies in that it included not only diverse students, but also students with disabilities. The authors stated, “all students should be offered an opportunity to
engage in culturally responsive education whether in general or special education settings” (Perez & Judson, 2007, p. 21). It seems that the authors assumed that teachers know their students’ cultural backgrounds. They asserted:

In today’s general education classrooms, teachers work in diverse, inclusive environments in which they teach students who have special needs alongside their peers who are non-disabled … teaching that is based on students’ experiences and diversity (having their culture in mind) has the potential to give students the desire and ability to succeed. (p. 20)

The authors recognized the importance and the challenges of creating meaningful lessons for all learners, but, again, they did not explicitly call for an application to White students. Another weakness of this study was the failure to collect student cultural information.

Based on these researches, one can see that there is a clear need for new literature that examines culturally responsive teaching in the ever-changing educational landscape of our modern era. It needs to be identified whether or not best practices for implementing culturally responsive teaching have changed, and if so, how and why. Are high-stakes testing, increasing class sizes, and increasing demands on teachers factors worthy of study? How might teachers already be utilizing technology unique to modern classrooms to implement culturally responsive teaching? How are modern teachers learning about their students? This last question is, in this researcher’s eyes, the most imperative, as it scarcely mentioned in the literature: There is no systematic, empirically validated approach identified to collecting factual student cultural data. As the crux of
culturally response teaching, thorough consideration should be given to the methods by which student demographic data are collected, which will be addressed here.

In her efforts to popularize culturally responsive teaching, Gay (2000) wrote that it “teaches to and through the strengths of [these] students. It is culturally validating and affirming” (p. 29). She asserted that responsive teaching can be “defined as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (Gay, 2000, p. 29).

However, while Gay popularized the term, her 2000 study was not necessarily a seminal piece. It was developed from the similar notions of “culturally appropriate” (Au & Jordan, 1981), “culturally congruent” (Mohatt & Erickson, 1981), “culturally responsive” (Cazden & Leggett, 1981; Erickson & Mohan, 1982), “culturally compatible” (Jordan, 1985; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1987), and “culturally relevant” (Ladson-Billings, 1995) pedagogies.

These previous works allowed Gay to fully develop the notion of culturally responsive teaching, but now, Gay’s (2000) definition may have become outdated. This author asks: Is Gay implying that all nonethnically diverse students needs are met without any cultural considerations being made by the teacher? In other words, do nearly all nonethnically diverse students have the same cultural knowledge, prior experiences frames of reference, and performance styles as nearly all nonethnically diverse teachers? Although recognized as pedagogy rooted in critical race theory, this literature review questions the scope of applicability for culturally responsive teaching. In other words, is
culturally responsive teaching a pedagogical practice that can, should or will extend beyond “ethnically diverse” students?

**21st Century Culturally Responsive Teaching**

As previously noted, new pedagogical endeavors are becoming increasingly important in US classrooms. Diversity within our public schools is rapidly increasing (Eck, 2001; El Nasser, 2004; USCB, 2000) and educational reform still struggles to penetrate the machinations of politics. The upward diversity trend is especially alarming as class sizes within many US classrooms are also increasing. As a result, middle school and high school teachers are charged with a uniquely difficult and dynamic situation. These pressures include but are not limited to (a) navigating an increasingly diverse classroom; (b) learning classroom management for class sizes of greater than 32 students; (c) promoting community within these large class sizes; (d) promoting meaningful friendships within large classrooms; (e) building rapport with individual students among many; and, most difficultly, (f) contending with increasing demands from districts, states and federal officials (some of whom have unrealistic expectations). For these reasons, there is a high demand for pedagogical approaches that can alleviate these pressures while simultaneously promoting the learning of all students.

This current study specifically addresses the following two problems of culturally responsive teaching:

1. The current literature does not thoroughly address practical, best-practice techniques for collecting and learning about each student’s culture; and

2. The current literature does not thoroughly address culturally responsive teaching within the educational paradigms of the 21st century.
Problem one: Culture. A thorough discussion of precisely how teachers can acquire student cultural information is almost nonexistent in the current literature. This problem is important to research because (a) new research data may illuminate the most effective and time-efficient methods for teachers to learn about each student’s unique culture, and (b) new collection methods may help to minimize the teacher’s risk of stereotyping and overgeneralizing when attempting to respond to each student’s unique culture. There is a need for a standardized, well-researched tool to collect student data—without promoting stereotyping and overgeneralizing—that is compatible with the other heavy demands modern teachers have to contend with.

Ladson-Billings (1994) briefly discussed a teacher named Margaret Rossi who used an “entry questionnaire” to discover what her “students do outside of school, how they spend their leisure time, and which subject they like and which they do not” (p. 67). In Etta Hollins’ (2008) book, Culture in school learning: Revealing the deep meaning, she dedicates an entire chapter toward an approach for learning about diverse populations of students (chapter 4, p. 59). In the chapter, Hollins (2008) suggested an approach “similar to the grounded theory approach used in qualitative research” called reflective-interpretive inquiry (RIQ; p. 63). RIQ “is a process whereby educational practitioners construct meaning by reflecting on their own practice and their students’ experiential backgrounds in ways that facilitate focused and strategic inquiry concerned with improving professional competence and the benefits provided their students” (Hollins, 2008, p. 60). Outlined below is Hollins (2008) RIQ approach:

The questioning format for RIQ is divided into seven categories that include:

1. Teacher beliefs about the students he or she teaches.
2. Teacher beliefs about instructional practices.
3. The social context of classroom instruction.
4. Students’ ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
5. Understanding the community in which the students reside.
6. Understanding the students in relation to the larger societal context.
7. Students’ personal and experiential backgrounds. (p. 83)

Hollins’ RIQ model is very thorough and densely populated with ideas and suggestions. However, the researcher was unable to find empirical data on its implementation process and the nature of the 21st century demands on teachers make it unlikely that teachers will develop their own student cultural inventories.

In summary, this researcher found no published, empirical support for Hollins (2008) proposed RIQ model or for Rossi’s (Ladson-Billings, 1994) entry questionnaire. Even if such empirical data exists, the accelerating rate in which 21-st century pedagogical paradigms change and advance, serves as justification for continual research related to culturally responsive teaching.

The concern of stereotyping and overgeneralizing has come to the forefront due to the fact that “at some point over the next 10 to 12 years, the nation’s public school student body will have no one clear racial or ethnic majority (Frey, 2011)” (Boser, 2011, p. 1). Evident, then, is the fact that cultural identities are ever-changing and overgeneralizations about certain ethnic groups and races are grave threats to the implementation of culturally responsive teaching.

Applying culturally responsive teaching requires significant knowledge on the part of the teacher of each student’s culture outside of school in order to respond to each
student’s unique culture without casting their own assumptive interpretations of a student’s culture in their teaching—a far cry from simply “taking cues.”

**Problem two: Modernity.** The current literature offers little insight into the various methods and mechanisms employed by 21st century teachers who employ culturally responsive teaching practices. The problem is important to research because (a) the new research data may illuminate new characterizations of culturally responsive teaching which are reflective of the increasing demands of and pressures placed on 21st century teachers, and (b) the potentially new characterizations of culturally responsive teaching may lead to adjustments in the implementation of best practice strategies.

As noted above, scholars of culturally responsive teaching do not discuss the theory’s applicability to and its effects upon White students, which will become increasingly problematic as White students become a minority. The limited scope of applicability is based on its inferred assumption that all White students share the same culture as White teachers. This simply is not adequate for the shifting educational paradigms of the 21st century.
Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework of the research design, the methodological selection process, the problems and purposes of the research, the employed instrumentation method, the interview questions aligned to the three research questions, and how the data were analyzed.

Theoretical Framework of the Research Design

Recent evidence indicates an alarming pattern of societal relapse in the demographic disparities in the US. In Chapter 2, these disparities in education were discussed in terms of two commonly referenced areas: the achievement gap and the culture gap. In this section, these gaps among the population are discussed with respect to the three following components, as outlined by Gay and Howard (2000): “the diverse student population, the homogenous teaching force, and the demographic divide” (p. 1).

Diversity. Currently, the demographic disparities among the US student population are being both perpetuated and worsened by ever-increasing diversity. Renowned educational demographer Harold Hodgkinson (2001, 2002) noted “that although some 40% of the school population is now from racially and culturally diverse groups, this varies dramatically (from 7% to 68%), depending on the state” (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004, p. 931). Hodgkinson characterized the future demographic shifts as follows:

Future population growth in the United States continues to be uneven—61% of the population increase in the next 20 years will be Hispanic and Asian, about 40% Hispanic and 20% Asian; but then, as now, 10 states will contain 90% of the Hispanic population, 10 will contain 90% of the Asian population, and 7 will do
both. Half of the Mexican Americans live in California! In fact, most of this increased diversity will be absorbed by only about 300 of our 3,000 [US] counties. (Hodgkinson, 2002, p. 103)

According to the US Census Bureau (USCB, 2012), as of July 1, 2011, 50.4% of the US population under the age of 1 year were minorities. Furthermore, data from the USCB (2012) project that children of color will be the statistical majority of the student population near year 2018. This information is especially important and interesting when considering the statistics pertaining to the US’s future and current teacher workforce.

**Homogenous Teaching Force**

According to the U.S Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2012), in the 2007-2008 school year, 83% of teachers in public elementary schools were White, leaving teachers of color at only 17% of the workforce. Cochran-Smith and colleagues (2004) concisely articulated the relevant concerns already existing and new ones emerging in the uneven demographic distribution of teachers:

The strikingly different racial, cultural, and linguistic profiles of the nation’s student and teaching populations, coupled with continuing disparities among racial and cultural groups in school achievement and completion rates, poverty levels, and opportunities to learn from qualified teachers, have been highlighted for some time now as a pressing—if not the most pressing—issue for teacher preparation research, practice, and policy. (p. 933)

To many multicultural theorists, the uneven demographic distribution of teachers is alarming because many White European teachers are not optimally equipped nor
informed to facilitate learning for non-White students. Many multicultural education theorists hold the following beliefs in regard to the intersection of teachers and culture:

Teachers tend not to have the same cultural frames of reference and points of view as their students because, as Gay (1993) suggests, “they live in a different existential worlds” (p. 287) and thus often have difficulty functioning as role models for students (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a) or a cultural brokers and cultural agents (Gay, 1993; Goodwin, 2000) who help students bridge home-school differences. They also have difficulty constructing curriculum, instruction, and interactional patterns that are culturally responsive (Irvine, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995), which means that the students in the greatest academic need are least likely to have access to educational opportunities congruent with their life experiences.

(Cochran-Smith et al., 2004, p. 934)

Demographic Divide

This cultural disconnect illuminates the demographic divide (Gay & Howard, 2000), or “the marked disparities in educational opportunities, resources, and achievement among student groups that differ from one another racially, culturally, and socioeconomically” (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004, p. 933). The focus of this researcher, the multicultural-education-aligned pedagogical approach called culturally responsive teaching, has been formed in response to this problem. According to Cochran-Smith and colleagues (2004):

As a field of scholarly inquiry, multicultural teacher education ne will use it if it makes sense for the topic that eds studies linking theory and practice…. Particularly, we need to know what is happening to notions of multiculturalism,
diversity, equity, and social justice in the face of intense emphasis on standards, high-stakes testing, and narrow views of what counts as research.” (p. 965)

This is precisely the aim of this researcher.

Although these demographic disparities have existed for decades, multicultural education theorists continue in their steadfast approach to gradually eroding the educational divide, holding that “the educational community must take action in order to alter the disparities deeply imbedded in the American educational system” (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004, p. 933).

This researcher argues that the problem with culturally responsive teaching is twofold, with difficulties arising from both an implementation standpoint and a limiting applicability standpoint. The purpose of this study is to collect information from elementary school teachers that characterize phenomena related to culturally responsive teaching, and to use that information to illuminate methods and mechanisms currently employed by teachers.

Gay (2002) identified the following five essential components of culturally responsive teaching: (a) developing a cultural diversity knowledge base, (b) designing culturally relevant curricula, (c) demonstrating cultural caring and building a learning community, (d) implementing effective cross-cultural communication, and (e) facilitating cultural congruity in classroom instruction. By employing a mixed-methods research model with two different instruments, this study will by link the theory behind multicultural education to the practice of culturally responsive teaching.
Problems and Purposes Overview

The current literature on culturally responsive teaching does not thoroughly address practical, best-practice techniques for collecting and learning about each student’s culture. New research data should illuminate the most effective and time-efficient methods that can (a) be employed by teachers who aim to learn about each student’s unique culture, and (b) help to minimize the teacher’s risk of stereotyping and overgeneralizing when attempting to respond to each student’s unique culture.

There is also a deficit in the current literature regarding methods and mechanisms of education that reflect the ever-increasing demands and pressures placed on 21st century teachers. These deficits led this researcher to formulate the following research questions:

1. How do teachers’ understandings of culture influence their pedagogy?
2. How do teachers develop greater cultural competency?
3. How do teachers enact culturally responsive teaching?

The exploratory design of this research allowed these three research questions to examine the greater question: How do 21st century elementary school teachers perceive culturally responsive teaching and characterize its implementation process?

Sample and Population

This researcher consulted various experts in the field of teaching by sending e-mail communication pieces to different elementary school teachers in the Midwest. Two separate groups of individuals were recruited for the research. Individuals in the first group were sent e-mails that intended to recruit participants for only a Web-based survey. Individuals in the second group were sent e-mails that intended to recruit participants for
a Web-based survey and interview. The same Web-based survey was used for each group.

**Interview and Web-based survey recruitment.** The researcher, an elementary school teacher, used nonrandom convenience sampling within his existing professional relationships to identify and connect with potential participants, all of whom were elementary school teachers working in grades 3-6. The teachers being recruited were not working within the same school building as the researcher.

Before the initial recruitment e-mails were sent, the researcher drew on his prior professional relationships and used his knowledge of each potential participant’s demographics. In doing so, nonrandom judgmental sampling was considered, giving particular consideration to each potential participant’s race, gender, and school-site demographics in the hope of yielding near-to-equal representation in the sample size.

**Summative Characterization.** In all, a total of 25 Web-based survey recruitment e-mails were sent to the potential participants in both groups. One of the 25 e-mails generated an automatic response e-mail that indicated the e-mail address was invalid. Thus, it is assumed that 24 recruitment e-mails were successfully sent to potential participants. Across both groups, nine of the 24 teachers participated in the Web-based survey portion of the study. Eight of the nine teachers were female, and one of the teachers was male. Of the female teachers, six were identified as being White, one as African American, and one as Asian Indian. The male teacher identified himself as being White. Of the eight female teachers, three taught in an inner-city neighborhood school (one African American teacher, one Asian Indian teacher, one White teacher), three taught in an urban neighborhood school (all three were White teachers), and two taught in
a suburban neighborhood school (two White teachers). The White male teacher taught in an inner-city neighborhood school.

In all, seven interview recruitment e-mails were sent to potential participants in the second group: Interview and Web-based survey recruitment. Four of the seven teachers participated in the interview portion of the study. All four of those teachers also participated in the Web-based survey. Of the three of the seven teachers who did not participate in the interview process, two were African American females and one was a White male. One of those three noninterviewing participants, one of the African American females, participated in the survey portion only. In the interview portion, three of the teachers were female and one of the teachers was male. Of the female teachers, two identified as being White and one as Asian Indian. The male teacher identified himself as being White. Of the three female teachers, two taught in an inner-city neighborhood school (one Asian Indian teacher, one White teacher), and one taught in a suburban neighborhood school (one White teacher). The White male teacher taught in an inner-city neighborhood school.

**Instrumentation and Data Collection**

The purpose of this research study was to explore new, 21st century phenomena in culturally responsive teaching. A Harvard University linked document discussed the benefits of the exploration of new phenomena as a way to better “test the feasibility of a more extensive study, or determine the best methods to be used in a subsequent study” (Harvard.edu, 2013). The exploratory nature of this study provided new data that inform not just culturally responsive teaching but also multicultural education and best practice pedagogies among different types of learners.
Although the Harvard document discussed the shortcomings of having such a broad focus in that it “rarely provides definite answers to specific research issues,” it also contended that “the objective of exploratory research is to identify key issues and key variables” (Harvard.edu, 2012). To this end, Chapter 5 characterizes the newfound key issues and variables that emerged in this exploratory study. The characterizations were made possible by employing different research methodologies.

The study employed mixed-methods research techniques, using both qualitative and quantitative lines of inquiry (Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher, & Pérez-Prado, 2003). The qualitative component took the form of semistructured interviews conducted by the researcher. The second component combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches and consisted of a structured survey asking closed-ended questions with numerical responses, which was completed by the participants.

The interviews were conducted by telephone. Seidman (1991) wrote, “At the root of… interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p. 3). Additionally, the semistructured format of the interviews allowed for “open-ended questions based on the study’s central focus… to obtain specific information and enable comparison across cases” while still allowing “creativity and flexibility to ensure that each participants story is fully uncovered” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 3). In this study, it was advantageous for the interviews to be conducted over the phone, because phone interviews are more economically viable, offering advantages in that:

Researchers can take detailed notes of an interview without making participants feel uncomfortable, response bias may be reduced in the absence of facial
expressions, [and] the anonymity afforded by the phone may enable participants to be more open in their responses.

Additionally, phone interviews “improve the quality of data collection” by allowing “greater supervision and support of interviewers” and the participation of “those who may have reading/writing difficulties” (Knox & Burkard, 2009, as cited in Musselwhite, Cuff, McGregor, & King, 2006, p. 4). Interestingly, Marcus and Crane (1986) wrote that phone interviews are advantageous because the nonverbal communications that occur during an in-person interview may “introduce the potential for response bias, because participants may ‘read; interviewers’ reactions to participant responses and adjust their replies accordingly” (p. 4).

During the phone interviews, the participants were given the option to either allow or not allow the interview to be audiorecorded; however, none of the participants allowed the interview to be recorded, thus amending the original plan of recording the interviews and then transcribing them to ensure accuracy. It was also the goal of this researcher to remain consistently neutral, with the goal of not being “a source of measurement error” (Groves, 1989, p. 358).

The surveys were conducted through a Web-based program called SurveyMonkey, with the intent of exposing “each participant to exactly the same interview (survey) experience (Fontana & Frey, 2005) so that any differences are assumed to be due to variations among participants rather than to differences in the interview (survey) process itself (Singleton & Straits, 2002)” (Knox & Burkard, 2009, p. 3). According to Evans and Mathur (2005), “online surveys have significant advantages over other formats” (p. 195). For the researcher and this study’s goal, the online survey
proved to be a practical and economically efficient method to obtain additional data from participants with different demographics. Utilizing a Web-based survey was especially appropriate given the 21st century technological bent of this paper.

The survey questions with closed-ended numerical responses asked the teachers to rank the usefulness of knowing different facts about their students. By utilizing these mixed-methods approaches, it positioned the study to protect against any qualitative variance insofar as it would be “reflected in the trait and not the method” (Creswell, 1994, p. 174). Such an approach to research methods is sometimes referred to as triangulation, which is “a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation... [I]t serves also to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen” (Stake, 1994, p. 241).

**Web-based survey.** The participants were asked to complete a Web-based survey that was estimated to take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The Web-based software company, SurveyMonkey, was used to administer and collect survey data, and the agreeing participants were instructed to complete the survey within seven days of receiving the recruitment e-mail. After 7 days had passed, a follow-up e-mail was sent to all nonparticipating recipients. The follow-up e-mail encouraged participation by extending the deadline to complete the survey.

The survey consisted of four components: (a) the consent form (Appendix B), (b) the teacher profile, (c) the classroom profile, and (d) the usefulness of questions questionnaire. Figures 1 and 2 below show the survey’s teacher profile component and the classroom profile component.
The usefulness of questions questionnaire consisted of 10 questions that could be used by classroom teachers to learn about their students’ cultures. After each question, there were three subquestions. The first subquestion asked the participant to decide each
question’s degree of usefulness to him or her as a classroom teacher according to the following scale: 1 = *not useful*, 2 = *minimally useful*, 3 = *useful*, 4 = *fairly useful*, and 5 = *very useful*. The second subquestion asked the participant to give an example of exactly how such a response by a student could be used in the classroom. The third subquestion allowed for optional comments or suggestions to the original question. Table 1 below lists the 10 questions the participants were asked to consider.

### Table 1

*Usefulness of Questions Questionnaire*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. At home, I live with (including pet):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. When I do a good job at school, I want this person to know:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Non-school day clubs, organizations or private lessons that I participate in are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. At home, my family celebrates the following holidays:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Some of the chores and responsibilities that I have at home are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Something that people don’t know about me is that:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. When I grow up, I will:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My favorite TV show and/or book is:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Three of my favorite songs right now are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My favorite snack food is:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Phone interview.** Participants were asked to participate in a phone interview with the researcher in addition to the Web-based survey, both of which combined were estimated to have taken approximately 45 minutes. The time and date for conducting the phone interviews was mutually agreed upon through one or more of the following methods: (a) e-mail, (b) phone communication, and (c) the consent form (Appendix C). Table 2 below lists the 12 guiding questions used in the interview.
Table 2

Guiding Interview Questions

1. How do you define culture?
2. What role, if any, do you see culture playing in education?
3. What role, if any, do you see culture playing in your school?
4. What role, if any, do you see culture playing in your classroom?
5. How do you define student-culture?
6. What role, if any, does a student-culture play in effective teaching?
   6.A. Planning lessons?
   6.B. Teaching?
7. Tell me about a time you may have experienced a cultural conflict between a student and yourself?
8. How do you get to know your students?
9. How do you learn about your students and their cultures?
10. How do you adapt your teaching style or your approach to teaching, so to align it with your students’ cultures?
11. When you learn about a student’s culture, how do you decided if you’ll use the new information in your teaching and/or in planning?
12. What do you think will be make you a more effective teacher? (a question to ask at the end of the interview)

In this study, the participating teachers’ names and their schools have been assigned a pseudonym. Participants’ gender, race, and his/her classroom/school demographics will be associated with their given pseudonyms.

With the vast amount of qualitative data, quantitative data, and the potentially dynamic insights yielded from the study’s interviews and Web-based survey results, four interview participants and nine Web-based survey participants indicate an adequate and accomplishable research task.

Data Analysis

Data for analysis were derived from four phone interviews and results from nine completed surveys. The initial analysis began by transcribing during the interview
process, reviewing the transcriptions, and then manually coding the data, which lead to the nascent formation process of extracting meaning from within/ across the data. Once the data were transcribed, reviewed, and coded, they were compared and contrasted for common patterns and themes. From here, the emergent patterns and themes were placed within the literary context of Gay’s (2002) five essential components of culturally responsive teaching. Within this framework, the data were visually displayed using graphs and tables, which allowed for a comparative analysis. Figure 2 below depicts Gay’s (2002) five essential components of culturally responsive teaching.

**Figure 2**

*Five Essential Components of Culturally Responsive Teaching (Gay, 2002)*

Gay (2002) acknowledged that the five essential components outlined are merely “brief sketch[es]” (p. 106) for understanding the essential “knowledge, attitudes, and skills” (p. 106) required for teachers to facilitate culturally responsive teaching.
Acknowledging the limits of an analysis within Gay’s (2002) framework is important because, in the years since her publication, many new paradigms have been ushered into society and the classroom, such as the relatively new technological advances around social networking and social media. Although her work has been validated in more ways than one, Gay (2002) asserted that “there is much more to know, think and do” (p. 114).

To this end, the data analysis of this research paper utilizes a matrix format. The matrix below was created specifically for the data analyses of this research study, and the text within it is almost entirely made up of excerpts taken from Gay. The few phrases that are not direct quotations were simply used to better deliver her characterizations.

The data that were generated from the interviews and surveys were inserted into the “evidence” section of the matrix to which it most closely aligned. From here, the data were analyzed and then characterized in terms of patterns, themes, strengths, and weaknesses in order to address our original research questions:

1. How do teachers’ understandings of culture influence their pedagogy?
2. How do teachers develop greater cultural competency?
3. How do teachers enact culturally responsive teaching?

The exploratory design of this research allowed these three research questions to examine the greater question: How do 21st century elementary School teachers perceive culturally responsive teaching and characterize its implementation process?

Summary

This study consulted various experts in the field of teaching by sending e-mail communications to different elementary school teachers in the American Midwest. Two different types of instruments were used in this qualitative study: (a) a
researcher-completed instrument in the form of interviews and (b) a subject-completed instrument in the form of a survey. Both of the instruments used in this study included questions and prompts related to (a) each participant’s teaching background, (b) classroom demographics, (c) understanding of culture, (d) understanding of culturally responsive pedagogies, (e) understanding of his or her students’ cultures, (f) philosophy of teaching, (g) philosophy of education, (h) characterization of his or her teaching pedagogies, and (i) questions related to past real-life classroom examples (or potential future examples) in which some form of cultural knowledge was strategically used in the classroom. The successful methods and mechanisms were characterized and analyzed within the framework of Gay’s (2002) five essential components of culturally responsive teaching.
Chapter IV: Results

Culturally responsive teaching, one pedagogical approach of multicultural education, is capable of meeting and fulfilling many of the current and future dynamic needs of our education system. The purpose of this study was to collect information from elementary school teachers that characterized phenomena related to culturally responsive teaching and to use that information to illuminate methods and mechanisms currently employed by these teachers in modern educational practices. To that end, data were collected through the use of phone interviews and a Web-based survey and then formulated to address the following research questions:

1. How do teachers’ understandings of culture influence their pedagogy?
2. How do teachers develop greater cultural competency?
3. How do teachers enact culturally responsive teaching?

These questions were designed to address the greater question: How do 21st century elementary school teachers perceive culturally responsive teaching and characterize its implementation process?

Organization of Data Analysis

The subsequent organization of the data analysis is presented in seven sections. The first section presents the descriptive characteristics of the study’s participants (e.g., demographics on the participants and the schools in which they are employed), and includes information on the types of coding used in the study. The second section presents a brief overview of the instruments used in the study, and includes information on the types of coding used in the study. The third section presents an overview of the research findings, and includes information on the coding used to present data within a
matrix. The fourth section presents an analysis and evaluation of the findings. The fifth section presents a summary of the findings.

**Presentation of Descriptive Characteristics of Participants**

Across both groups, nine of the recruited 24 teachers participated in the Web-based survey. Eight of the nine teachers were female, and one of the teachers was male. Of the female teachers, six were identified as being White, one as African American, and one an Asian Indian. The male teacher identified himself as being White. Of the eight female teachers, three taught in an inner-city neighborhood school (one African American teacher, one Asian Indian teacher, one White teacher), three taught in an urban neighborhood school (all three were White teachers), and two taught in a suburban neighborhood school (two White teachers). The White male teacher taught in an inner-city neighborhood school.

Four of the seven teachers participated in a phone interview. All four of those teachers also participated in the Web-based survey. In the interview, three of the teachers were female, and one of the teachers was male. Of the female teachers, two identified as being White and one as Asian Indian. The male teacher identified himself as being White. Of the three female teachers, two taught in an inner-city neighborhood school (one Asian Indian teacher, one White teacher), and one taught in a suburban neighborhood school (one White teacher). The White male teacher taught in an inner-city neighborhood school.

Each participant was assigned a pseudonym. Participants’ gender, race, and classroom/school demographics will be associated with their given pseudonyms. In the study, “Eric” is the only male. The study employed axial coding. The participants’
demographics were coded assigned symbols, which allowed the data to be concisely presented in a more meaningful way. For example, in the following demographic statement, “Molly is a White 4th grade teacher. She teaches math, science, reading, and writing in a suburban school,” is consolidated to, “Molly, W_4_All_Suburban.” The format of the coding contains the following place values: ethnicity_grade/s taught_subjects taught_school’s neighborhood classification. Table 3 below lists the coded symbols for demographics.

Table 3

Demographic Coding Symbols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Coding Symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White =</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American =</td>
<td>AA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Indian =</td>
<td>AI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Grade Teacher =</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Grade Teacher =</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Grade Teacher =</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Grade Teacher =</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches Math =</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches Science =</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches Reading =</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches Writing =</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches Math, Science, Reading, Writing =</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches in an Inner-city</td>
<td>Inner-City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches in an Urban School =</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches in an Suburban School =</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 below presents the participants’ demographics using the demographic coding symbols.
**Table 4**

*Participants’ Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Demographics by Coding Symbols</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emily*</td>
<td>W_3_All_Suburban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vallie</td>
<td>W_5_Math_Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>W_3_Math&amp;Science_Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pooja*</td>
<td>AI_4-5-6_Math&amp;Science_Inner-city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nia</td>
<td>A_3_Math&amp;Science_Inner-city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molly</td>
<td>W_4_All_Suburban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric*</td>
<td>W_4_Reading_Inner-city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>W_6_Math&amp;Science_Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara*</td>
<td>W_4_Math&amp;SocialStudies_Inner-city</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Interview Participant.

Table 5 below lists the demographics of the participants’ students.
Table 5

Participants’ Students’ Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>&quot;at-risk&quot; students:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emily*</td>
<td>W_3_All_Suburban</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vallie</td>
<td>W_5_Math_Urban</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>W_3_Math&amp;Science_Urban</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pooja*</td>
<td>A1_4-5-6_Math&amp;Science_Inner-city</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nia</td>
<td>A_3_Math&amp;Science_Inner-city</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molly</td>
<td>W_4_All_Suburban</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric*</td>
<td>W_4_Reading_Inner-city</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>W_6_Math&amp;Science_Urban</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara*</td>
<td>W_4_Math&amp;SocialStudies_Inner-city</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 indicates that Cindy is a classroom teacher, but she is also employed in other capacities. Cindy’s student caseload reflects the students in her full-time classroom and those not. For the purpose of protecting Cindy’s anonymity, nothing else will be disclosed.

Overview of Instruments

Both the phone interviews and Web-based survey used in this study included questions and prompts related to each participant’s: (a) teaching background, (b) classroom demographics, (c) understanding of culture, (d) understanding of culturally responsive pedagogies, (e) understanding of his or her students’ cultures, (f) philosophy
of teaching, (g) philosophy of education, (h) characterization of his or her teaching pedagogies, and (i) questions related to past real-life classroom examples (or potential future examples) in which some form of cultural knowledge was strategically used in the classroom.

After the initial data collection, survey data were coded and disaggregated by theme, and interview survey data were coded and disaggregated into the matrix so as to be analyzed within the context of Gay’s (2002) five essential components of culturally responsive teaching: (a) developing a cultural diversity knowledge base, (b) designing culturally relevant curricula, (c) demonstrating cultural caring and building a learning community, (d) implementing effective cross-cultural communication, and (e) facilitating cultural congruity in classroom instruction.

**Survey instrument.** The survey consisted of four components:

1. The consent form (Appendix B)
2. The teacher profile
3. The classroom profile
4. The Usefulness of Questions Questionnaire.

Demographic data from the first three components have already been discussed in Chapter 3. Nine teachers participated in the Web-based survey, and all were asked the same 10 questions.

The directions of Web-based survey were as follows: “The next set of questions consists of ones that could be used by classroom teachers to learn about their students’ cultures. You’ll notice that after each question, there are three sub questions. The first sub question asks you to decide on each question’s degree of usefulness to you as a classroom
teacher: 1 = not useful, 2 = minimally useful, 3 = useful, 4 = fairly useful, and 5 = very useful. The second sub question asks you to give an example of how a student’s response can be used in the classroom. The third sub question allows for optional comments or suggestions to the original question.”

The participants’ ranked responses are marked in the appropriate box with his or her demographic coding. Marking the box in this way allowed for the data to be presented and understood at another sublevel of understanding. For example, the first question in the survey asked the participants, “At home, I live with (including pet)…,” which Emily marked as useful. Rather than displaying the data with a typical check, the demographic coding symbol is utilized so as to give insight into Emily and her response. Presenting the data in this way allows the reader to quickly understand that Emily is a White 3rd grade teacher who teaches all subjects in a suburban school. Furthermore, presenting the data in this format allowed for easy cross-analyses among teachers with similar and different demographics. Following the participants’ ranking responses were the participants’ optional comments or suggestions to the original question. Below each question were the following three variables, with a value associated to each: (a) rating average, (b) rating count, and (c) optional feedback count. The rating average is the average response score for the question. The rating count was the number of participants who ranked the question’s usefulness. The optional feedback count was the number of participants who submitted any form of optional feedback.

One unexpected but noteworthy instance occurred, which is related to the survey. After the interview with Sara was completed, she was notified that she would be sent the online survey via e-mail. She responded, “I don’t want to take it at school, and I can’t
take it at home because I don’t have Internet access. Can we do it over the phone?” to which this researcher responded, “Yes.” Three days later, the Web-based survey was administered to her over the telephone. Administering the web-based survey via the telephone only to Sara may be considered a limitation, as the other participants were not given the opportunity. As a result of this collection method, Sara may have withheld certain types of information or altered her message. On the contrary though, Sara’s data may be considered especially valuable when compared to the other survey participants, because she is unique in that she does not have Internet access at home.

In the presentation of data, each of the survey questions was coded to “SQ,” meaning “survey question,” followed by the question number. For example, survey question 2 is coded to SQ.2 (see Table 6). The results are discussed in the next chapter.

**Table 6**

*Survey Questions Coded*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Assessment</th>
<th>Coding Symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey Question 1 =</td>
<td>SQ.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Question 2 =</td>
<td>SQ.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Question 3 =</td>
<td>SQ.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Question 4 =</td>
<td>SQ.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Question 5 =</td>
<td>SQ.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Question 6 =</td>
<td>SQ.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Question 7 =</td>
<td>SQ.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Question 8 =</td>
<td>SQ.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Question 9 =</td>
<td>SQ.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Question 10 =</td>
<td>SQ.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interview instrument.** Four teachers agreed to be interviewed, and each was asked the same 12 guiding interview questions. In the presentation of data, each of the guiding questions was coded to “IQ,” meaning “interview question,” followed by the question number (see Table 7). For example, interview question 2 is coded to IQ.2.
Table 7

*Interview Questions Coded*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Assessment</th>
<th>Coding Symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview Question 1 =</td>
<td>IQ.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Question 2 =</td>
<td>IQ.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Question 3 =</td>
<td>IQ.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Question 4 =</td>
<td>IQ.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Question 5 =</td>
<td>IQ.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Question 6 =</td>
<td>IQ.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Question 7 =</td>
<td>IQ.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Question 8 =</td>
<td>IQ.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Question 9 =</td>
<td>IQ.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Question 10 =</td>
<td>IQ.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Question 11 =</td>
<td>IQ.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Question 12 =</td>
<td>IQ.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For some participants, follow-up questions were asked for purposes of clarification and/or elaboration. The follow up questions have been placed in italics with no reference number. For purposes of clarification and to maintain the anonymity of the interviewees, anecdotal comments or pseudonyms were entered into the transcripts. These inserted comments or pseudonyms are encased with brackets.

One unexpected but noteworthy instance occurred during the interview process. After nearly 41 minutes of being interviewed, Pooja was unable to answer the last question, IQ.12, because she had a prior commitment and the interview lasted longer than she had anticipated.

**Overview of Findings**

In this section, overviews of the findings are presented in two subsections. The first subsection is an overview of the interview findings. The second subsection is an overview of the survey questions. The order is such, with the next major section offering
an analysis and evaluation of these findings as they pertain to the three subresearch questions.

**Interview findings.** For purposes of connecting practice to theory, the researcher created a special matrix for the interview findings. The matrix serves as a literary and graphical framework to theoretically position and present the research data as it relates to research sub questions one and two. In this subsection, only an overview of the interview findings is presented through the matrix. The next major section offers an analysis and evaluation of these findings as they pertain to research sub questions one and two.

The matrix is organized around Gay’s (2002) five essential components of culturally responsive teaching, but it also includes other theorists. The various components of the matrix have all been coded to represent each section in each component as follows: In the code MC.3.M2, “MC.3” refers to matrix component 3, “demonstrating cultural caring and building a learning community”, and “M2” narrows the referencing code to the second main idea: “Building community among diverse learners is another essential element of culturally responsive teaching… The emphasis should be on holistic or integrated learning” (Gay, 2002, p. 110).” In the same vein, MC.1.B refers to matrix component 1, section B: “Some of which are more important for teachers to know… are ethnic groups’ cultural values, traditions, communication, learning styles, contributions, and relational patterns” (Gay, 2002, p. 107).

Below each lettered section of the matrix is a section titled “evidence”. References to these sections may be articulated by referencing—for example: “evidence in MC.1.B.” The evidence sections consist of excerpts and coded data that were generated from the interviews, where interview questions were coded by number—for
example, IQ.2 = interview question 2. Interview data were put in the “evidence” section of the matrix to which it was most closely aligned. For evidence that was either misguided or absent from the interview data, the evidence section is noted as, “(Blank)”, and those sections are discussed in a different section of this chapter. The completed matrix is presented below:
Matrix Component 1

| MC.1: Developing a Cultural Diversity Knowledge Base | M. Main Idea: “Explicit knowledge about cultural diversity is imperative to meeting the educational needs of ethnically diverse students” | R. Rationale: “‘We can’t teach what we don’t know.’ This statement applies to knowledge both of student populations and subject matter” (Gay, 2002, p. 106). |

EVIDENCE FOR MAIN IDEA AND RATIONALE:

“Probably through a lot of discussions and writing assignments when they tell me about what they might have done over the summer, etc. Usually you can get a pretty good snapshot of the kids by what their summer experiences were.” –IQ.9.Emily

“Hands-on observation experience, that’s the only. No questionnaire will help you figure it out. I’ve been here for [several] years, and I’m just figuring it out.” –IQ.9.Eric

A. “Teachers’ knowledge includes understanding the cultural characteristics and contributions of different ethnic groups (Hollins, King, & Hayman, 1994; King, Hollins, & Hayman, 1997; Pai, 1990; Smith, 1998).” (Gay, 2002, p. 107)

EVIDENCE:

“I get to know them through having dialogue with them, through their parents, I ask them if they are on a team, this is the example that I’ve been given by my dad: You see something about a person that is uniquely them and you do something to validate that within them. Because that’s what all people want, to be noticed and validated.” –IQ.8.Sara

“One time I took a girl and her friend to visit the African American culture center … and since I knew they were taking an African dance class, I knew they would enjoy it. I’ve also gone to skate parties and basketball games to get to know them outside of school.” –IQ.9.Sara

“All the characteristics that go into making a person who they are, mainly from the environment surrounding them. Some of those characteristics include family tradition, people’s dress, holidays, and just other things that a particular person might celebrate based on their environment or the people around them.” –IQ.1.Emily

“Culture consists of the values, traditions, how you live your day and regular life. Every culture does different things in different ways.” –IQ.1.Pooja
“As the social background that you come from.” “What do you mean by ‘social background’?” Your schema, you know—the community you grew up in, how it basically ran. Are you in a lower, economically, background project? Are you Jewish? You don’t necessarily have to be Jewish but that tells me that is your schema.” –IQ.1.Eric

“I define culture as belief, particular practices, what types of food you eat, type of music you listen to, the type of rituals that you have that connect certain communities.” “What would be a ritual?” I guess such as going to church and certain holidays that you celebrate.” –IQ.1.Sara

“You have to find out what kids find offensive and what are the children sensitive to.” –IQ.2.Eric

“I usually send home a sheet at the beginning of the year—special interests, hobbies, things they’re good and not good at doing, things that create anxiety for me—it was just a one-sided page of questions.” “Did you ever reference the special interests, hobbies, etc. again after viewing them once?” “No, not usually. Usually, culture-wise, the best information that I get is if they are bilingual, and I would have never known about it had I not asked because they never talked about it…. One spoke English and one spoke French. “Did you use that knowledge at all in the class?” “Probably only when we covered culture in the 3rd grade curriculum.” –IQ.8.Emily

“I do more than just ‘what’s your favorite ice-cream, food, etc.’” –IQ.8.Eric

B. “Some of which are more important for teachers to know … are ethnic groups’ cultural values, traditions, communication, learning styles, contributions, and relational patterns.” (Gay, 2002, p. 107)

EVIDENCE:
“Cultural background is important, especially as it pertains to the family… You are going to have students coming to school ready to learn and have a lot of experiences already.” –IQ.2.Emily

“I was raised in a different culture. I noticed that the culture decided how the education is…. Some value education more than others … and even how you learn and approach things … culture really defines that.” –IQ.2.Pooja

“They are not motivated to learn…. They [the parents] will call me and tell me that they don’t want their kids to do homework because they have a good life and they are busy.” –IQ.4.Pooja
“I do as much cooperative learning as I can, station work, the Kagen program’s collaborative and hands-on approach to learning strategies are good, small work. I try to use songs to learn their multiplication … or direct instruction so they can all respond together, calling out the answers that they wrote on their mini whiteboards, to their math problem.” –IQ.6.A.Sara

C. “Teachers need to know (a) which ethnic groups give priority to communal living and cooperative problem solving and how these preferences affect educational motivation, aspiration, and task performance; (b) how different ethnic groups’ protocols of appropriate ways for children to interact with adults are exhibited in instructional settings; and (c) the implications of gender role socialization in different ethnic groups for implementing equity initiatives in classroom instruction.” (Gay, 2002, p. 107)

**EVIDENCE:**

“Many times they will bring a family member or friend when they show up at school … grandmother, grandfather, a friend.” –IQ.3.Sara
### Matrix Component 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designing Culturally Relevant Curricula</th>
<th>M. Main Idea: “Culturally responsive teaching is acquiring detailed factual information about the cultural particularities of specific ethnic groups (e.g., African, Asian, Latino, and Native American).… There is a place for cultural diversity in every subject taught in schools.” (Gay, 2002, p. 107)</th>
<th>R. Rationale: “This is needed to make schooling more interesting and stimulating for, representative of, and responsive to ethnically diverse students.” (Gay, 2002, p. 107)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### EVIDENCE FOR MAIN IDEA AND RATIONALE:

“I think about social studies, because the students may not understand the cultural experiences in the text are far different. 8-, 9-, and 10-year olds are not always aware of other cultures in my school.” –IQ.6.A.Emily

**A.** Teachers know about and designs curriculum around or within “very significant contributions of ethnic groups in science, technology, medicine, math, theology, ecology, peace, law, and economics.” (Gay, 2002, p. 107)

**EVIDENCE:**
(Blank)

**B.** “Culturally responsive teachers know how to determine the multicultural strengths and weaknesses of curriculum designs and instructional materials and make the changes necessary to improve their overall quality.” (Gay, 2002, p. 108)

**EVIDENCE:**
(Blank)

**C.** Culturally responsive teachers use “a wide range of ethnic individuals and groups; contextualizing issues within race, class, ethnicity, and gender; and including multiple kinds of knowledge and perspectives. It also recognizes that these broad-based analyses are necessary to do instructional justice to the complexity, vitality, and potentiality of ethnic and cultural diversity.” (Gay, 2002, p. 108)

**EVIDENCE:**
(Blank)

**D.** “Culturally responsive teachers are critically conscious of the power of the symbolic curriculum as an instrument of teaching and use it to help convey important information, values, and actions about ethnic and cultural diversity. They ensure that the images displayed in classrooms represent a wide variety of age, gender, time, place, social class, and positional diversity within and across ethnic groups and that they are accurate extensions of what is taught through the formal curriculum.” (Gay, 2002, pp. 108-109)

**EVIDENCE:**
(Blank)
E. “Culturally responsive teaching includes thorough and critical analyses of how ethnic groups and experiences are presented in mass media and popular culture. Teachers need to understand how media images of African, Asian, Latino, Native, and European Americans are manipulated; the effects they have on different ethnic groups; what formal school curricula and instruction can do to counteract their influences; and how to teach students to be discerning consumers of and resisters to ethnic information disseminated through the societal curriculum.” (Gay, 2002, p. 109)

EVIDENCE:
(Blank)
### Matrix Component 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Culturally responsive teaching is creating classroom climates that are conducive to learning for ethnically diverse students.… Teachers need to know how to use cultural scaffolding in teaching these students—that is, using their own cultures and experiences to expand their intellectual horizons and academic achievement.”</td>
<td>“This begins by demonstrating culturally sensitive caring and building culturally responsive learning communities.” (Gay, 2002, p. 109). “Pedagogical actions are as important as (if not more important than) multicultural curriculum designs in implementing culturally responsive teaching… Caring is a moral imperative, a social responsibility, and a pedagogical necessity.” (Gay, 2002, p. 109)</td>
<td>“Building community among diverse learners is another essential element of culturally responsive teaching…. The emphasis should be on holistic or integrated learning.” (Gay, 2002, p. 110)</td>
<td>“Many students of color grow up in cultural environments where the welfare of the group takes precedence over the individual and where individuals are taught to pool their resources to solve problems.” (Gay, 2002, p. 110)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### EVIDENCE FOR MAIN IDEA AND RATIONALE:

“I mean, I hear teachers all the time, ‘Oh my God, what is going on with this kid?’ I respond by saying, ‘Well have you called his/her parent?’ And they respond by saying, ‘What’s the point?’ Most of the time they are supportive, because I’ve built a relationship with them. If you don’t make a relationship with the parents, it’s twice as hard to do your job. The students need to see that the parent at home is communicating with the parent (teacher) at school.” –IQ.6.Sara
“My fellow teacher is shocked that I know my parents’ names, and he asked, “How do you know their names?” I tell him that I make a point to know their names and background and their family situation. I call my parents, sometimes daily on a weekly basis.… They behave better because I know their Aunt Sharron, that I know their grandma, I taught their brother or sister, I send an incomplete assignment with the student, her brother, and the planner. I make a point to know who the brothers and sisters are, I make a point to immerse myself, to make sure they are successful in my classroom.” –IQ.6.Sara

“You have to know what your kids are coming to school with in terms of culture. If you know that they are coming to school without any of the experiences that you’re talking about, then you would need to know that.” –IQ.6.B.Emily

A. “Culturally responsive caring also places ‘teachers in an ethical, emotional, and academic partnership with ethnically diverse students, a partnership that is anchored in respect, honor, integrity, resource sharing, and a deep belief in the possibility of transcendence’ (Gay, 2000, p. 52).” (Gay, 2002, p. 109)

EVIDENCE:
(Blank)

B. “It requires that teachers use ‘knowledge and strategic thinking to decide how to act in the best interests of others … [and] binds individuals to their society, to their communities, and to each other’ (Webb, Wilson, Corbett, & Mordecai, 1993, pp. 33-34).” (Gay, 2002, p. 109)

EVIDENCE:
“When you’re doing research for a project, I do the same for a kid. You know, their parents, their grandparents.… You know, school wide, I say ‘Hi’ to students and use their names. I try to have conversations with them to find out what interests them.” –IQ.9.Sara

“Even now, when my kids are growing up, even if I don’t agree, I’ll talk so that I don’t offend them.” –IQ.2.Pooja

C. “Teachers have to care so much about ethnically diverse students and their achievement that they accept nothing less than high-level success from them and work diligently to accomplish it (Foster, 1997; Kleinfeld, 1974, 1975).” (Gay, 2002, p. 109)

EVIDENCE:
“I started adapting since I started teaching! Like I said, I … still have different expectations for education for many of my students than they expect of me. Even though most student and their parents don’t want spring break and summer homework packets, I still give it to them.” –IQ.10.Pooja

“My culture education is so valued, when I teach I need to give my students the maximum that they can…. So I kind of work extra hard and they get working right away.” –IQ.3.Pooja

“I always give homework packets during spring break, summer break.” –IQ.3.Pooja
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>D.</strong></td>
<td>“Culturally responsive teachers understand how conflicts between different work styles may interfere with academic efforts and outcomes, and they understand how to design more communal learning environments.” (Gay, 2002, p. 110)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EVIDENCE:</strong></td>
<td>(Blank)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E.</strong></td>
<td>“Contrary to the tendency in conventional teaching to make different types of learning (cognitive, physical, emotional) discrete, culturally responsive teaching deals with them in concert. Personal, moral, social, political, cultural, and academic knowledge and skills are taught simultaneously.” (Gay, 2002, p. 110)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EVIDENCE:</strong></td>
<td>(Blank)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F.</strong></td>
<td>“Culturally responsive teachers help students to understand that knowledge has moral and political elements and consequences, which obligate them to take social action to promote freedom, equality, and justice for everyone.” (Gay, 2002, p. 110)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EVIDENCE:</strong></td>
<td>“I feel sometimes that I put too much stress on the education, and I tell them that no one can take their education away from them.” –IQ.3.Pooja</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Matrix Component 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MC.4: Implementing Effective Cross-Cultural Communication</th>
<th>M. Main Idea:</th>
<th>R. Rationale:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Porter and Samovar (1991) explained that culture influences ‘what we talk about; how we talk about it; what we see, attend to, or ignore; how we think; and what we think about’ (p. 21). Montagu and Watson (1979) added that communication is the ground of meeting and the foundation of community’ (p. vii) among human beings.” (Gay, 2002, p. 110)</td>
<td>“Without this ‘meeting’ and ‘community’ in the classroom, learning is difficult to accomplish for some students.” (Gay, 2002, p. 110)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. “The intellectual thought of students from different ethnic groups is culturally encoded (Cazden, John, & Hymes, 1985) in that its expressive forms and substance are strongly influenced by cultural socialization. Teachers need to be able to decipher these codes to teach ethnically diverse students more effectively.” (Gay, 2002, pp. 110-111)

**EVIDENCE:**
(Blank)

**B.** Ethnic communication styles have many implications for culturally responsive teaching. Understanding them is necessary to avoid violating the cultural values of ethnically diverse students in instructional communications; to better decipher their intellectual abilities, needs, and competencies; and to teach them style or code-shifting skills so that they can communicate in different ways with different people in different settings for different purposes. Therefore, multicultural communication competency is an important goal and component of culturally responsive teaching.” (Gay, 2002, p. 111)

**EVIDENCE:**
“Yes, the colloquialism ‘we is’ and that is perfectly acceptable, but I’m trying to teach them ‘we are’.” –IQ.3.Eric
C. Culturally responsive teachers know “how the communication styles of different ethnic groups reflect cultural values and shape learning behaviors and how to modify classroom interactions to better accommodate them.” (Gay, 2002, p. 111)

**EVIDENCE:**
“I hate doing this, but you speak like them, which may be different than what I teach in the classroom, but it shows that I care more about you. You have to immerse yourself in the culture to effectively teach.” –IQ.6.Eric

D. “The cultural markers and nuances embedded in the communicative behaviors of highly ethnically affiliated Latino, Native, Asian, and African Americans are difficult to recognize, understand, accept, and respond to without corresponding cultural knowledge of these ethnic groups.” (Gay, 2002, p. 111)

**EVIDENCE:**
(Blank)
Matrix Component 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MC.5: Facilitating Cultural Congruity in Classroom Instruction</th>
<th>M. Main Idea:</th>
<th>R. Rationale:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This component deals with the actual delivery of instruction to ethnically diverse students.” (Gay, 2002, p. 112)</td>
<td>“Cultural characteristics provide the criteria for determining how instructional strategies should be modified for ethnically diverse students.” (Gay, 2002, p. 112)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. “Further analysis of teaching behaviors reveals that a high percentage of instructional time is devoted to giving examples, scenarios, and vignettes to demonstrate how information, principles, concepts, and skills operate in practice. These make up the pedagogical bridges that connect prior knowledge with new knowledge, the known with the unknown, and abstractions with lived realities. Teachers need to develop rich repertoires of multicultural instructional examples to use in teaching ethnically diverse students.” (Gay, 2002, p. 113)

EVIDENCE:
“…I’ve already mentioned a couple, like teaching grammar, but also finding materials that they are interested in reading.” –IQ.4.Eric

“Unfortunately, they know things that I never would have dreamt about knowing when I was 10, but they know things about sex, drugs, gangs, crime, you know—it’s something they see every day.” –IQ.4.Eric

“You have to match material to that is appropriate, and I have to walk that line where it is appropriate for a 10 year old.” –IQ.4.Eric

B. “The internal structure of ethnic learning styles includes at least eight key components (which are configured differently for various groups): preferred content; ways of working through learning tasks; techniques for organizing and conveying ideas and thoughts; physical and social settings for task performance; structural arrangements of work, study, and performance space; perceptual stimulation for receiving, processing, and demonstrating comprehension and competence; motivations, incentives, and rewards for learning; and interpersonal interactional styles. These dimensions provide different points of entry and emphasis for matching instruction to the learning styles of students from various ethnic groups. To respond most effectively to them, teachers need to know how they are configured for different ethnic groups as well as the patterns of variance that exist within the configurations.” (Gay, 2002, p. 113)

EVIDENCE:
“The school, depending on the neighborhood, and the geographic neighbor depends on the social norms.” –IQ.2.Eric
C. Teachers “develop rich multicultural instructional examples to use in teaching ethnically diverse students... The process begins with understanding the role and prominence of examples in the instructional process, knowing the cultures and experiences of different ethnic groups, harvesting teaching examples from these critical sources, and learning how to apply multicultural examples in teaching other knowledge and skills—for instance, using illustrations of ethnic architecture, fabric designs, and recipes in teaching geometric principles, mathematical operations, and propositional thought. Or using various samples of ethnic literature in teaching the concept of genre and reading skills such as comprehension, inferential thinking, vocabulary building, and translation. Research indicates that culturally relevant examples have positive effects on the academic achievement of ethnically diverse students.” (Gay, 2002, p. 113)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVIDENCE:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I’ve already mentioned a couple, like teaching grammar, but also finding materials that they are interested in reading.” –IQ.4.Eric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Unfortunately, they know things that I never would have dreamt about knowing when I was 10, but they know things about sex, drugs, gangs, crime, you know—it’s something they see every day.” –IQ.4.Eric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“So you have to match material to that is appropriate, and I have to walk that line where it is appropriate for a 10 year old.” –IQ.4.Eric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If I want to teach a lesson about decimals, I don’t talk about [the restaurant, The Dolly] [a pseudonym for a prestigious and expensive restaurant in the region]—instead, McDonalds.” –IQ.6.A.Eric</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Survey findings.** For purposes of connecting practice to theory, the researcher created a web-based survey primarily intended to elicit data that would inform research sub question three: *How do teachers enact culturally responsive teaching?* The web-based survey asked participants to rank and discuss the potential value in and uses of knowing specific cultural facts about their students. The survey data indicated that the participants have an understanding of some ways in which to integrate student knowledge into the curriculum, but as the interview findings indicated, evidence for implementing this understanding is limited. In this subsection, only an overview of the survey findings is presented. The next major section offers an analysis and evaluation of these findings as they pertain to research sub question three.
The survey data indicated that a majority of the teachers ranked eight out of the 10 “usefulness” questions as either useful, fairly useful, or very useful. SQ.1 ranked the highest of all 10 questions with six out of 10 (66.7%) teachers finding it very useful. SQ.1—“At home, I live with ... (including pets)”—generated interesting feedback from Karen who summarizes the general tenor of the responses. Karen stated:

The question gives information about who to communicate with, primarily regarding academic or behavior issues. This would also provide insight into available support for students. There should be some consideration given to the possibility the student lives in more than one home.

Sara’s eye-opening response reflected the challenges of teaching in the inner city. Sara stated, “Some kids live with their grandparents... I have a kid who saw his mom get murdered in front of him, so I need to know that information.”

The survey data indicated that a majority of the teachers ranked two out of the 10 usefulness questions as minimally useful. SQ.9 ranked the second lowest of all 10 questions with three out of the 10 (33.3%) of the teachers designating it as minimally useful. One out of the 10 teachers ranked SQ.9—“Three of my favorite songs right now are...”—as not useful. Of the three teachers who ranked SQ.9 as minimally useful, only Pooja commented, “I am not sure.” Emily scored SQ.9 as not useful, but she did not comment further. Cindy ranked SQ.9 as very useful, and she stated, “This is a look into their culture and how they are adapting to the world.” Nia ranked SQ.9 as very useful because it gave insight into “what kind of music the child is exposed to, language heard, and supervisions at home.”
SQ.10—“My favorite snack food is...”—ranked the lowest of all 10 questions with four out of the 10 (44.4%) teachers ranking it *minimally useful* and one ranking it as *not useful*. Of the four teachers who ranked SQ.10 as *minimally useful*, two commented. Vallie thought that knowledge of favorite snack foods could be used to inform the teaching of unit rates, weight, and volume; Sara stated, “I’m not a dietitian, so I really don’t need to know what your favorite snack is.” Emily scored SQ.10 as *not useful*, without further comment. Cindy was the only teacher to rank SQ.10 as *fairly useful*, and she commented, “This is good for sharing experiences to demonstrate the differences in our tastes that make up the whole world.” Nia was the only teacher to rank SQ.10 as *very useful*, stating, “Income based upon foods eaten, what is close by the home—fast food or whether a grocery store is nearby—how much access they have to a variety of foods, type of transportation.” Of note, Nia, an African American woman, is an outlier in that she is the only teacher who ranked all survey questions as *very useful*.

**Analysis and Evaluation**

Throughout this analysis and evaluation section, the research findings are analyzed and evaluated within the conceptual framework of multicultural education. The findings are interpreted in a scholarly, succinct format, which when appropriate, cites and connects the research findings to supporting theories. In doing so, the aim of this study draws closer to answering the greater dynamic research question—*How do 21st century elementary school teachers perceive culturally responsive teaching and characterize its implementation process?*—by using the research study’s following three sub questions as base units for analysis and evaluation:

1. How do teachers’ understandings of culture influence their pedagogy?
2. How do teachers develop greater cultural competency?

3. How do teachers enact culturally responsive teaching?

Findings. In this section, three subsections offer an analysis and evaluation of the interview and survey findings as they relate to the research study’s three sub questions. The first subsection offers an analysis and evaluation of the findings related to research sub question one: How do teachers’ understandings of culture influence their pedagogy? The second subsection offers an analysis and evaluation of the findings related to research sub question two: How do teachers develop greater cultural competency? The third subsection offer an analysis and evaluation of the findings related to research sub question three: How do teachers enact culturally responsive teaching?

Analysis and evaluation of findings: How do teachers’ understandings of culture influence their pedagogy? As previously discussed and concluded in Chapter 1, “There can be no generally agreed definition of culture” (Jahoda, 2012, p. 289). Still though, a clear and concise conception of “culture” is instrumental to building and validating theoretical scholarship (Jahoda, 2012). To this end, in this research question, the meaning of “culture” is operationalized using the definitional roots put forth by Multicultural Education scholars, Banks and McGee Banks (2010):

Most social scientists today view culture as consisting primarily of the symbolic, ideational, and intangible aspects of human societies. The essence of a culture is not its artifacts, tools, or other tangible cultural elements but how the members of the group interpret, use, and perceive them. It is the values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives that distinguish one people from another in modernized societies; it is not material objects and other tangible aspects of
human societies. People in a culture usually interpret the meaning of symbols, artifacts, and behaviors in the same or in similar ways. (p. 8)

In this section, the manner in which participants accrued cultural knowledge will be discussed, as elaborated upon in the interviews. Exactly how the teachers developed greater cultural competency was unique to each teacher – hence, findings pertaining to this research question are addressed relative to each teacher. The first subsection provides an overview of findings, which theoretically positions their implications. The following four subsections are presented in relation to the findings of each teacher. The final subsection summarizes the findings related to this sub question.

**Overview.** The findings related to this question found that some elementary school teachers have used racial stereotypes to define and place students into cultural identities. In doing so, those elementary school teachers employed a form of racializing identity – racializing students’ identities – which in turn, influenced their pedagogy. In other words, some teachers in this study “made racial” (Nasir, 2011, p. 6) or racialized students’ identities, based on stereotypes. Nasir (2011) cited Drake (1987) with the argument that such “color prejudice and racism, in the form of assumptions about the character and capacity of African Americans, have long been prevalent in the United States” (p. 62). Nasir (2011) expounded, citing the Clark and Clark (1939) study:

The idea that the racialized structure of our society and the prevalence of discrimination (in multiple forms) matters for the identities of African American and other minority students is not a new one. Indeed, it dates back to at least the 1930s, when Kenneth Clark conducted the first racial identity studies with black and white children by measuring students’ preferences for black and white dolls. (p. 13)
Nevertheless, “the ways that stereotypes about African Americans seems to operate automatically and consequently go virtually unexamined in American society” (Nasir, 2011, p. 61). However, such is not the case in this research study. As already supported by Nasir (2011), this research sub question gives additional evidence to:

The nature of the stereotypes about African Americans as belief systems that often can be found ‘hanging in the air’ in learning settings inside and outside of school… specifically on the in-school context as one where stereotypes not only hang in the air but also play out for students. (p. 62)

More specifically and in short, three of the four teachers interviewed in this study have clearly racialized students’ identities. As a result, racializing students’ identities can lead to potentially dangerous implications on students’ identities and their educational trajectories (Nasir, 2011). Data from the fourth remaining teacher offered no clear indication of racializing students’ identities. To the three teachers racializing students’ identities, Hollins (2008) theoretically positioned these qualities in teachers, when she stated: “[Teachers] cannot learn all [they] need to know about the students [they] will teach from university courses, but [they] can learn a process for acquiring, interpreting, and transforming knowledge about students for pedagogical practice” (p. 83). Aiming to minimize such occurrences, Hollins’ (2008) theoretically remedies these teachers’ cultural shortcomings with her reflective-interpretive-inquiry (RIQ) approach. Outlined below is Hollins (2008) RIQ approach:

The questioning format for RIQ is divided into seven categories that include:

8. Teacher beliefs about the students he or she teaches.

9. Teacher beliefs about instructional practices.
10. The social context of classroom instruction.

11. Students’ ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

12. Understanding the community in which the students reside.

13. Understanding the students in relation to the larger societal context.

14. Students’ personal and experiential backgrounds. (p. 83)

In overview, the meaning of culture has been operationalized, while the findings have been theoretically positioned within the multicultural framework of racialization and the RIQ teaching approach. In turn, the next four subsections are separated by each interview participant. The final subsection summarizes the findings related to this sub question.

**Emily.** Emily articulated an understanding of culture that was based on shared characteristics of a certain group of people, which in turn constituted a certain cultural title or category. Emily stated that culture is “all of the characteristics that go into making a person who they are… Some of those characteristics include family tradition, people’s dress, holidays, and just other things that people might celebrate based on their environment or the people around them.” Despite this recognition, Emily offered no insight into how she used this student cultural information in her classroom. Interestingly though, referencing her current students, Emily racialized their White identity when she stated:

The only culture that they know is the culture that is around them, because that’s the only culture that is around them. Since all of the students are the same [White], it’s challenging for them to understand that everyone in the world isn’t
like them… It is probably difficult for them to imagine that people around them are poor.

She continued, stating that she “honestly never really had to” adapt her teaching style or approach to teaching to align it with her students because “they all spend holidays with family, their holidays are all very similar, and their life experiences are similar—traveling, the cars they drive.” Such a rational could be made for many classrooms across the country, as culture extends beyond holidays, traveling, and cars. Moreover, assumed “similar” life experiences do not constitute same life experiences. A culturally responsive teacher recognizes and values the uniqueness of each student’s identity and culture (Gay, 2002). Therefore, this evidence suggests that Emily’s scope of cultural understanding and appreciation for implementation only goes as far as social studies class and lessons on citizenship. It is the very fact that the students Emily describes lack any experience with real-world diversity outside the classroom, that a multicultural approach is essential to their growth and likely to ease their emergence into the diverse landscape of the 21st century workforce. Gay (2000) warned of withholding culturally responsive teaching from students in the following statement: “Ignorance of people different from ourselves often breeds negative attitudes, anxiety, fears, and the seductive temptation to turn others in to images of ourselves” (p. 23). Before Emily begins introducing her students to different cultures and adjusting her curriculum, Hollins’ (2008) research supports that Emily must first engage in a type reflective-interpersonal-inquiry (RIQ) process, so to gain a deeper understanding of her own culture.

**Pooja.** Pooja’s understanding of “culture” aligned most closely with that of Banks and McGee Banks (2010). Pooja stated, “To me, the culture consists of the values,
traditions, how you live your day and regular life; every culture does different things in different ways.” Perhaps Pooja uniquely understands culture because she “was raised in a different culture.” She understands what it means to be an outsider, and this can be gleaned from the story in which she recounted arriving in the US and taking a class: “I had a hard time understanding things and had a different perspective.” Pooja cited several examples of how her own Asian Indian culture has impacted her teaching. In one example, she said:

[In] my culture education is so valued, [so] when I teach, I need to give my students the maximum that they can … so I kind of work extra hard and they get working right away. Not only do you do the work, but you also do extra work at home. I always give homework packets during spring break, summer break…. I feel this way because I grew up this way. I talk with them about my culture; I use the book on the floor example [where she teaches her students to not throw books on the floor because that is disrespectful to knowledge]. I feel sometimes that I put too much stress on the education and I tell them that no one can take their education away from them.

Pooja also had high expectations of accountability for her students’ parents and guardians. She attributed these high expectations to those of her own Asian Indian culture. Pooja’s understanding of culture and how it is reflected in her pedagogies was best summarized when she stated:

I have and still have different expectations for education for many of my students, than they expect of me. Even though most students and their parents don’t want spring break and summer homework packets, I still give it to them.”
Eric. Eric’s understanding of culture placed emphasis on an individual's characteristics being developed from his or her surroundings. Eric defined culture as:

The social background you come from... your schema... the community you grew up in, how it basically ran... Are you in a lower, economically, background project? Are you Jewish? You don’t necessarily have to be Jewish, but that tells me that is your schema.

Eric also believed that “culture is a huge part” of the educational process and shared a personal example which is highlighted with the intersection of race. Eric stated:

When I first got there [to my new school], I felt it was a problem being White in the Black school... males are not father figures, but as authority, police, cops... It takes me years to gain trust with the students, because in their culture White males are usually just the police officers.

In different realms of understanding and describing culture, especially in the realm of culturally responsive teaching, Eric’s blanket statement is a dangerous racialization of his students’ identities and cultures, as supported by Nasir (2011). After all, how would he know each of his student’s feelings toward him, plus their feelings toward (White) authority figures? On the outstanding chance that Eric does in fact know how each student feels about him and all the (White) authority figures in each of his or her lives over the past several years, Hollins’ (2008) research suggests that someone like Eric engage in her RIQ process. The seven categories of the RIQ process would be especially beneficial to Eric, personally and professionally, by deepening his understanding of culture and matters related to racialized identity.
Sara. Sara defined culture as the “belief, particular practices, what types of food do you eat, type of music you listen to, the type of rituals that you have that connect certain communities” and referenced “going to church and certain holidays that you celebrate” as rituals. As for the culture of her students, she believed that it is important for teachers to have knowledge in this area. Sara stated, “I think it’s a very important role to understand the type of student that you are teaching and what they believe in. I think it plays a huge role in how well they learn.” Although at times, Sara suggested that she uniquely individualized each student’s learning style, the findings suggested otherwise. In fact, the findings suggested that Sara accurately learned about certain students’ cultural identities, and then applied the newfound knowledge to students of similar race and ethnicity. In doing so, Sara operationalized the usage of racializing students’ identities and culture; in turn, negatively influenced her pedagogy (Nasir, 2011).

For example, Sara racialized her students’ identities and cultures, discussed in the next several examples. For the first example, Sara stated: “African American kids will not learn as well by standing there and lecturing… They learn cooperatively and in a group. So do Native American children.” Sara continued and stated her belief that students’ cultures and ethnic backgrounds predispose them to be “cooperative learners.” She elaborated, stating: “It’s not that they can’t do it… It’s put into their cultural DNA… Black children identify with faces… That goes back to the African culture… They want their learning to be with something they can identify with.”

One may well wonder, to what extent Sara believes African Americans’ optimal learning styles are in their “cultural DNA”? Regardless, these collective racial characteristics are being “attributed with negatively evaluated characteristics and
represented as inducing negative consequences” (Miles, 1989, p. 79). As a result, Miles’ (1989) research suggests Sara’s overgeneralizations are racist practices, which Nasir (2011) warns, promote and hold negative implications for her students.

For a second example, here Sara attributed her African American students’ learning styles to their ethnic roots:

Well, just that their rituals, the things that they celebrate in the city are in groups… I seldom see them celebrating with families, neighbors… It’s like their own tribe… If you want to get real deep, it’s like their roots in Africa. It’s about valuing the group, not the individual… because if you want to go back to the tribe mentality, that’s where the loudness and the out talking each other… they try to out-talk one another. That’s how they convey messages to one another… It’s not sitting down writing a letter. It’s their way of story telling and communicating… verbally. More so than the practice of writing it down. It’s like their schoolwork… they’d much rather tell you verbally than having to write it down by hand. The nature of the school… the cafeteria gets really loud… I don’t know how to explain it. They like to walk in groups, communicate in groups… If one is singing, the other is going to be singing along with them. It’s not individualized.

For a third example, here Sara compared the optimal learning style of Black students to White students when she stated: White students “can be lectured to and take notes at the same time.” In this example, perhaps Sara had once observed this type of learning in her own classroom, however, she must still be careful to not generalize across race. These overgeneralizations are dangerous because they are based one’s skin color
and ethnicity, as opposed to students’ individual mental abilities to perform academically (Nasir, 2011).

For a fourth racializing example of optimal learning styles, here Sara believed that all African American students culturally identify with music, especially the African drum:

I use to bring in my friends djembe. We’d listen to music. I’d ask, what does that sound like to you? This was for a writing exercise. It was an African Drum… because the African Americans identify with music… It’s just, like, their history. They learn well through music, songs, because they’re all singing the song. The singing together is part of the community… congregate with concerts. Religion is very important, too… congregate together, singing together. A lot of kids in the classroom will learn if you present it to them in a song.

Again, the implications of these aforementioned examples of racist generalizations are problematic for a variety of reasons (Nasir, 2011). Interestingly, Sara’s racist belief system is further problematic because each of these generalizations may be similarly applicable for non-Black students. For example, many works of art include faces. Secondly, all “types” of students identify with music or musical instruments (Silver, Strong, & Perini, 2000). Third, all “types” of students enjoy singing together and learning from song (Silver, Strong, & Perini, 2000). Fourth, religion and being together is very important to many non-Black families too.

Not only are Sara’s statements regarding the optimal learning styles of African American and Native American children racialized based on her own, non-researched experiences; they operationalize a baseless stereotype toward minorities that can
negatively influence her pedagogy (Nasir, 2011). Contrary to Sara’s aforementioned
beliefs, Sadker, Sadker, and Zittleman (2008) clarified:

Diverse students learn through a variety of modes, not only through reading or
listening. Although many students rely on those two perceptual modes, other
students find them less effective. Some learn best through touch, while others
rely on kinesthetic movement, including creative drama, role play, and field based
experiences. (p. 39)

In summary of Sara, her racializations are based on her own interpretations that lack the
support of educational research. Sara’s understanding of culture influences her pedagogy
by grossly stereotyping students and racializing their identities, where by, in turn, she
places them into different ‘types’ of categories. Rationales for her racializations and
stereotypes such as these are not only potentially condescending (i.e. her usage of tribe),
but they have potentially dangerous implications on students’ identities and educational
trajectories (Nasir, 2011).

Summary. For Emily, culture was only a relevant pedagogical phenomenon in
Social Studies class since all of her White students “were the same.” As a result, Emily
stated that she, “honestly never really had to” adapt her teaching style or approach to
teaching to align it with her students. While Emily believed all Whites have the same
culture, Eric believed that all blacks have the same culture. Eric held the generalized
belief that all black students did not trust him “because in their culture White males are
usually just the police officers.” As a result, Eric believed that this affected his ability to
teach. Like Emily and Eric, Sara too believed that by default, the pigment of one’s skin
places him or her into a culture. Sara believed that her students’ race predispose them to
be “cooperative learners.” She elaborated, stating: “It’s not that they can’t do it… It’s put into their cultural DNA… Black children identify with faces… That goes back to the African culture… They want their learning to be with something they can identify with.” Partly as a result, Sara, Emily, and Eric struggled to implement culturally responsive teaching. For those three interviewees, they implemented a type of culturally racialized teaching with race, racism, stereotypes, and generalizations being the monolithic denominator of one’s culture. As for the Pooja, there was no clear evidence that indicated she made generalizations. As an Asian Indian who is a US cultural outsider (moving to the US as an adult), culture was a continually relevant pedagogical phenomenon for Pooja, lasting throughout the school year and into summer.

Analysis and evaluation of findings: How do teachers develop greater cultural competency? In this section, the manner in which participants accrued cultural knowledge will be discussed, as elaborated upon in the interviews. Exactly how the teachers developed greater cultural competency was unique to each teacher—hence, findings pertaining to this research question are addressed relative to each teacher. The first subsection provides an overview of findings, which theoretically positions their implications. The following four subsections are presented in relation to the findings of each teacher. The final subsection summarizes the findings related to this sub question.

Overview. Conceptualized within a cultural deficit perspective, discussed below are the findings that indicated some elementary school teachers overgeneralized, and in doing so, created barriers in developing greater cultural competency.

The teachers discussed below made comments that indicated that they either overgeneralized or stereotyped their students. This occurred in the case of cultural
conflicts in which the expectations between teacher and student or student and guardian were in discord. Many of these cultural conflicts resulted from generalizations made by teachers, which in some instances, were rooted in a cultural deficit perspective. In simple terms,

A cultural deficit perspective is a view that individuals from some cultural groups lack the ability to achieve just because of their cultural background… Deficit models in general suggest the cause of underachievement lies within the individual rather than the individual's environment. For children in learning situations, the environment may include the learning context such as the safety or comfort of a classroom, the teacher or parent and his or her presentation of new material, or other external factors. The cultural deficit perspective in particular places the cause of underachievement within an individual's cultural group. (Silverman, 2011)

Dray and Wisneski (2011) suggested the following approach to minimize overgeneralizing as well as prejudice and deficit thinking:

Teachers within diverse communities should become highly aware of their personal cultural background and lens for understanding behavior, as well as cultural norms or tendencies of others, so that they can reduce attributions that lead to prejudice, deficit thinking, and overgeneralizations. (p. 30)

A culturally responsive teacher should follow suit and allow a student to define him- or herself not solely based upon his or her race, ethnicity, or social class, but rather as an individual. For teachers, overgeneralizing a single experience with a child or stereotyping a child based on prior cultural influences can wreak havoc on best-practice educational
pedagogies (Nasir, 2011). As evident in the findings from some teachers, assumptions about students and overgeneralizing students can create barriers in developing greater cultural competency (Nasir, 2011).

*Emily.* Emily developed a greater cultural competency for her students by sending home a survey at the beginning of the year. She explained, “I usually send home a sheet at the beginning of the year—special interests, hobbies, things that they’re good and not good at doing, things that create anxiety for me—it was just a one-sided page of questions.” Emily stated that she would usually look at the survey once and not reference it again. Emily could have continually referenced the questionnaire throughout the year, so as to implement student interests into story problems, engage disconnected students, or even connect two students having difficulty with each other. Another way that Emily learned about her students and their cultures was “through a lot of discussions and writing assignments.” She said that through these assignments, her students “tell me about what they might have done over the summer, etc. Usually you can get a pretty good snapshot of the kids by what their summer experiences were.”

Referencing the most valuable data to her, she stated: “Usually cultural-wise, the best information that I get is if they are bilingual, and I would have never known about it had I not asked because they never talked about it… One [student] spoke English and one spoke French.” Although Emily could not confidently recall if she utilized this information in a class or unit lesson, she first estimated, “probably only when we covered culture in the 3rd grade curriculum.” Three interview questions later, Emily cited a specific example, stating: “Two years ago I had a student whose mom was studying citizenship, and I taught the lessons using her as an example, and the student enjoyed me
using her as a reference.” However, had Emily’s beginning of the year survey inquired about food preferences, the following instance could have been avoided; Emily reflected:

Once I had an 8-year-old student in my class from India, and the student wasn’t allowed to eat pork. He had a one-on-one aid with him all day. However, on one day, he had a substitute aid, and the student tricked the aid into thinking he didn’t have food in his lunch box, so the substitute aid allowed him to eat pepperoni pizza. The student’s mom found out that he ate pizza when the student returned home with the lunch still in his lunchbox. The result was a weeklong discussion of one-page e-mails going back and forth. The parents were upset that the sub didn’t know … and just upset because they [the school] couldn’t take it back [the problem was irreversible]. The situation resolved after several weeks of e-mail communication offering apologies and adding a food alert to this students lunch account, such as beef and pork. Nobody would have ever thought that by looking at him—that he couldn’t eat pork.

Though even when armed with specific cultural information, Emily demonstrated room for improvement as a culturally responsive teacher. Referring to the similarity of culture among her students, Emily stated:

We have a few instances where we have students from other cultures that are contrary to what they can eat or celebrate as a holiday. At my school, those students are singled out because we tend to serve the majority… The Indians don’t eat pork, and they are singled out because some days they don’t have a lunch option other than to pack a lunch.
As for culturally responsive teaching in the previous statement, its practice extends beyond the classroom and into the school (Gay, 2000). In the example above, Emily could have been a change agent on behalf of all students, especially the marginalized students. In return, she could have advanced the school closer toward the ideals of culturally responsive teaching by giving voice to the marginalized students.

_Pooja_. Pooja learned about her students’ cultures by speaking with them and asking questions “about their days and their families.” Reflecting on how she uses the information that she gathers from conversations with students, Pooja stated, “I will use it if it makes sense for the topic that we are teaching. Some subjects are easier than others.”

_Eric_. Eric believed that culture plays a “huge” role in his school. Eric developed greater cultural competency by spending time with his students in various extra-curricular settings, asking them questions. Eric said:

I get to know them a lot outside of the classroom, by the lunchroom, classroom, I use Kagen teaching methods, team building, class building … to get to know them. I do more than just “What’s your favorite ice-cream? food?” etc… [I] just spend time with them, day in and day out.

Eric believed that the “only way” to get to know students and their cultures is through “hands-on observation experience.” He continued, stating: “No questionnaire will help you figure it out. I’ve been here for [several] years and I’m just figuring it out.” Although Ladson-Billings’ (1994) supports Eric’s notion of learning about students outside the classroom by cultivating “relationships beyond the boundaries of the classroom” (p. 62), her support stops short of Eric’s beliefs toward the usage of questionnaires. Contrary to Eric’s belief, Ladson-Billings’ (1994) briefly cited a teacher named Margaret Rossi, who
successfully used an “entry questionnaire” to discover what her “students do outside of school, how they spend their leisure time, and which subject they like and which they do not” (p. 67). In the words of Rossi (Ladson-Billings, 1994):

I try to find out as much as I can about the students early in the year so I can plan an instructional program that motivates them and meets their needs. You’d be surprised how many kids tell me that nobody has ever bothered to even ask them what they like. The entry questionnaire is also a great way to learn a little about their reading and writing levels. (p. 67)

Supported by Gay (2000), Rossi valued every bit of information, including her students’ favorite ice-cream flavors, so to build a greater, factual understanding of her students. Though unlike Rossi, Eric’s questions aimed to “find out what kids find offensive and what the children are sensitive to,” so to intertwine the information into his pedagogy. This approach however is at odds with culturally responsive teaching in that it aims to gather only offensive and sensitive cultural information. Such an approach to learning about students is non-celebratory in its intended usage and could promote the avoidance of certain issues. For Ladson-Billings (1994), and the African American parents and teachers in her study (p.138), they would rather a teacher like Eric gather information that could be used to “honor and respect the students’ home culture” (p. 138).

Sara. Sara developed her cultural competency by communicating with her students and their parents. She elucidated:
I get to know them through having dialogue with them, through their parents; I ask them if they are on a team. This is the example that I’ve been given by my dad: You see something about a person that is uniquely them and you do something to validate that within them. Because that’s what all people want: to be noticed and validated.

Sara concluded by saying, “Everyone wants to feel validated and important… The kids love that stuff, especially if they have a parent that doesn’t do that.” The following excerpt summarizes Sara’s approach to learning about her students’ identities and cultures, in which she seeks out both positive and negative aspects: In order to “get the best out of [the students], you need to know what they like and dislike… You are working with human beings.” Gay (2000), as well as Banks and McGee-Banks (2010), support this finding because culturally responsive teachers should strive to engage, integrate, celebrate, and value cultural similarities and differences.

The aforementioned findings indicated that Sara partly approaches learning about her students’ cultures with good, culturally responsive teaching purpose. However, this conclusion cannot be entirely drawn for every aspect of Sara’s approach to learning about her students’ cultures. As gleaned in the previously discussed findings from research sub question one, Sara racialized her students’ identities, and in doing so, she overgeneralized.

In turn, Sara’s overgeneralizations are further problematic in that they are casted from a deficit perspective. For example, referring to all of the boys in her class, Sara stereotyped when she stated her belief that:
African American boys are at a loss and angry because they don’t know how to be a man, because the parent is absent. My African American teacher friend said, “African American mothers love their sons and raise their daughters… They get a free pass because Daddy is not involved… They are given excuses. Your brother can be a goof-off at school but you’re expected not to be doing this… These mothers treat their boys like little men, but they’re not… They need to be raised. I’ve had kids tell me that their father is dead when in actuality they don’t know who their father is. Little girls are conspicuous because the father is missing, and they will seek that in a boy that is willing to give them attention.”

Generalizing all African American boys, girls, and fathers, within such a bold cultural deficit perspective goes strikingly against every bit of the empowering nature of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000). Furthermore, these sexist generalizations significantly subtract from the emancipatory nature of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000). Lastly, these generalizations are baseless; with Telesford and Murray (undisclosed year of publication) finding no evidence that indicated mothers behave “differently with their sons” (p. 53). In conclusion, one is left to surmise the extent to which Sara’s friend is reinforcing stereotypes, as well as impacting Sara’s classroom pedagogies. Hollins’ (2008) research puts forth a possible remedy for Sara’s lack of sensitivity by way of the previously discussed, RIQ approach.

Summary. The findings illuminated that some elementary school teachers used preconceived stereotypes of and made overgeneralizations toward, their students when determining a need and method for developing greater cultural competency. While the findings indicated that some teachers employed empirically validated methods to develop
greater cultural competency, the findings also indicated that teachers overgeneralized students’ identities and cultures.

**Analysis and evaluation of findings: How do teachers enact culturally responsive teaching?** In this section, the analysis and evaluation employed a type of recursive abstraction method, which was informed by utilizing (a) raw interview data, (b) survey data coded and disaggregated by theme, and (c) the interview-based findings from the two research questions previously elaborated upon. The findings are theoretically supported by having been cited as evidence in the matrix of culturally responsive teaching. In order to answer the question—*How do teachers enact culturally responsive teaching?*—the findings are presented by way of three different themed practices related to enacting culturally responsive teaching: (a) Learning practices, (b) Connecting practices, and (c) Integrating practices. The final subsection summarizes the findings related to this sub question.

**Learning practices: How do teachers enact culturally responsive teaching?** Learning practices entail a teacher “getting to know” the identities and cultures of both their students and their students’ guardians (or caretakers). Many of the participants indicated that it is valuable for a teacher to “get to know the child” and his or her family dynamics; the participants indicated that this information is particularly useful when it (a) informs the teacher of who to contact when making “good” and “bad” phone calls home, (b) gives insight into “family values,” (c) lends insight into family income restrictions, (d) indicates which topics to avoid in class, (e) tells the teacher which holidays a student observes and therefore the days he or she may be absent, (f) conveys which activities to include a student in or exclude a student from based on their beliefs, and, similarly, (g)
lends insight into a “belief system that stems from religion.” Utilizing and finding value in these learning practices is the initial phase of embodying cultural knowledge in the next theme: Connecting practices.

*Connecting practices: How do teachers enact culturally responsive teaching?* For the purposes of this theme, having a “connection” with another individual is equivalent to having a “rapport” with them. In connecting practices, teachers utilize what they know about their students and their students’ guardians so as to make authentic connections with them, which may also position the teacher to expand his or her cultural knowledge—the fuel that ignites connections and successful cross-cultural endeavors.

All teachers endorsed the idea that connecting with students is beneficial and two teachers offered the following ideas as ways to foster a connection: (a) get involved with activities outside of school, and (b) allow time for students to self-disclose.

According to over half of the participants, connecting or building “rapport” with students can further multiple educational goals, such as a teacher’s desire to (a) get the best out of a student or (b) enhance a student’s sense of self-worth—such as recognizing a student’s nonacademic strengths.

Utilizing and finding value in these connecting practices is a type of prerequisite for accomplishing the third and final theme: Integrating practices.

*Integrating Practices: How do teachers enact culturally responsive teaching?* Integrating practices entail teachers using what they know about their students and their students’ guardians to increase the efficacy of their pedagogies. The survey participants indicated that a teacher’s cultural knowledge in this respect could be used in planning instruction to more closely align it with student interests or “learning style.”
According to the participants, integrating cultural knowledge generated from the questionnaire could take different forms. For example, knowing a student’s favorite candy may be useful for “incentives” or “motivation”; knowing students’ favorite songs could be used “in lessons or as a classroom management tool”; and knowledge of a student’s favorite food, chores at home, hobbies after school, or even career goals can be used to design relevant “word problems” that have “real-life applications” (e.g., using the knowledge of a student’s favorite snack in an example problem to help them overcome learning difficulties).

**Summary.** Through the open-response component of the survey questions, the teachers indicated varying degrees of appreciation for the potential data that could be gathered from a student questionnaire. In short, the survey data indicated that the teachers have an understanding of methods or ways in which to integrate student culture into the curriculum. However, as indicated by the absence of data in evidence sections of the matrix, knowing how to integrate student culture into the curriculum does not translate into actual implementation or proper implementation.

The findings related to this sub question illuminated elementary school teachers shortcomings related to enacting culturally responsive teaching. Below, the findings are analyzed and evaluated within the matrix of culturally responsive teaching.

In matrix component one, each “evidence” section cited examples of teachers developing a cultural diversity knowledge base. The data found in matrix component one indicated that teachers have a good understanding of culture. Interestingly though, findings from interview sub questions one and two enriched and clarified this data because it includes evidence that does not align with culturally responsive teaching. To
this end, the data found in matrix component one indicated that although the White
teachers had a good understanding of culture, they dismissed the dynamic
understandings, and opted for a meaning of culture that generalized across individuals
based on stereotypes of skin color.

In matrix component two, only one of the four evidence sections cited an example
of a teacher designing culturally relevant curricula. As for the blank evidence sections in
matrix component three, these empty evidence sections described scenarios for which
evidence would have indicated a teacher demonstrated a critical consciousness for “the
power of the symbolic curriculum as an instrument of teaching” (Gay, 2002, p. 108), as
well as usage of “a wide range of ethnic individuals and groups; contextualizing issues
within race, class, ethnicity, and gender; and including multiple kinds of knowledge and
perspectives” (Gay, 2002, p. 108). This absence of evidence is supported by the findings
in research sub questions one and two, which indicated that teachers placed students into
overgeneralized cultures, defined by skin color. In doing so, the teachers shortened a
potentially wide range of ethnic/racial groups into just two ethnic/racial groups:
European/White and African American/Black. This absence of evidence is constituted as
a valuable research finding that indicated a shortcoming of 21st century teachers enacting
culturally responsive teaching.

In matrix component three, four of the seven evidence sections cited examples
related to teachers demonstrating cultural caring and building a learning community. As
for the blank evidence sections in matrix component three, these empty evidence sections
described scenarios for which evidence would have indicated a teacher: is “in an ethical,
emotional, and academic partnership with ethnically diverse students” (Gay, 2000, p. 52),
understands “how conflicts between different work styles may interfere with academic
efforts and outcomes, and they understand how to design more communal learning
environments” (Gay, 2002, p. 110), and simultaneously teaches “personal, moral, social,
political, [and] cultural” (Gay, 2002, p. 110) knowledge in concert with academic
knowledge and skills. This absence of evidence is constituted as a valuable research
finding that indicated a shortcoming of 21st century teachers enacting culturally
responsive teaching.

In matrix component four, two of the four evidence sections cited examples
related to teachers implementing effective cross-cultural communication. As for the blank
evidence sections in matrix component four, these empty evidence sections described
scenarios for which evidence would have indicated a teacher deciphers the culturally
coded (Cazden, John, & Hymes, 1985) “intellectual thoughts of students from different
ethnic groups” (Gay, 2002, p. 110), and “recognize[s], understand[s], accept[s], and
respond[s] to… the cultural markers and nuances embedded in the communicative
behaviors of highly ethnically affiliated Latino, Native, Asian, and African Americans”
(Gay, 2002, p. 111). This absence of evidence is supported by the findings in research
sub questions one and two, which indicated that teachers placed students into racialized,
overgeneralized cultures, primarily defined by stereotypes and skin color. In doing so, the
teachers shortened a potentially wide range of ethnic/racial groups into just two
ethnic/racial groups: European/White and African American/Black. This absence of
evidence is constituted as a valuable research finding that indicated a shortcoming of 21st
century teachers enacting culturally responsive teaching.
In matrix component five, all three of the three evidence sections cite examples related to teachers facilitating cultural congruity in classroom instruction. Noteworthy though, had it not been for Eric’s reflections, matrix component five would have then contained only one of three evidence sections citing examples. Although Sara’s evidence is valid, it is loosely connected to the main idea of this component, which “deals with the actual delivery of instruction to ethnically diverse students” (Gay, 2002, p. 112). This minimal amount of evidence is constituted as a valuable research finding that indicates a shortcoming of 21st century teachers enacting culturally responsive teaching.

Although a further speculative discussion regarding the implications of these reflections is certainly beyond the scope of this current study, the aforementioned discussion does offer insight into the dynamics of some 21st century classrooms.

**Summary of Findings**

The findings related to the research question- *How do teachers’ understandings of culture influence their pedagogy?* -illuminated that some elementary school teachers use race to define and place students into a culture. In doing so, some of these elementary school teachers employed a racialized identity that influenced their pedagogy. More specifically, three of the four teachers interviewed, racialized the identity of their students and their students cultures. Data from the fourth remaining teacher offered no such indication.

The findings related to the research question- *How do teachers develop greater cultural competency?* -illuminated that some elementary school teachers use preconceived stereotypes of and make overgeneralizations toward their students when determining a need and method for developing greater cultural competency. While the
findings indicated that some teachers employed empirically validated methods to develop greater cultural competency, the findings also indicated that teachers overgeneralized students’ cultures, and in doing so, created barriers in developing greater cultural competency.

The findings related to the research question- *How do teachers enact culturally responsive teaching?* -illuminated some elementary school teachers’ strengths and shortcomings related to enacting culturally responsive teaching. The findings indicated that teachers have an understanding of methods and/or ways in which to integrate student culture into the curriculum. However, as indicated by the absence of data in evidence sections of the matrix, knowing how to integrate student culture into the curriculum does not automatically and/or accurately translate to implementation.
Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the research study, draw conclusions, discuss research findings and conclusions, and make recommendations for the study.

Summary of Study

This current study specifically addressed the following two problems of culturally responsive teaching:

1. The current literature does not thoroughly address practical, best-practice techniques for collecting and learning about each student’s culture; and

2. The current literature does not thoroughly address culturally responsive teaching within the educational paradigms of the 21st century.

The purpose of this study was to begin to resolve these gaps in the literature through the collection of information from elementary school teachers that characterized phenomena related to culturally responsive teaching, illustrating methods and mechanisms employed by current teachers in modern educational practice.

Data were collected through the use of phone interviews and a Web-based survey, formulated to address the greater question—How do 21st century elementary school teachers perceive culturally responsive teaching and characterize its implementation process?—through the following research questions:

1. How do teachers’ understandings of culture influence their pedagogy?

2. How do teachers develop greater cultural competency?

3. How do teachers enact culturally responsive teaching?
After initial collection, data were analyzed within the context of Gay’s (2002) five essential components of culturally responsive teaching. In turn, these findings informed the conclusion.

**Conclusion**

The following summative conclusion is a result of the research findings: A deficit of knowledge exists in some 21st century elementary school teachers’ understandings of phenomenon related to culturally responsive teaching. This conclusion is supported by the findings related to the three research sub questions aimed to address the greater research question of this study—*How do 21st century elementary school teachers perceive culturally responsive teaching and characterize its implementation process?* In response to the greater research question, all teacher participants expressed a certain value in knowing about students’ cultures; and in varying capacities and frequencies, each teacher integrated this knowledge into their pedagogies. However, as discussed in the next four subsections, the data also indicate the need for teachers to acquire knowledge, skills, and desire to (a) design culturally relevant curricula, (b) withhold racializing students’ identities, (c) be cognizant of overgeneralizing, and (d) use technology in culturally responsive teaching.

**Culturally relevant curricula design.** Designing curriculum is a challenging endeavor that requires significant knowledge, skill, and motivation on the part of the teacher. First, the teacher must acquire detailed factual information about the cultural aspects of specific ethnic groups present in the classroom. Not one teacher in this study described how they obtained *detailed* factual information. Gay (2002) supports this notion, and believed that: *“Explicit knowledge about cultural diversity is imperative to*
meeting the educational needs of ethnically diverse students” (p. 107). Indeed, one teacher (Emily) referenced using a survey in the beginning of the year, but she did not reference particularities of specific ethnic groups. Thus, all teachers interviewed were left to make generalizations about ethnic groups different from their own. For example, if Emily had had specific knowledge about her only ethnic student’s culture, she could have avoided the cultural conflict that she discussed in IQ.7. Furthermore, she could have used this knowledge to strengthen the curriculum for all learners, not just the one student. For example, in addition to thoughtfully inserting this cultural information into story problems, doing so would demonstrate cultural caring and building of a learning community (Gay, 2002). Gay supports this claim in the following statement: “Pedagogical actions are as important as (if not more important than) multicultural curriculum designs in implementing culturally responsive teaching... Caring is a moral imperative, a social responsibility, and a pedagogical necessity” (Gay, 2002, p. 109).

For teachers, obtaining detailed factual information is essential, but not all teachers recognized the potential use for each bit of student cultural information.

Contrary to Eric’s belief in that questionnaires are not helpful, Rossi (Ladson-Billing, 1994) supported the notion that in fact questionnaires can lend great insight into students and inform curriculum design. According to Gay (2000), but absent in the paper’s research findings, teachers also need knowledge of different ethnic groups’ contributions in science, technology, medicine, math, theology, ecology, peace, law, and economics. Not one teacher in this study described the use of such information. Such knowledge can be taught and practiced in teacher education programs.
Secondly, teachers must be facile at inserting culture into the curricula, which can be taught and practiced in teacher education programs. The survey data indicated that the teachers have an understanding of methods or ways in which to integrate student culture into the curriculum. However, as indicated by the absence of data in various “Blank” evidence sections of the matrix, knowing how to integrate student culture into the curriculum does not translate into actual implementation.

Thirdly, teachers must have a desire to design culturally relevant curricula in order for it to occur. Such inspiration may be incited and nurtured in teacher education programs, which should aid teachers to understand that designing culturally relevant curricula is advantageous to students, parents, teachers, and society at large.

**Racializing students’ identities.** The occurrence of teachers racializing in the classroom was evident throughout the data. For the student, both implicit and explicit implications of racializing stifle the learning process (Nasir, 2011). For the teacher, racializing students’ identities is dangerous, and especially concerning, as it may evolve into deeper complexities and dangers, should the demographic outlook come to fruition. To this point, diversity within our public schools is rapidly increasing (Eck, 2001; El Nasser, 2004; USCB, 2000). With such beautiful blending of racial boundaries, the racializing of students’ identities shows no sign of dissipating soon, especially with the following, perpetuating political forces. To the point, Zorn et al. asserted:

Certain researchers warn that disaggregated achievement data can mask important differences within subgroups (Carpenter, Ramirez, & Severn, 2006; Murphy 2009a). Murphy cites a variety of research that illustrates social and economic distinctions among cultural groups within Asian, Black, and Hispanic racial
categories that correlate with differential academic achievement. Economically disadvantaged White students who tend to demonstrate lower achievement are also masked by the White demographic. Therefore, caution must be taken not to over-generalize [or Racialize] about any of the NCLB subgroups, particularly when planning interventions and supports for addressing the achievement gap. (Zorn et al., 2010, p.1)

Although disaggregated achievement data is valuable for many different prescribed reasons, teachers must be careful to not racialize students’ identities. As analyzed and evaluated in Chapter 4, racializing students’ identities can lead to potentially dangerous implications on students’ identities and their educational trajectories (Nasir, 2011). With emerging demographic changes, the notion will most certainly continue to be a concern in the 21st century.

Overgeneralizing. Similar to teachers racializing students’ identities, the occurrence of teachers overgeneralizing in the classroom was also evident throughout the data. The ramifications of this, both implicit and explicit, stifle the learning process of current students (Nasir, 2011). Interestingly though, the idea of overgeneralizing is nothing new to culturally responsive teaching. New, however, is this evidence, which documents the continual existence of overgeneralizing in 21st century teaching practices.

Gay (2002) made a case for educating preservice teachers in culturally relevant practices through the examination of five culturally responsive teaching elements: “developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity, including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum, demonstrating caring and building learning communities, communicating with ethnically diverse students, and responding to ethnic
diversity in the delivery of instruction” (p. 106). Gay believed that knowledge of students’ cultural diversity “goes beyond mere awareness of, respect for, and general recognition of the fact that ethnic groups have different values or express similar values in different ways” (p. 107). She continued to emphasize the importance of “detailed factual information about the cultural particularities of specific ethnic groups” (p. 107).

Additionally relevant, is the forecast that “at some point over the next 10 to 12 years, the nation’s public school student body will have no one clear racial or ethnic majority (Frey, 2011)” (Boser, 2011, p. 1). Evident, then, is the fact that cultural identities are ever changing and overgeneralizations about certain ethnic groups and cultures are grave threats to the implementation of culturally responsive teaching (Nasir, 2011).

**Use of technology.** Evidence for the presence of technology in the classroom to aid in culturally responsive teaching was absent, both from this set of data and the literature at large. Despite the fact that some of the greatest technological advances in the history of the world have occurred quite recently, there was no evidence of the use of technology in the implementation process of culturally responsive teaching. This is unfortunate, as online surveys and other tools could be used to learn about students. Every bit of information, however small, that teachers know about their students helps them to better connect with their students on both a cultural and a personal level (Gay, 2002). The use of small gestures of understanding, implemented in teaching practices, can result in fostering a cultural connection in the classroom and enable a more impactful curriculum, whether for one student, one class, or the entire school (Gay, 2002).
Moreover, technology should be used to foster culturally diverse experiences outside of the classroom. Teachers could use trusted, Internet reliant programs such as Epal and Skye, to connect teachers and students with other teachers and students all over the world. Furthermore, culturally responsive programs and lessons could be shared across an online database. More than ever before, these lessons will be most relevant with the emerging Common Core State Standards.

**Discussion**

The 21\textsuperscript{st} century has ushered in new educational paradigms and reinvented old ones. This was made possible by three synergistic agents that both generated and facilitated these changes: technology, public policy, and educational leadership based on years of dedicated work. The result is evident at every level of the US educational system today. Consequently, new methods of accountability have been forged within the public educational system. The new methods of accountability have been aimed to address the finding of recent data which clearly indicate continued increases in diversity within US public schools and concerning disparities in US academic achievement levels. As a result, elementary school, junior high school, and high school teachers are charged with uniquely difficult and dynamic tasks.

The increasing demands and pressures that 21\textsuperscript{st} century teachers must contend with place great importance upon high-stakes testing data, and nearly nothing upon effective and time-efficient tools and methods for learning about and teaching through their students’ cultures. Since it is not recognized in public policy, this political understatement may play a role in the overgeneralizations taking place in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century classroom. With a greater emphasis being placed on data driven decision-making, little
room and time is left for teachers to gain “explicit knowledge” (Gay, 2002) about their students, so to use the information in best practice pedagogies. One such best practice pedagogy is called, Culturally Responsive Teaching.

Applying culturally responsive teaching requires significant knowledge on the part of the teacher. In order to respond to each student’s unique culture without casting their own assumptive interpretations of a student’s culture in their teaching, the teacher must know each student’s culture inside and outside of school—a far cry from simply “taking cues.” As the research findings indicate, assumptive interpretations can lead to racialized students’ identities and overgeneralizations.

Racialized students’ identities, overgeneralizations, and the implementation of hastily drawn conclusions into the curriculum can be avoided when teachers confirm their interpretation and suspicions through additional scrutiny—for example, employing a cultural questionnaire two or more times a year. This will allow a closer to factual gleaning of student cultural information. Although, worth noting, a fully factual understanding is elusive due to the limitation of any questionnaire seeking to learn about culture because culture is ever-changing, and individual self-reporting can be unreliable.

Once student cultural information is learned, the next challenge for teachers is to continually implement cultural knowledge into the curriculum. In turn, rooted in the research study findings, I suggest the following implementation strategies: (a) employ a carefully designed, student cultural survey throughout the year, so to glean up-to-date data, (b) implement student interests and cultural facts into story problems, (c) use student interests and cultural facts to engage disconnected or disengaged students, (d) use technology to foster culturally diverse curriculum design and experiences inside and
outside of the classroom and (e) use common student interests and cultural facts as a tool for connecting two disconnected students via a project or as a grouping strategy.

In summary, through the words of Stritikus and Varghese (2010), this discussion was “not meant as a simple critique”; it was meant to “provide an understanding of how much further educators need to go in meeting the challenge” (p. 297). To this end, I understand that embodying the qualities of a culturally responsive teacher is difficult and elusive. It requires a special, dynamically rich combination of knowledge, skill, and desire. Although I believe that it is impossible to be the ideal culturally responsive teacher—that should not stop the pursuit.

**Recommendations from the Study**

This study has characterized 21st century culturally responsive teaching; and although it is an initial exploratory study, the data indicate the need for teachers to acquire knowledge, skills, and desire to (a) design culturally relevant curricula, (b) withhold racializing students’ identities, (c) be cognizant of overgeneralizing, and (d) use technology in culturally responsive teaching. It is this researcher’s hope that these findings will aid the advancement of exploration of the implementation process of culturally responsive teaching, and as a result, improve multicultural education.

To this end, I recommend that future studies explore the four points listed above. Specifically, I recommend that researchers explore the higher education curriculum on matters relating to cultural relevant curricular design and implementation, along with subsequent research to validate the effectiveness of such designs. Furthermore, I recommend researchers explore whether preservice teachers are being taught to accurately learn about their students’ cultures, ethnicities, identities and if so, how?
Lastly, I recommend researchers explore the possibilities and implications of using and integrating technology into culturally responsive teaching.
References


Appendix A: Survey: Recruitment & Consent Form

Adult Consent Form for Research
University of Cincinnati
Department: Educational Studies
Principal Investigator: Matthew Cohen
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Allen-brown

Title of Study: Culturally Responsive Teaching in the 21st Century: Elementary School Teachers’ Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching and Their Characterizations of its Implementation Process

Introduction:
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Please read this paper carefully and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

Who is doing this research study?
The person in charge of this research study is Matthew S. Cohen of the University of Cincinnati (UC) Department of Educational Studies. He is being guided in this research by Dr. Vanessa Allen-brown.

What is the purpose of this research study?
The purpose of this research study is to collect information on:

- If and how elementary school teachers’ understandings of culture influence their pedagogy
- If and how teachers develop greater cultural competency
- If and how teachers use culturally responsive pedagogy

Who will be in this research study?
About 17 people will take part in this study. You may be in this study if you are currently a full-time classroom teacher of students in any grade, 3rd through 6th. You are ineligible to participate in this research study if you are currently teaching in the same school building as the researcher of this study.

What will you be asked to do in this research study, and how long will it take?
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey, which will take approximately 15 minutes. The web-based survey will include interview questions and prompts related to your: understanding of culture, understanding of culturally responsive pedagogies, understanding of his or her students' cultures, philosophy of teaching, philosophy of education, own characterization of his or her teaching pedagogies, and questions related to past real-life classroom examples (or potential future examples) in which some form of cultural knowledge was strategically used in the classroom.

Are there any risks to being in this research study?
There are no anticipated risks to the individual research participants in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

Are there any benefits from being in this research study?
There are no foreseen benefits to the individual research participants.

What will you get because of being in this research study?
You will not be paid or given anything to participate in this study.
Do you have choices about taking part in this research study?
If you do not want to take part in this research study you may simply not participate. You may stop at any time during the web-based survey.

How will your research information be kept confidential?
In the study, information about you will be kept private. Any identifying information will be separated from the data and secured on a private, password-protected computer, so to maintain confidentiality of responses. Your responses in the interview process will be de-identified and confidentiality will be maintained. Furthermore, the school in which you teach will be de-identified and confidential. Both you and the school in which you teach will be identified by a pseudonym. The data from this research study may be published; however, you will not be identified by name. Your individual identifying data will be de-identified. The city in which you teacher will be identified as a major city in its given region of the United States. Access to the research data will be limited to the research team.

Your information will be kept secure on the lead researcher’s private, password-protected computer for three year after the study. After this time period, your information will be destroyed by erasing the appropriate files from the lead researcher’s private, password-protected hard drive, by deleting computerized records and by deleting all of the web-based survey data.

Agents of the University of Cincinnati may inspect study records for audit or quality assurance purposes.

What are your legal rights in this research study?
Nothing in this consent form waives any legal rights you may have. This consent form also does not release the investigator, the institution, or its agents from liability for negligence.

What if you have questions about this research study?
If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, you should contact, Matthew Cohen, at cohenmh@email.uc.edu or at 513-382-6900. Or, you may contact Dr. Vanessa Allen-brown, at allenbv@ucmail.uc.edu or at 513-556-3625.

The UC Institutional Review Board reviews all research projects that involve human participants to be sure the rights and welfare of participants are protected.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or complaints about the study, you may contact the UC IRB at (513) 558-5259. Or, you may call the UC Research Compliance Hotline at (800) 889-1547, or write to the IRB, 300 University Hall, ML 0567, 51 Goodman Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0567, or email the IRB office at irb@ucmail.uc.edu.

Do you HAVE to take part in this research study?
No one has to be in this research study. Refusing to take part will NOT cause any penalty or loss of benefits that you would otherwise have.
Agreement:
BY PARTICIPATING IN THE WEB-BASED SURVEY LINKED BELOW, YOU, THE PARTICIPANT, INDICATE YOUR CONSENT FOR YOUR ANSWERS TO BE USED IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. IN DOING SO, YOU ALSO AGREE TO KEEP THE FOLLOWING THREE ITEMS PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL: YOUR PARTICIPATION, THE RESEARCH STUDY’S QUESTIONS, AND YOUR ANSWERS TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS.

BY PARTICIPATING IN THE WEB-BASED SURVEY LINKED BELOW, YOU, THE PARTICIPANT, UNDERSTAND THAT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE WEB-SURVEY PORTION, YOU WILL HAVE THE OPTION TO PRINT AND/OR DIGITALLY-RECORD YOUR OWN COPY OF THE WEB-BASED SURVEY’S CONSENT/AGREEMENT FORM.

BY PARTICIPATING IN THE WEB-BASED SURVEY LINKED BELOW, YOU, THE PARTICIPANT, AGREE THAT YOU HAVE READ THIS INFORMATION AND HAVE RECEIVED ANSWERS TO ANY QUESTIONS THAT YOU HAVE ASKED. YOU GIVE YOUR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY.

AGREEING PARTICIPANTS: CLICK HERE TO PARTICIPATE
Appendix B: Survey: Web-based Consent Form

Research Study: Culturally Responsive Teaching

Copy of page: Consent Form

1. Introduction:
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Please read this paper carefully and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

Who is doing this research study?
The person in charge of this research study is Matthew S. Cohen of the University of Cincinnati (UC) Department of Educational Studies. He is being guided in this research by Dr. Vanessa Allen-brown.

What is the purpose of this research study?
The purpose of this research study is to collect information on:
• If and how elementary school teachers’ understandings of culture influence their pedagogy
• If and how teachers develop greater cultural competency
• If and how teachers use culturally responsive pedagogy

Who will be in this research study?
About 17 people will take part in this study. You may be in this study if you are currently a full-time classroom teacher of students in any grade, 3rd through 6th. You are ineligible to participate in this research study if you are currently teaching in the same school building as the researcher of this study.

What will you be asked to do in this research study, and how long will it take?
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey, which will take approximately 15 minutes. The web-based survey will include interview questions and prompts related to your: understanding of culture, understanding of culturally responsive pedagogies, understanding of his or her students’ cultures, philosophy of teaching, philosophy of education, own characterization of his or her teaching pedagogies, and questions related to past real-life classroom examples (or potential future examples) in which some form of cultural knowledge was strategically used in the classroom.

Are there any risks to being in this research study?
There are no anticipated risks to the individual research participants in this study other
than those encountered in day-to-day life.

Are there any benefits from being in this research study?
There are no foreseen benefits to the individual research participants.

What will you get because of being in this research study?
You will not be paid or given anything to participate in this study.

Do you have choices about taking part in this research study?
If you do not want to take part in this research study you may simply not participate. You may stop at any time during the web-based survey.

How will your research information be kept confidential?
In the study, information about you will be kept private. Any identifying information will be separated from the data and secured on a private, password-protected computer, so to maintain confidentiality of responses. Your responses in the interview process will be deidentified and confidentiality will be maintained. Furthermore, the school in which you teach will be deidentified and confidential. Both you and the school in which you teach will be identified by a pseudonym. The data from this research study may be published; but you will not be identified by name. Access to the research data will be limited to the research team.

Your information will be kept secure on the lead researcher’s private, password-protected computer for three year after the study. After this time period, your information will be destroyed by erasing the appropriate files from the lead researcher’s private, password-protected hard drive, by deleting computerized records and by deleting all of the web-based survey data.

Agents of the University of Cincinnati may inspect study records for audit or quality assurance purposes.

The researcher will ask the research participants to keep information and matters relating to the research confidential, but they might talk about it anyway. The researcher will not share your information with any of the participants.

TO CONTINUE, CLICK "CONSENT: PART 2"
Consent Form

2. What are your legal rights in this research study?
Nothing in this consent form waives any legal rights you may have. This consent form also does not release the investigator, the institution, or its agents from liability for negligence.

What if you have questions about this research study?
If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, you should contact, Matthew Cohen, at cohenmh@email.uc.edu or at 513-382-6900. Or, you may contact Dr. Vanessa Allen-brown, at allenbv@ucmail.uc.edu or at 513-556-3625.

The UC Institutional Review Board reviews all research projects that involve human participants to be sure the rights and welfare of participants are protected.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or complaints about the study, you may contact the UC IRB at (513) 558-5259. Or, you may call the UC Research Compliance Hotline at (800) 889-1547, or write to the IRB, 300 University Hall, ML 0567, 51 Goodman Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0567, or email the IRB office at irb@ucmail.uc.edu.

Do you HAVE to take part in this research study?
No one has to be in this research study. Refusing to take part will NOT cause any penalty or loss of benefits that you would otherwise have.

Agreement:
I UNDERSTAND THAT BY TAKING PART IN THE WEB-BASED SURVEY, I INDICATE MY CONSENT FOR MY ANSWERS TO BE USED IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. IN DOING SO, YOU ALSO AGREE TO KEEP THE FOLLOWING THREE ITEMS PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL: YOUR PARTICIPATION, THE RESEARCH STUDY’S QUESTIONS, AND YOUR ANSWERS TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS.

I HAVE READ THIS INFORMATION AND HAVE RECEIVED ANSWERS TO ANY QUESTIONS I ASKED. I GIVE MY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. AT THE BEGINNING OF THE WEB-SURVEY, I WILL HAVE THE OPTION TO PRINT/DIGITALLY-RECORD A COPY OF MY VALIDATED CONSENT FORM TO KEEP.
ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below. Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that:

• you have ready the above information • you voluntarily agree to participate
• you are at least 18 years of age

If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button.
Appendix C: Interview and Survey: Recruitment and Consent Form

Adult Consent Form for Research
University of Cincinnati
Department: Educational Studies
Principal Investigator: Matthew Cohen
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Allen-brown

Title of Study: Culturally Responsive Teaching in the 21st Century: Elementary School Teachers’ Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching and Their Characterizations of its Implementation Process

Introduction:
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Please read this paper carefully and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

Who is doing this research study?
The person in charge of this research study is Matthew S. Cohen of the University of Cincinnati (UC) Department of Educational Studies. He is being guided in this research by Dr. Vanessa Allen-brown.

What is the purpose of this research study?
The purpose of this research study is to collect information on:
- If and how elementary school teachers’ understandings of culture influence their pedagogy
- If and how teachers develop greater cultural competency
- If and how teachers use culturally responsive pedagogy

Who will be in this research study?
About 17 people will take part in this study. You may be in this study if you are currently a full-time classroom teacher of students in any grade, 3rd through 6th. You are ineligible to participate in this research study if you are currently teaching in the same school building as the researcher of this study.

What will you be asked to do in this research study, and how long will it take?
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to give a phone interview with the lead researcher of this study and asked to complete an online survey, both of which combined will take approximately 45 minutes. You may either agree or disagree to the phone interview being audio-recorded. The time of the phone interview will be mutually agreed upon. The researcher will include interview questions and prompts related to your: understanding of culture, understanding of culturally responsive pedagogies, understanding of his or her students’ cultures, philosophy of teaching, philosophy of education, own characterization of his or her teaching pedagogies, and questions related to past real-life classroom examples (or potential future examples) in which some form of cultural knowledge was strategically used in the classroom.

Are there any risks to being in this research study?
There are no anticipated risks to the individual research participants in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

Are there any benefits from being in this research study?
There are no foreseen benefits to the individual research participants.

What will you get because of being in this research study?
You will not be paid or given anything to participate in this study.
Do you have choices about taking part in this research study?
If you do not want to take part in this research study you may simply not participate. You may stop participating at any time during the interview or web-based survey. You have a choice whether or not to allow the phone interview to be audio-recorded. There is a place at the end of this paper that gives directions on how to mark your choice (see the last question: How do I take part in this research study?).

How will your research information be kept confidential?
In the study, information about you will be kept private. Any identifying information will be separated from the data and secured on a private, password-protected computer, so to maintain confidentiality of responses. Your responses in the interview process will be de-identified and confidentiality will be maintained. Furthermore, the school in which you teach will be de-identified and confidential. Both you and the school in which you teach will be identified by a pseudonym. The data from this research study may be published; however, you will not be identified by name. Your individual identifying data will be de-identified. The city in which you teacher will be identified as a major city in its given region of the United States. Access to the research data will be limited to the research team.

Your information will be kept secure on the lead researcher’s private, password-protected computer for three year after the study. After this time period, your information will be destroyed by erasing the appropriate files from the lead researcher’s private, password-protected hard drive, by deleting computerized records and by deleting all of the web-based survey data.

Agents of the University of Cincinnati may inspect study records for audit or quality assurance purposes.

What are your legal rights in this research study?
Nothing in this consent form waives any legal rights you may have. This consent form also does not release the investigator, the institution, or its agents from liability for negligence.

What if you have questions about this research study?
If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, you should contact, Matthew Cohen, at cohenmh@email.uc.edu or at 513-382-6900. Or, you may contact Dr. Vanessa Allen-brown, at allenbv@ucmail.uc.edu or at 513-556-3625.

The UC Institutional Review Board reviews all research projects that involve human participants to be sure the rights and welfare of participants are protected.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or complaints about the study, you may contact the UC IRB at (513) 558-5259. Or, you may call the UC Research Compliance Hotline at (800) 889-1547, or write to the IRB, 300 University Hall, ML 0567, 51 Goodman Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0567, or email the IRB office at irb@ucmail.uc.edu.

Do you HAVE to take part in this research study?
No one has to be in this research study. Refusing to take part will NOT cause any penalty or loss of benefits that you would otherwise have.
Agreement:

YOU THE PARTICIPANT, understand that by taking part in the interview and web-based survey, you indicate your consent for your answers to be used in this research study. In doing so, you also agree to keep the following three items private and confidential: your participation, the research study’s questions, and your answers to the research questions.

YOU THE PARTICIPANT chose to NOT ALLOW or ALLOW (circle one) THE RESEARCHER TO AUDIO-RECORD THE INTERVIEW.

BY PARTICIPATING, YOU THE PARTICIPANT, ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOU HAVE BEEN READ THIS INFORMATION AND HAVE RECEIVED ANSWERS TO ANY QUESTIONS THAT YOU HAVE ASKED. BY PARTICIPATING, YOU GIVE YOUR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY.

YOU THE PARTICIPANT UNDERSTAND THAT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE WEB-SURVEY PORTION, YOU WILL HAVE THE OPTION TO PRINT AND/OR DIGITALLY-RECORD YOUR OWN COPY OF THE WEB-BASED SURVEY’S CONSENT FORM.

YOU THE PARTICIPANT UNDERSTAND THAT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PHONE INTERVIEW, YOU WILL BE ASKED TO GIVE ORAL CONSENT TO THE PHONE INTERVIEW AGREEMENT, AND YOU WILL RECEIVE AN EMAIL OF THE RESEARCHER-SIGNED ORAL AGREEMENT. UPON RECEIVING THE EMAIL AND CHECKING THAT THE AGREEMENT IS CORRECT, YOU WILL REPLY WITH AN AFFIRMATIVE/CONFIRMING EMAIL (I.e. “Everything looks great, thanks.”).

Participant Name ____________________________

Oral presentation of the agreement and consent was given to the participant, who was not able to read the written consent. By signing, I certify that the oral presentation was consistent with this written document.

Signature of Person Obtaining Oral Consent (the researcher) ____________________________ Date _____