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Culture and the Classroom: Teachers' Perspectives of Ethnic and Racial Culture in the Middle School Classroom

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It is important to study these views and ask whether educators are able to increase awareness of their own class, gender, and race and reflect on how their views and beliefs impact their teaching. This study employed a multi-site design to compare four public middle schools in Colorado on perceptions of cultural competency as well as investigating possible correlations between these perceptions and the disaggregated discipline data for each of the schools.

While it was not possible to confirm a relationship was between the average school site score on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum and discipline referrals of Hispanic students the qualitative data illuminated the perspectives of the participating teachers regarding cultural proficiency and the classroom. The qualitative data revealed significant negative perspectives held by the participants regarding the largest student group in the middle schools in the study. The focus group data illuminated the perspectives of the teachers in this study as well as their perception of the effect race and culture have on the middle school classroom.

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CULTURE AND THE CLASSROOM: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES OF ETHNIC

AND RACIAL CULTURE IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM

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the Faculty of the Morgridge College of Education

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Rachel E. Heide

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Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

Over the past decade the face of American education has changed considerably. The dramatic shift in the demographic of United States is most pronounced in public education (Phutsog, 1999). Change is constantly surrounding us, such as the picture of change Perea (2004) paints of the old-fashioned mom-and pop store torn down to make room for a strip mall which, in turn, is torn down to make room for a parking lot for the shopping mall and is itself turned back into an outdoor mall made up of mom-and-pop shops. Past pictures of public education include the picture of all White boys and girls being taught in the classroom by a White teacher. However, this picture has changed considerably with the inclusion and globalization of culturally diverse students. The 2010 Census confirmed a growing number of non-White citizens in the U.S. (United States Census Bureau, 2010). The population of students in our schools has followed the same growth pattern. In contrast to the rapid and significant change in the demographics across the nation, the demographic of teachers and educational leaders has changed much more slowly and less dramatically. With these changes occurring between the make-up of the student body and educators, issues of equity are on the rise. Perea (2004) indicates that "The problem, of course, is that what worked a century ago no longer works today. Assimilation doesn't work anymore because there is no longer a single cohesive America to assimilate into" (p. 11). The cultural gap between student and educator populations

calls into question whether the public school teachers and leaders are able to ensure equity and access to education for all learners. We have entered a time where "…what seemed like stable White ethnicities and heritages in an earlier era are now entering a zone of recoding and redefinition" (McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993; p. xiii).

Dramatic inequalities also exist in education between urban and suburban areas where students in urban areas do not have the same access as their suburban counterparts to highly qualified teachers, and with impoverished students of color at the very bottom of this ladder (Nieto, 2003). Educating everyone's children has not historically been the societal norm. After the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, it is now federal mandate that schools ensure all students are successful. NCLB focuses on closing the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers by calling for equity and high quality education which ensures the success of all students regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family background, etc. (McKenzie, 2004).

Students in urban schools are the ones who seem to lose the most in the current educational system. Urban schools are becoming victims within the current educational system by being overrepresented with under-qualified teachers and experiencing conditions within the school that the White middle-class would find intolerable (McKenzie, 2004; Nieto, 2003). The answer, historically, has been to raise the standards and institute high-stakes testing leaving teachers to receive the most blame in a failing

school (Nieto, 2003).   With teachers receiving most of blame in response to inequitable educational systems it is imperative to give teachers, both veteran and new the tools to be culturally responsive in their teaching practices in order to ensure the success of all students.

Educators must become better at supporting today's diverse student population and addressing the inequities that are present in our schools and communities. Many teachers and administrators in schools have a limited awareness of how their class, gender, and race impact their work, and often do not see how their views about others' class, gender, and race help to reproduce social and educational inequities. These limited or uneducated views may also contribute to the achievement gap that exists between students belonging to the minority and non-minority groups. It is important to study these views and ask whether teachers are able to increase awareness of their own class, gender, and race and reflect on how these positions impact their practice. Perhaps a heightened level of awareness will lead to a more culturally proficient teacher and stronger relationships between the teacher, their students, and the school community.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature and Framework for Understanding

Culture, Poverty, and Public Education

As our population has increased, so has the diversity in that population. In Colorado, the number of Hispanic students enrolled in schools has increased significantly. According to the Colorado Department of Education the number of Hispanic students enrolled in PK-12 education has increased 157% since 1986 (cited in Colorado Children's Campaign, 2010). Over the past decade this increase has remained consistent. A visual representation of this increase can be found in Appendix C, *Figure* 1 (Colorado Department of Education, 2010). As traditionally minority students move to being the majority in some school districts, issues related to race, ethnicity, culture, poverty and closing the achievement gap become increasingly important to public education.

While there have been various acts and laws put in place to monitor and ensure the appropriate treatment of people in particular racial or ethnic groups there have been few to no controls put into place to monitor the treatment of those whose diversity places them in an impoverished group (Biddle, 2001). Many minority members also suffer from poverty making it difficult to delineate which circumstance--poverty or racial status--has a greater impact on students' academic and behavioral achievement. Many studies indicate that one out of every five students is likely to experience educational difficulties

stemming from poverty (Biddle, 2001; Berliner, 2005). These include, but are not

limited to, arriving to school on time, having the right clothing, shoes, and lunch, and

completing school work (Beegle, 2003). Beegle (2003) expresses a sense of violence,

humiliation, and fear when reflecting on her early education from the perspective of

someone born into generational poverty. As a matter of human nature, people use their

own experience as their point of reference. It would then stand to reason that differences

between the teacher's personal experience and that of his or her students leads to a clash

of cultures, at times, and requires insight and reflection regarding how to best assist

students to be successful in today's society (Delpit, 2006; Kozol, 2005; Perea, 2004).

Culture and racial diversity, in and of themselves, are not the problem in schools.

Rather, the positive or negative manner in which educators and community members

respond to the cultural and racial diversity present in schools has extensive impacts on the

self-esteem and academic success of students from varied cultural backgrounds (Phutsog,

1999). Pai (1990) notes that:

> Our goals, how we teach, what we teach, how we relate to children and each other
> are rooted in the norms of our culture. Our society's predominant worldview and
> cultural norms are so deeply ingrained in how we educate children that we seldom
> think about the possibility that there may be other different but equally legitimate
> and effective approaches to teaching and learning. In a society with as much
> socio-cultural and racial diversity as the United States, the lack of this
> wonderment about alternative ways often results in unequal education and social
> injustice (p. 229)

These changes have, therefore, challenged schools to evaluate the approach, which is taken to instruct students, to manage classrooms, and to student learning, to name a few, in order to best meet the needs of a diverse population of students.

There is little doubt about the central role culture plays in learning. Phuntsog (1999) indicates that

> …it is important to emphasize that we are all victims of cultural ethnocentrism that seriously impedes one's ability to view values, norms, and behavior from different cultures as viable ways of perceiving reality. Teachers' cultural ethnocentric outlooks may blind them to their own negative assumptions or stereotypes that they may hold toward different cultural groups. It is crucial to provide teachers with powerful learning experiences designed to bring about profound personal transformation needed to begin the process of becoming culturally responsive teachers (p. 3).

While the percentage of minority students in public schools has increased over the past decade, the number of teachers belonging to minority groups has decreased and the chance for that percentage to increase seems very small (Nieto, 2003). In 1972, 22% of students enrolled in public schools were considered minority students, and by 1998 this number had increased to 37%. In contrast, almost 90% of the teaching force is White and this has not changed much in the last 40 years (Nieto, 2003). Several studies indicate that the majority of teachers in the U.S. are White, middle-class, monolingual women (Nieto, 2003; Swanson-Gehrke, 2005; Edgar, Patton, & Day-Vines, 2002). In addition, a contributing factor that isolates teachers from experiences with students of diverse cultures is the fact that most teachers attend college less than one hundred miles from where they live permanently or where they lived prior to college (Zimpher & Ashburn,

1992). Studies by Dilworth (1992) and Goodlad (1990) found that most teacher

candidates will have grown up with little knowledge about or direct contact with others of

different social class, racial, or religious backgrounds. As previously mentioned, in many

areas racial and ethnic minority students now comprise the majority population in public

schools. As a result, teachers are far more likely than their predecessors to teach children

with backgrounds different than their own (Sleeter, 2001). In other words, teachers and

students generally live in geographically and existentially different worlds (Gay, 2000).

This widening gap between student and teaching populations is alarming, at best, and

requires a deeper look at the impact culture plays on the classroom so as to identify ways

in which to bridge this gap.

Teacher Perceptions and Expectations

      "Social reproduction" or the perpetuation of the current social hierarchy where

students from middle class and/or White families tend to find educational success over

their minority counterparts can partially be attributed to teacher perceptions and

expectations (Collins, 2009). Research suggests that teachers' expectations of minority

students' academic performance are lower than expectations for their non-minority

counterparts (Diamond, 2004; Farkus, 1996; Farkus et al., 1990). This same research

examines how teachers' low expectations become "self-fulfilling prophesy," lowering

students' academic self-image, causing students to exert less effort, and leading teachers

to give less challenging work to minority students, "dumbing-down" the content taught.

A real challenge for teacher educator programs is to prepare teachers to have the skills, attitudes, knowledge, and sensitivity to connect meaningfully with their diverse population of students, thereby empowering the students to succeed both academically and socially in a culturally complex world. Likewise, school districts are challenged to help veteran teachers develop these same skills in order to overcome cultural biases to successfully reach their students.

Literature from the past decade suggests that many educational professionals are unable to see the ways in which their unconscious cultural perspectives shape and influence their own views of the teaching and learning process (Craig, Hull, Haggart, & Perez-Selles, 2000). From this veiled perspective, educators tend to explain students' inability to benefit from instruction in terms of poor student motivation, disability, or a lack of parental involvement. Biddle (2001) posits that this perspective may have emerged from an American ideology, which stresses that everyone can succeed provided they obtain appropriate skills and work hard enough, since Americans live in a country that provides a level playing field.

Most schools have been doing a decent job of providing a quality education for their White middle-class students, but the same cannot be said for the education provided to students of color, especially those living in poverty (McKenzie, 2004). In fact, students of color are not only performing at lower achievement levels than their White counterparts (Campbell, Hombo, & Masseo, 2000) but are overrepresented in special

education and lower level and remedial classes (Olson, 1991; Reglins, 1992; Robertson, Kushner, Starks, & Drescher, 1994; Useem, 1990). Racial and ethnic minority students drop out of school in higher numbers than their White counterparts (Cardenas, Montecel, Supik, & Harris, 1992; Colorado Department of Education, 2010, see Figure 2); are frequently educated by teachers who do not believe they can learn or who are actively negative in their attitude toward these students (McKenzie, 2001); are underrepresented in gifted and talented and higher level and advanced placement classes (Robertson et al., 1994); are often educated in schools with fewer resources (Kozol, 2005) and with the least experienced teachers (Urban Teacher Collaborative, 2000); and are more likely than their White counterparts to be suspended or expelled (Gordon, Paina, & Keleher, 2000). In order to effectively teach a diverse population of students, teachers need to examine their own classroom practices and reflect on their own assumptions and biases that may be influencing students' ability to learn (Delpit, 2006, Beegle, 2003).

McKenzie & Scheurich (2004) conceptualize an idea they describe as "equity traps" into which educators periodically fall. Equity traps are "ways of thinking or assumptions that prevent educators from believing that their students of color can be successful learners" (p. 602). The four areas making up the concept of the equity trap are 1) A Deficit View; 2) Racial Erasure; 3) Avoidance and Employment of the Gaze; and 4) Paralogical Beliefs and Behaviors. The Deficit View refers to the belief that students' lack of success is due to certain inherent deficits students possess such as cultural

inadequacies, lack of motivation, poor behavior, or failed families or communities.

Racial Erasure is the concept of claiming to be color-blind and prioritizing other factors,

such as economics, as the area in which to place blame for the lack of success students

may be showing. McKenzie (2004) suggests Racial Erasure is a method utilized to cover

or hide an unwillingness to address race and/or racism. The concept of the Gaze focuses

on the idea of avoiding the "eye" of the community and the building and district

administration (avoidance of the gaze) and the idea of changing the views of those who

attempt to advocate for a contradictory view (employment of the gaze). Teachers may

choose to work in a school that has little building administrator or community

involvement in the classroom where they are able to treat students in ways that may be

unacceptable for White, middle class students. Teachers may also counter any advocacy

attempts by others with negative comments until the other person changes their viewpoint

or no loner attempts to advocate for the contradictory viewpoint. The final area within

the concept of equity traps is Paralogical Beliefs and Behaviors. Simply stated,

Paralogical Beliefs and Behaviors function as a way of blaming negative teacher behavior

on student behavior. The teacher is not at fault for his/her actions due to the actions of

the student (McKenzie, 2004). This equity trap affects how students are treated as well

as how students see themselves as learners. By recognizing these equity traps and

combating them it is possible to create a learning environment in which students of all

backgrounds can be successful.

Teachers and Cultural Proficiency

In this early part of the 21st Century, concerns remain that, as the student population becomes increasingly diverse, the teaching population remains mostly White, middle class, and female (Causey, Thomas & Armento, 1999; Gay and Howard, 2000). Our teaching force, both in-service and pre-service teachers, need to be educated on how to teach an increasingly diverse population of students (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Many civic movements, such as the Civil Rights Movement and gender equity efforts, have brought increasing awareness of the need to address diversity in teacher education programs. According to Banks and Banks (2007), multicultural education in the United States has slowly developed with the growing demands of a pluralistic society. Multicultural education was intended to improve the classroom learning experience for students from diverse backgrounds. Many higher education institutions across the nation have incorporated some type of multicultural education training into their curriculum. However, the concept of multiculturalism has developed into some very broad definitions, leaving some individuals to believe that simplistic approaches such as having a "taco day" are enough to acknowledge students' background and satisfy equity needs. These interpretations by in-service educators have served to make inequality less obvious to the dominant culture and to give the false perception that racism is a thing of the past (Leonardo, 2009). These shallow approaches to multiculturalism do not actually create equality within the educational system.

Sleeter's 1991 study recommends that contemporary teacher preparation programs provide teacher candidates a greater ability to be responsive to issues of race, ethnicity, gender, age, and the like than their more veteran counterparts received. In the study, student teachers were attempting to implement some culturally responsive strategies when their cooperating classroom teacher would discount or condemn the practices. Sleeter (1991) further suggests that the cooperating, more veteran teacher often feels threatened by the use of multicultural strategies and may discourage the more junior teacher from using them. Perhaps this discomfort comes from a lack of understanding of the importance of incorporating culturally responsive strategies in the classroom. While new teachers need to develop their understanding of culturally responsive instructional strategies, it seems more experienced teachers should not be excluded from this as Sleeter's (1991) study indicates.

Many practicing teachers and school administrators look at the most rapidly growing minority group, Hispanic students[1], through the lens of a deficit model, believing that their lack of success is due to issues within the family (Valenzuela, 2005). This view of Hispanic students creates a disconnect between teachers and students and perpetuates, perhaps even enlarges, the achievement gap. The existence of this deficit view points to a need for greater understandings of culture and learning.

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[1] In this study, the term "Hispanic" is used to refer to students of Hispanic and Latino ethnicity, not African American, following the Colorado Department of Education's standard classification of ethnic/racial backgrounds for students.

Culture of Power and White Privilege

Whether it is happening consciously or subconsciously these various aspects of culture affect how individuals interact with each other within the school environment through creating cultural conflicts or through building cultural understanding (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2003). The concepts of "the culture of power" and "White privilege" contribute heavily to the cultural dissonance existent within our public schools today. The culture of power can be viewed in this context as a relationship between power and knowledge: "Thinking about this relationship in terms of the politics of race is crucial" (Apple, 1990, p. viii). Delpit (2006) states that the culture of power is

> the codes or rules that relate to linguistic forms, communicative strategies, and presentation of self; that is , ways of talking, ways of writing, ways of dressing and ways of interacting. The rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power (pp. 24-25).

Understanding the culture of power is especially important given that the culture of power in most school systems is the White, middle-class culture.

In a very vivid account of her own experience in the White culture, Peggy McIntosh (1988) defines "White privilege" as:

> …an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks (p. 133).

Framework for Understanding Cultural Proficiency

Cultural proficiency is a way of being that allows individuals and organizations to function effectively with people who differ from them. It is also a developmental approach for addressing issues that emerge from these differences among people (Lindsey, 2006). Delpit describes cultural proficiency as

> ...A very special kind of listening, listening that requires not only open eyes and ears, but open hearts and minds. We do not really see through our eyes or hear through our ears, but through our beliefs. To put our beliefs on hold is to cease to exist as ourselves for a moment—and that is not easy. It is painful as well, because it means turning yourself inside out, giving up your own sense of who you are, and being willing to see yourself in the unflattering light of another's angry gaze. It is not easy, but it is the only way to learn what it might feel like to be someone else and the only way to start the dialogue (Delpit, 2006, pg. 46).

Lindsey, Robins, and Terrel (2005) describe cultural proficiency as knowing how to learn and teach about different groups in ways that acknowledge and honor all groups represented. Teachers who are culturally proficient would then exhibit these skills of honoring and acknowledging the groups represented and using that information to enhance their effectiveness as the classroom teacher and skills for communicating with students and families.

To help understand cultural proficiency, Lindsey, et. al, (2005) developed the following cultural proficiency continuum. This continuum describes the range of behaviors that may be present within schools.

1. Cultural destructiveness: negating, disparaging, or purging cultures that are different from your own.

2. Cultural incapacity: elevating the superiority of your own cultural values and beliefs and suppressing cultures that are different from your own.

3. Cultural blindness: acting as if differences among cultures do not exist and refusing to recognize any differences.

4. Cultural precompetence: recognizing that lack of knowledge, experience, and understanding of other cultures limits your ability to effectively interact with them.

5. Cultural competence: interacting with other cultural groups in ways that recognize and value their differences that motivate you to assess your own skills and expand your knowledge and resources and that, ultimately, cause you to adapt your relational behavior.

6. Cultural proficiency: honoring the differences among cultures and viewing diversity as a benefit, and interacting knowledgably and respectfully among a variety of cultural groups (p. 54).

Teachers and students often bring different cultural frames of reference and communication styles to the classroom. Unfortunately, learning may not occur because the student may not be able to form and display knowledge in the manner the teacher expects (Delpit, 2006). To be more culturally proficient, it is important to keep the

perspective that people are the best experts about their own lives and experiences. Aspects of one's experience can only be authentically chronicled by that particular individual and should not so quickly be identified as false simply because the interpreter of the situation does not share that same perspective (Delpit, 2006). While most educators believe that racism is morally wrong, the inherent challenge is to move this moral standing into real, comprehensive, cognitive, and intellectual foundations of understanding that will allow us to challenge racism in our everyday personal interactions and professional practices (Singleton, 2006, p. xvii). Entering into dialogue about culture and race is a key element in achieving equity and access in public education and narrowing the existing achievement gap.

Culturally Responsive Strategies

On the frontlines of the educational process teachers are in a critical position to provide learning experiences that best reflect cultural integrity and support academic success for all children (Phutsog, 1999). Being able to utilize culturally responsive teaching allows teachers to involve students' personal experiences and background as a method for helping students learn essential academic skills such as reading, writing, and mathematics as well as essential behavioral skills and problem solving skills. Also, utilizing culturally responsive teaching has the potential for addressing the barriers of social prejudice that both teachers and students bring into the classroom and, ideally, effecting social change.

The issues faced by our schools today in trying to close the achievement gap are no less than the civil rights movement of our time. A key element to bridging the achievement gap is to remain student-centered by connecting learning to students' lives through the students' culture, strengths, goals, dreams, and interests as a starting point for learning rather than focusing on the students' deficits (Williams, 2003). Culturally responsive teaching practice is more than just mentioning a few individuals representative of minority groups; it is rather celebrating all the contributions to our society (Apple, 1990). A culturally responsive student-centered approach also develops students' sense of intrinsic motivation, encouraging greater academic and behavioral progress.

Chapter Three: Method

Purpose of the Study

This study intended to employ both qualitative and quantitative methods to address the following question:

Is there a relationship between disaggregated discipline data and teachers' perspectives of their own cultural proficiency?

While the intention of the study was to discover if a relationship existed between the discipline data and the teachers' perspectives of cultural proficiency through the use of the *CDE Equity Toolkit for Administrators* (2010), the data needed to evaluate the existence of any relationship was unavailable. The qualitative data collected as a result of the work with the toolkit, therefore, became the focus of the study.

The following questions were designed for the original anticipated analysis:

a) Are the percentages of Hispanic versus non-Hispanic students who receive discipline referrals in proportion to the student population of the middle school?

b) Is there a change in teacher perspective on cultural proficiency after the use of the *CDE Equity Toolkit for Administrators* (2010)?

c) Does number of years teaching have a relationship with teachers' perspective of their cultural proficiency?

d) Is there a correlation between the percentage of Hispanic students receiving discipline referrals and the teachers' perception of their placement on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum?

Unfortunately, the researcher was unable to gather data about discipline referrals at an individual teacher level, to connect with teachers' survey data on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum, and so analysis of the primary research question and sub-questions "a" and "d" was not possible. The mixed methods design did include a collection of in-depth focus group data related to teachers' Self-Assessment for Teachers surveys, however, and these data were very enlightening with regard to gaining insights into the teachers' perspectives of how racial and ethnic culture impact middle school classrooms.

In order to help control potential researcher bias and the possibility of prejudgment of the participants in the focus groups, the researcher did not gather and analyze the discipline referral data or analyze the pre- and post-survey data until after the focus groups were completed. Because of this, the adjustment to the focus of this study to accommodate the lack of adequate discipline referral data had to be completed after all the qualitative data were collected and examined.

This study used the *Colorado Department of Education Equity Toolkit for Administrators* (2010) in order to survey and analyze levels of cultural proficiency of teachers in four middle schools in a Colorado school district. This Toolkit was used both to help control potential researcher bias and to try this recommended approach from the state.

Because the focus groups, using the Toolkit approach, and the pre- and post-surveys of the Cultural Proficiency Continuum were all successfully completed, the research presented here now examines the following research questions:

What are the perspectives the middle school teachers hold of their own cultural proficiency, and how do these perspectives impact their daily work in the classroom and school?

The sub questions from the initial proposal are still examined, specifically:

a) Are the percentages of Hispanic versus non-Hispanic who receive discipline referrals in proportion to the population of the middle school?

b) Is there a change in the teachers' ratings of cultural proficiency after the use of the *CDE Equity Toolkit for Administrators* (2010)?

c) Does number of years teaching have a relationship with teachers' ratings on the cultural proficiency survey?

This sequential study (Plano, 2008) used data from focus groups, surveys, reflective journaling, and school-level disaggregated discipline data in order to examine teachers' perspectives on their own cultural proficiency, what experiences or mindsets may have influenced those perspectives, and how those perspectives may affect the classroom.

Study Site and Participant Selection

This study utilized a multi-site design to gather data in four public middle schools in Colorado on perceptions of cultural proficiency as well as examining the disaggregated discipline data for each of the schools to provide additional context for understanding possible impacts of teachers' perceptions and cultural proficiency. Approximately 160 participants were invited to take a survey rating their own cultural proficiency, which provided the baseline for the study. At the time the survey was given, participants had the opportunity to volunteer for the focus groups that were to be conducted at each of the four sites. One of the four schools did not have enough participants volunteer for the focus group, therefore, focus groups were conducted at three of the four middle school sites. There were five to eight participants at each participating site.

Demographic Findings

The demographic findings indicated that teachers who have taught 11 years or more made up the largest population of the sample for the middle school sites. Of the respondents, 49.5% had taught 11 years or more; 9.3% had taught 6-10 years; 41.2% had taught five years or less. Within the focus groups, teachers who had taught five years or fewer were the majority, at 53.8%; 7.7% of the focus group participants had taught six to ten years; and 38.5% participants had taught 11 or more years. For context, Table 2 outlines the ethnicity/racial demographics of the overall teaching population at each of the middle schools.

Table 2

Teacher Ethnicity/Race by Middle School.

School	White	Hispanic	Black	Asian	Native American
MS1	81%	14%	0%	3%	3%
MS2	92%	8%	0%	0%	0%
MS3	87%	8%	3%	0%	3%
MS4	83%	13%	2%	0%	2%

Methodology

A sequential approach was used in this study. The researcher carefully sequenced stages of data collection and analysis in order to collect data needed but analyzing in a sequence that would help minimize the possibility that the researcher would participate in the focus groups having already made assumptions about the participants. These steps, in order, were:

1. Recruitment of a large group of potential participants

2. Administration of the Self-Assessment for Teachers to the large group and simultaneous invitation to participate in the focus group portion of the study (no analysis of the surveys at this time);

3. Data collection through focus groups and reflective journaling processes, with selected survey participants who volunteered for this stage of the research;

4. Administration of the follow-up Self-Assessment for Teachers;

5. Analysis of themes from focus group and journal data;

6. Analysis of pre- and post- administrations of the Self-Assessment for Teachers;

7. Analysis of disaggregated school level discipline data.

Measures

The Self-Assessment for Teachers from the *CDE Equity Toolkit for School Administrators* (2010) was used in this study to identify individuals' perceptions of cultural proficiency. The Toolkit was developed in alignment with the focus of the Commissioner of Education for the state of Colorado in order to support community and school leaders in addressing issues of bias, harassment, discrimination and prejudice within the school communities. The 25-question Self-Assessment for Teachers survey was administered as a pre- and post-survey at the beginning and the end of the fall semester of the school year in 2010 (See appendix A). The survey contained three possible answers to each of the 25 questions, which were assigned a number in order to code the data quantitatively: most of the time (3), some of the time (2), and never (1). An overall score was calculated and each individual was placed on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum based on the range in which the score fell. Participants' identities were kept confidential through the use of a coding system. Participants constructed a number on their survey, which was the year they first began teaching followed by the middle two, and last two of their social security number. This system allowed for more accurate responses from participants on the survey as well as allowing for confidentiality of responses.

After the first administration of the survey, focus groups were formed with a minimum of five participants and maximum of eight in each group at each of the middle schools. Participants were selected to ensure that the focus groups had only teaching staff participants even though some survey respondents were in other roles within the school. The groups met monthly for three months during the fall semester and used the guiding questions from the *CDE Equity Toolkit for Administrators* (2010) as well as researcher-developed questions about culture and discipline (See Appendix B). Discussions, journaling, and observations of the focus groups generated qualitative data. The follow-up Self-Assessment for Teachers survey was given to participants after their final focus group meeting, and only to the focus group participants to determine changes on the cultural proficiency continuum. Post-surveys were coded in the same manner as the pre-survey to maintain confidentiality, but also to match pre- and post-results for analysis. It should be noted that the qualitative data collection through the focus group and reflective journaling was not intended as a treatment by the researcher, but as means for collecting the qualitative data for this study. The analysis the pre- and post-Self-Assessment for Teachers was to measure any effect the focus group might have had on participants' perspectives on their own cultural proficiency.

The quantitative data analyses were conducted after the collection of the qualitative data from the focus groups and observations during the interpretation phase. A Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted using SPSS statistical software to determine if a relationship existed between the number of years teaching and the result of the Self-Assessment for Teachers survey. The statistical significance level was set at

$p<.05$ with $n=108$. A Spearman's Rho correlation was also conducted using SPSS

statistical software to determine if a relationship existed between the average score by

school on the Self-Assessment for Teachers and the discipline data.

Discipline data were retrieved in December following the conclusion of the focus

groups from the district's student management system through the Management of

Information Systems department. The ad hoc reporting period was set for the first day of

school in August through the final day of school before Winter Break in December.

Discipline data were collected from the district system as a single student, single event

report. For example, student "A" may have received a discipline referral resulting in an

in-school suspension (ISS) and then later received a discipline referral resulting in an out-

of-school suspension (OSS). Both the ISS and OSS reported as a single line of data for

student "A." Unfortunately, the researcher found that the discipline data were not linked

directly to teacher participants in the study, but were linked to the individual school, so

analysis and research questions were addressed accordingly.

Qualitative Journal and Focus Group Instrument

The qualitative data were collected through guided-reflection journals (see

Appendix B) and through researcher facilitated focus groups. The participants expressed

their thoughts in reflective journals during the fall semester of 2010 between October and

December while the focus group also met. During this period of time, the first month in

the focus group was spent dialoguing on the topic of bias. During the second month,

participants spent time dialoging on the topic of discrimination and harassment followed

by the third month on the topic of community and family engagement. Participants were

given two prompts, which they responded to in their journals during the three-month

reflective time period (see Appendix B). The focus group dialogues were audiotaped and

transcribed at the end of the three-month time period. Focus groups lasted approximately

one hour and were held after school hours at each of the school sites. The researcher

facilitated two of the three focus groups and a retired district employee facilitated the

remaining focus group due to the researcher being closely connected to that particular

school site, so that participants would feel comfortable being open in the focus group

dialogue.

The researcher utilized pseudonyms for all focus group participants in notes and

transcripts. Also, a coding system was used to assign participants an alias so the

researcher was not aware of identities and participants' survey ratings, until after analyses

were completed.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The reflection journals and focus group transcripts were analyzed through a

process known as coding, which according to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) is the

process of categorically marking or referencing units of text with codes and labels as a

way to uncover patterns and meanings. The researcher began the coding process using a

priori themes drawn from the *CDE Equity Toolkit for Administrators* (2010; see

Appendix E). The reflective journals and focus group transcripts were coded by marking

the text to keep track of words and phrases that were perceived by the researcher to have

meaning, and quotes supporting the themes were also noted. During the coding process,

inductive themes were identified while reading the journal reflections and focus group

transcripts. Themes were further modified after the completion of the coding process by relating the preliminary themes to the coded responses.

Analyses

A Spearman's Rho correlation analysis was used to determine if a relationship existed between the average survey results and the discipline data for the four school sites using SPSS statistical software. The statistical significance level was set at $p<.05$ with $n=108$. A Pearson's correlation was used to determine if a relationship existed between the number of years teaching the results from the Self-Assessment for Teacher. The statistical significance level was set at $p<.05$.

Chapter Four: Quantitative Results

Introduction

The 25-question Self-Assessment for Teachers from the *CDE Equity Toolkit for Administrators* (2010) was administered to collect data on teachers' perspectives of their own cultural proficiency. The researcher facilitated focus groups in order to collect qualitative data to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' views of cultural issues and proficiency using guiding questions from the *CDE Equity Toolkit for Administrators* (2010) for the discussions. Discipline data from all four middle schools was collected from the fall semester of 2010 in order to provide further context from the school settings.

Descriptive Statistics

This study utilized a multi-site design focusing on four middle schools in one Colorado public school district. The district is comprised of approximately 18,500 students in kindergarten through the 12th grade. The following is a breakdown of the district student demographics:

Table 3.1
District Student Demographic Data

Student Demographic Group	District Percentage
Hispanic	51.5
White	45.5
Native American	1.0
Asian	1.0
Black	1.0

The data for each of the four middle schools in this study were disaggregated into dichotomous student groups: Hispanic and non-Hispanic groups, since the other ethnic/racial minority groups were comprised of so few students, and the Hispanic group was the researcher's primary group of focus as these sites. The following table exhibits the disaggregated demographic information of each of the middle schools based on the dichotomous groups:

Table 3.2

Disaggregated Student Demographic Data by School

School Identification	Percent Hispanic	Percent non-Hispanic	Enrollment
MS1	73.3	26.7	674
MS2	63.4	36.6	781
MS3	68.9	31.1	655
MS4	77.2	22.8	751

Approximately 160 middle school teachers were given the opportunity to participate in the Self-Assessment for Teachers survey, and 108 participants completed the survey. The survey responses were given numerical scores based on the following: 3- Most of the time; 2- Some of the time; 1- Never. The number values were then added together to determine one single numerical score for each completed survey. The numerical scores were then placed on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum based on the following numerical ranges in Table 3.3. The numerical ranges were determined with a consultant from CDE who participated in the writing of the *CDE Equity Toolkit for Administrators* (2010). However, the numerical ranges attributed to the Cultural Proficiency Continuum were not part of the original Toolkit and, therefore, is a limitation of this study. The results of the survey are displayed in Table 3.4 in Appendix D.

Table 3.3
Cultural Proficiency Continuum Score Ranges

Proficiency Level	Numerical Range
Cultural Proficiency	75 and above
Cultural Competence	65-74
Cultural Precompetence	55-64
Cultural Blindness	45-54
Cultural Incapacity	35-44
Cultural Destructiveness	34 and below

Table 3.41 below references the percentage of teachers scoring in each of the six categories (See Appendix D, Table 3.4 for each individual teacher's score).

Table 3.41

Cultural Proficiency Continuum: Percentages Scored by Category

Proficiency Level	Percentage
Cultural Proficiency	0.0
Cultural Competence	32.7
Cultural Precompetence	43.3
Cultural Blindness	23.1
Cultural Incapacity	1.0
Cultural Destructiveness	0.0

A mean of the Self-Assessment for Teachers survey scores, displayed in Table 3.5, was calculated for each of the middle schools to determine an average cultural proficiency score and the frequency of each proficiency level by school site is displayed in Table 3.51.

Table 3.5
Average Cultural Proficiency Score by School

School Identification	*M*	Proficiency Level
MS1	59.6	Cultural Precompetence
MS2	58.0	Cultural Precompetence
MS3	62.0	Cultural Precompetence
MS4	62.1	Cultural Precompetence

Table 3.51

Frequency Percent for Each Level by School

School Identification	Proficiency Level	Frequency (%)
MS1	Cultural Proficiency	0
	Cultural Competence	27.6
	Cultural Precompetence	44.8
	Cultural Blindness	27.6
	Cultural Incapacity	0
	Cultural Destructiveness	0
MS2	Cultural Proficiency	0
	Cultural Competence	27.6
	Cultural Precompetence	34.5
	Cultural Blindness	34.5
	Cultural Incapacity	3.4
	Cultural Destructiveness	0
MS3	Cultural Proficiency	0
	Cultural Competence	39.1
	Cultural Precompetence	47.8
	Cultural Blindness	13.0
	Cultural Incapacity	0
	Cultural Destructiveness	0
MS4	Cultural Proficiency	0
	Cultural Competence	39.1
	Cultural Precompetence	47.8
	Cultural Blindness	13.0
	Cultural Incapacity	0
	Cultural Destructiveness	0

Quantitative Findings by Research Question

This section of the chapter presents the quantitative analysis conducted to address each research question. A Spearman's Rho was used to determine any relationships between the data points. Statistical significance was determined by an alpha ≤ 0.05.

Research sub-question(a). The first research sub-question asked, "Are the percentages of Hispanic versus non-Hispanic students who receive discipline referrals in proportion to the student population of the middle school?" The analysis visually assessed whether there was an over- or under-representation of overall discipline incidences for the Hispanic student group. The results of this analysis can be found in Table 3.6 and indicate no consistent patterns for discipline referrals related to students being Hispanic or not. Table 3.61 presents similar over- and under-representation data for the state of Colorado. Data were obtained from the Colorado Department of Education website. The state data show an over representation of Hispanic students in the state discipline referral data statewide.

Table 3.6

Over/Under Representation of Overall Discipline Referrals for Student Groups at Each Site

School Identification	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic
MS1	-2.92	2.92
MS2	-11.53	11.53
MS3	9.30	-9.30
MS4	-12.79	12.79

Table 3.61

Over/Under Representation of Overall Discipline Referrals for Student Groups for Colorado

Hispanic	Non-Hispanic
9.82	-9.82

Research sub-question (b). The second research sub-question asked, "Is there a change in teacher scores on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum after the use of the *CDE Equity Toolkit for Administrators* (2010)*?"* The results from pre- and post-survey administrations were analyzed to determine what change, if any, occurred. The results of the Repeated Measures t-Test in Table 3.7 indicates the differences in the pre- and post-test scores are not statistically significant at the 0.05 level [t (11) $= -1.732$, p =0.111].

The analysis indicates no significant changes in participants' survey results for those participating in the focus groups.

Table 3.7

Repeated Measure t-Test Results: Pre- and Post-Surveys

t	df	p
-1.732	11	0.111

Research sub-question (c). The research question asked, "Does number of years teaching have a relationship with teachers' perspectives of their own cultural proficiency?" To address this question survey results were analyzed to test whether a correlation exists between a teacher's number of years teaching and the cultural proficiency score. Teachers were asked to indicate the number of years they have been teaching on their survey and a Pearson's correlation was then calculated. The results of the Pearson's correlation was statistically significant [$r (104)= -0.214$, $p=0.032$] and indicated a slight negative relationship between years of teaching and the score on the survey.

Original research sub-question (d). The research question asked, "Is there a correlation between the percentage of Hispanic students receiving discipline referrals and the teachers' perception of their placement on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum?"

Because the discipline data were at the school level, but the survey data were at the

teacher level, it was not possible to address this research question.

Quantitative Findings Summary

The results of the repeated measures t-test indicated that the focus group did not

have an effect on the results of the survey for the focus group participants [t (11) =

−1.732, *p* =0.111]. It is possible that an ongoing focus group utilizing the *CDE Equity*

Toolkit for Administrators (2010) could result in movement along the Cultural

Proficiency Continuum, however, this study indicated no significant changes in

perception as a result of using the Toolkit. A slight, negative relationship exists between

number of years teaching and the cultural proficiency score teachers received from the

survey. Finally, the question regarding discipline referrals and teachers' perspectives of

cultural proficiency could not be addressed with the data accessed.

Chapter Five: Qualitative Results

Introduction

This section discusses the qualitative data gathered to further explore teachers' perspectives of their own cultural proficiency. Qualitative data came from focus groups as well as reflective journals, which were guided using the *CDE Equity Toolkit for Administrators* (2010). Of the four middle school sites, one did not have enough participants volunteer for the focus group, so focus group and reflective journaling came from only three of the four schools.

The researcher facilitated two of the three focus groups in order to collect qualitative data to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' perspectives on cultural proficiency using guiding questions (see Appendix C) from the Toolkit for the discussions. Another individual facilitated a focus group in order to avoid a bias in the data due to the researcher being closely connected with that particular school.

Qualitative Journal Results by Theme

The qualitative section of this study was originally designed to better understand the possible interactions of teachers' perspectives of their own cultural proficiency on the middle school classroom as these relate to discipline. Because the quantitative data needed to link discipline referral with teachers were not available, the qualitative findings presented here are instead an illumination of the perspectives of the participating teachers

regarding cultural proficiency and the classroom. The reflections are categorized by theme as outlined in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8. *Identified Themes Reflective Journal Response Frequencies*

Journal Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Totals
Teacher Perspective on Cultural Proficiency	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	15
Culture and Discipline	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	5
Cultural Confusion	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	6
Individual Experience	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	10

Note. Numbers at the top are in place of the respondents' names.

Teacher Perspective on Cultural Proficiency. The third research question asked, "How do teachers perceive themselves in terms of cultural proficiency? Is there a change in teachers' perspectives on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum after the use of the *CDE Equity Toolkit for Administrators* (2010)?" This section will address the first part of this question. All 15 participants mentioned their perspectives on their own cultural proficiency in response to the two prompts for the journaling activities:

1) What is your earliest memory of seeing another person (someone from a different background than your own) being treated unfairly or without respect? The mistreatment might have been prejudiced attitudes or actions toward someone

because of ethnicity, gender, class, religion, disability, etc. It might have been

societal, institutional or personal. How did you feel?

2)   Think about a time when you have observed or been involved in the situation of

discrimination/harassment of yourself or another individual. Describe your

reaction and/or emotional response.

Each participant had journal entries that detailed how past events have

informed/effected their current perspectives. For example, Rose detailed a past

experience living in a diverse community as a child:

> In contrast I was only one of seven White kids on the Wichita Track Club girls
> 12-14 year old team. There were 75 girls, 68 of them Black and all three coaches
> were Black. We all got along great and that experience really helped me gain
> perspective.

John shared his experience learning about race and ethnicity as a child:

> On the way into town one day I was thrilled to sit up front next to my Mom. I had
> a great view of some of my favorite sights. Our road followed the railroad tracks
> into the downtown area of Laramie, but this time into town I noticed a bridge that
> crossed the tracks and lead into smaller, quaint houses. Being very curious about
> anything associated with my Grandma's town I asked my Mom, "What's over
> there?" She quickly told me, "Well that side of town is where the Mexicans live."
> Though I was only four or five, I suddenly felt confused. What my Mom said of a
> place in my favorite town, where everything was so magical, seemed not
> altogether right. A shadow had been cast on a perfect place. Naturally, I began to
> ask questions. My confusion quickly grew when I learned that my Dad's uncle
> lived there. Being a child I couldn't help but make the following conclusions and
> connections: something is wrong with the place over there, because it's not
> included, it's there for Mexicans, my Dad's uncle lives there, he must be scary or
> different. My Dad's Mexican, but he's ok because he doesn't live there, and I am
> part Mexican, so what does that mean about me? I couldn't help but wonder what
> it was like over there…That car ride into town was the first moment in my life

realizing that there can be a this way or that way, normal or over there, a qualification or marginalization based on race and Ethnicity. My early perceptions of the polarized society in Laramie left me constantly piecing together what was right and wrong about where people live, how they act, how they speak and what they believe. This evident polarization also informed what I deemed normal and different and I soon began to place myself and my family somewhere between the two.

Participants shared past experiences that shape how they view things as an adult or informed their understandings. For example, Frank shared an experience in his home town about a homosexual man who was stoned in the streets, "I am not sure that incident shaped my views [on] how I feel about homosexuals, but [it] makes me appreciate a lot better how homosexuals are treated in society today."

Sara shared an experience from her youth,

I grew up on a farm outside a very small community in eastern Kansas, and there were no minority people living in or near that community. In fact, there was an ordinance that prohibited Black people from spending the night in that community—from sundown to sunup. My family watched very little television for entertainment, but watching the evening news was mandatory. Consequently, night after night, we saw the terrible things that were happening across the South. I have some vivid memories of that time for two reasons. First, the violence we saw on TV every night made a huge impression on me and my brothers, but equally important in shaping my attitudes and beliefs were the reactions from my parents…He [my father] nearly always explained the "news" for us, and tried to help us understand what we were seeing. I only witnessed my father cry three times in my life—first, when his father died, then when President Kennedy was assassinated, and finally, when we were watching young Black people being attacked by police dogs and knocked down with the spray from fire hoses. That had a great impact on me and my brothers, and I'll always remember what he said, several times, in various ways, during that period in our history. He said that our democracy could not survive if we continued to treat some of our citizens in those ways.

The past experiences shared by the participants reminded them that all individuals have a unique background as Mike reflected on his experiences, "I must remember every student comes from a different place than from where I came. They have different behaviors…" Ben remembered seeing a peer with disabilities getting picked on,

> I think at the time I felt that is was funny…Later on at a different elementary school I was diagnosed with a learning disability which allowed me to meet some of the students with disabilities. That experience really changed my views about teasing people with disabilities.

Participants expressed how past experiences of recognizing differences either within themselves or others has shaped their current perspectives of their own cultural proficiency.

Culture and Discipline. The main research question asked, "What are the perspectives that these middle school teachers hold of their own cultural proficiency, and how do these perspectives impact their daily work in the classroom and school?" While no relationship can be assumed, participants did write in reflective journaling about how they believe culture is related to discipline within the school. Iris relayed a story about a girl who "was shoved into a garbage can…I asked [another student] who shoved her; was told that it was [student name] and the victim was a 'White' girl as in that was the reason to start a fight." Judy shares, "Two boys who are new to me in…class said, 'We don't get bullied, we are the bullies!'" Bullying within the school continues to emerge as a common theme as Stacy expresses,

I have to place the Black boy on the other side of the room to keep him from being harassed by these two boys. I have talked to them several times about bullying the other student…As the teacher, I know about all I can do is talk to the students…It makes me feel helpless to stop.

Cultural Confusion. In this section, the primary research question will be addressed through the journal reflections in this category. Participants expressed feelings of confusion around understanding the effects of culture on themselves and those around them. A sense of fear was also present around issues of race and ethnicity as well as a desire for others to assimilate to the dominant culture.

John noted from a conversation with his Mom, "Though I was only four or five, I suddenly felt confused. What my Mom said of a place in my favorite town where everything was so magical seemed not altogether right. A shadow had been cast on a perfect place."

Jen recalled a situation,

One year as a sophomore all the seniors harassed a fellow teammate. Called her names. Threatened to do things and always made her uncomfortable. My emotional response was to feel bad for her. But could do nothing as I too was scared. However I always let her talk to me and helped her do what they told her to do.

Tom reflected on his experience,

My feelings reflected a diverse assortment of reactions ranging from disbelief to outright anger…I immediately knew the comments were wrong, but there is a social pressure to appease the initiators, especially when you are first getting to know them…Disbelief, discomfort, anger and disinterest best summarize my feelings in this particular circumstance…Peer acceptance is valued by both the young and old, thus making it difficult to intervene for fear of "rocking the boat."

44

In response to seeing someone harassed, Frank shared,

I felt completely scared and powerless to do anything. As a young boy I didn't understand why so much cruelty could be deserved. I felt as if [it] was happening to me in a way. I felt compassion but utter powerlessness.

Kate recalled her reaction to the harassment received by her step-brother, "At the time I felt embarrassed but also hurt at the actions of others. I didn't understand how others could treat him with so much disrespect, anger and malice." Kate remembered feeling "frightened" and "ashamed" when the harassment began, "I was afraid that people would attack me as well…I really became ashamed of his behavior."

Kate continued to recount the experience,

I didn't understand that he was searching for his identity. I just wanted him to stop wearing make-up and dress like a male so he wouldn't embarrass me. I never thought of him and how it must feel to be unable to be myself because of how people might look at or judge me. I was the selfish one.

Rose detailed her experience,

I was an elementary-aged student when racial riots were really saturating our nation. My father was a police officer in Wichita, KS at the time. Black students were being bused all over town to "desegregate" schools and no one was in favor of the decision. Riots and protests over our country in the Vietnam War compounded all of the issues…I remember feeling scared and fearing for my safety daily. I remember always being on guard and watching every corner for aggressors to come around. Schools were especially threatening places. You quickly learned which doors of the building to avoid exiting where there were fewer adults or bushes for attackers to hide behind. My dad was a police officer who was a motorcycle cop on traffic patrol. He loved his job, often being the first one on the scene of an accident. He saved countless lives and helped so many when in the middle of traumatic situations. He was pulled from his beat and put in full riot gear in high school halls. There was an officer every ten yards or so to

45

keep the peace. His sergeant couldn't tell him how long his change in assignment would go. After six weeks, Dad said "I'm not going to earn a living this way and my kids aren't going to try to get an education this way…" Overall, I felt afraid and quite confused. A good deal of what I learned about "trust" was shaken and questioned.

John remembered feeling both "angry and proud. Angry because some sort of violation took place and proud that I had stood up for myself" recalling a situation of racial profiling that he personally experienced. He goes further to say that he was surprised at feeling "indignation and shame." The emotionally charged situations shared by participants caused confusion within the individual as well as internal, conflicting emotional responses.

Experience with Bias, Discrimination and Harassment. Participants shared in their journals their personal experiences with bias, discrimination, and harassment, which helped to further inform the researcher about the participants' perspectives on their own cultural proficiency in understanding their own background and biases and/or the background and biases of others. The experiences shared by the participants were either experienced directly by the participant or an experience, which they viewed as an outsider. Participants reflected on how these experiences have influenced their worldview and perspectives of others from differing backgrounds or ethnic or racial groups.

Rose shared her direct experience,

My brother and I were two of the five "new kids" in grades six through twelve…At the end of the first day of school, I headed to the "girls'" gym to see what sport teams were offered for girls in the fall. At the same time, my brother was entering his first football practice in the gorgeous, spacious Field House. I was surprised to find the "girls" gym lights off and doors locked. I assumed that I'd missed a meeting announcement, so I found an unlocked restroom, changed, and headed to the Field House to create my own workout. I remember lots of looks from others in the Field House as they slowed to see who I was and what I was doing. I assumed it was all because I was the "new girl." I continued my workout and remained in the Field House until my brother had finished his football practice and we headed home. The second day of school I received a note from the office to leave class and to come right away. From there, I was escorted to the superintendent's office…After introductions, Mr. [name] said, "I understand you were in the Field House after school yesterday. Is that right?" I replied "Yes, sir, it is." He answered, "Would you mind telling me what you were doing there?" At this point, I knew that something was "up" and I became anxious with his stern look and posture leaning back into his high-backed chair. It wasn't too long into my explanation that he interrupted me, "Girls are not allowed in that building!"…At the end of the second school day, I did the exact same thing—not knowing what I'd face on day three. I was "on guard" that whole day and I wasn't called in. After the third school day, I repeated my sequence. Near the end of the second week of school, a couple of girls joined me. By the end of the first month there were about a dozen of us working out on our own. We even braved taking a pick-up basketball game to the main court in the Field House! I asked the others why there weren't any athletic teams for girls. They didn't really know or have an answer. So, we got organized with a plan…For the next five months, one of us made our way into the superintendent's office to plead our case and challenge him to defend his position on not allowing girls to participate in sports. Finally, in the middle of February he's had enough… "You can have a track team this spring! Just get out and stay out of my office!"

Frank recalled a situation he witnessed in his neighborhood,

My first recollection goes back to the time when I was a child (10-12). It happened in my neighborhood where a homosexual person was harassed by a group of guys throwing stones at him for just being gay. I felt completely scared and powerless to do anything.

Tom points out that discrimination, harassment, and/or bias can come from anyone:

The instance that connects the most with me is a culmination of consecutive comments made by a colleague of mine concerning minority groups…Without knowing this individual personally, a casual bystander would assume he was uneducated and plain ignorant. Regrettably, he comes from a diverse cultural background, has higher-level degrees and works in a profession that directly offers aid to marginalized groups. Each time he would make a disparaging remark, it was never directly at someone, but more so originated as a behind the back comment intended to get a cheap laugh or positive reaction. The actual result proved negative at best for myself and those around us.

Sara shared the deep impact a situation she was part of had on her,

Before I married my husband, I was engaged to an African American. While we were on a trip with three of his children in Washington state, our rented van was damaged in a rock slide. It could not be driven and we needed to get to a town to call for a replacement vehicle. This was before cell phones. My fiancé, who happened to be a medical doctor and was dressed accordingly, waved to passing car after car, but no one would stop to help us, give us a ride into town. I suggested to him that he and his three sons get out of sight and let me try to get someone to stop. He did as I suggested, and the very next car stopped to see what I needed. The couple in the car seemed very uncomfortable when [fiancé's name] appeared at my side, and even more so when his sons appeared. They agreed to take [fiancé's name], his youngest son, and me into the next town so we could call for help. We left the other two boys with the disabled vehicle. I was angry and grateful all at the same time; angry because of the prejudice and humiliation for [fiancé's name] and his children, yet grateful for help out in the middle of nowhere in the mountains in an unfamiliar place.

Bob shared his direct experience with discrimination,

When I first moved to Colorado, I was going out to dinner with some friends after my brother's football game in [city name]. As we were going into the restaurant, there was a pick-up truck going down the road and yelled "nigger" as loud as he could. The girl I was dating at the time grabbed my arm and stared at me and said, "Don't mind them, they don't know you." As I stopped starring at the people in the truck, I looked back at her and said, "That is what you will hear hanging out with me, especially in Colorado…" It irritated me but I knew it was going to happen because it wasn't the first time and I know it was not going to be the last.

Francis shared her direct experience with discrimination,

I was a junior in high school and I had a part-time job as a custodian at the junior high school. Every night, after school, I would work for two hours, sweeping floors, cleaning desks and chalkboards. I got paid minimum wage…I was saving my money to buy a prom dress. At last I had $60. I went to the dress hop in the neighboring town. I had never been to that dress shop as it was quite elite and I hadn't had a need for that type of dress before. As soon as I walked in, I could feel the eyes on me. Although there were women available to assist me, no one came over. The "eyes were still on me, though. I spotted a pretty lime-green dress and went over to it. The sales clerks looked at one another, as if "drawing lots" to see who would help me. A sales clerk came up and stood beside me. In a cold voice she asked, "Can I help you?" I replied, "I'm looking for a dress to wear to prom." She said, "These dresses are very expensive." I asked if I could try on the green dress. She looked at me in disgust and led me to the dressing room. I really wished I had my mom or a friend with me for support. I could have used a friend right there and then. I could hear the sales lady talking to the other clerks about the "Mexican girl." I came out of the room and looked in the 3-way mirror. I thought to myself, I really like this dress. The women all stood looking at me. It made me wonder why there were no "Mexican" salesclerks there. I went back in the dressing room and took off the dress. The lady said, in a snobby, degrading tone, "Make sure you put that dress back on the hanger just as you found it." I really wanted to step on it. I hung up the dress and gave it back to the lady. I told her I decided against it. As I was walking out the door, I heard one of the women say, "I don't know why she came in here in the first place." I was very upset; I thought to myself that I didn't know why people needed to treat one another like that. I didn't have the nicest clothes, but I didn't need to be treated like a dog. I knew that I had done nothing wrong, yet I did not feel very good about myself.

Sue shared her indirect experience, which turned into a direct experience of

harassment,

> When I was in seventh grade my best friend was not the cleanest person to be
> around. At times she smelled and her hair was almost always greasy…The other
> students called her names and I asked them to stop. It wasn't until a student saw
> her pick up a piece of candy off the floor and put it in her mouth that other
> students began to get physical. They would poke her while calling her names like
> disgusting, stinky, slut, and White trash. At this point I was having a hard time
> ignoring them and began to poke them back. I was saying the same things to
> them that they were saying to her…When that didn't work and they began picking
> on both of us even more, I shoved the main leader into the lockers and told her to
> never touch me or my friend again or I would create damage to her face. It then
> ended for the most part for both of us.

John shares his own experience with being profiled,

> My first job after graduating from college involved the creation of a tutoring and
> mentoring program, which serviced a population of students who were low-
> income, Hispanic and at high risk of dropping out of school. The students I
> worked with most were between the ages of 13-16 and each had a 13-16 year
> olds' passion for cars. One random weekend in Fort Collins I noticed an ad in the
> paper for a 1995 Honda civic with 80,000 miles at the price of $1800. I
> immediately went for a test drive. The engine purred and all the lights worked,
> the exterior had a hundred small and large dents, and the interior had a tear or
> two—it was perfect! The plan was to get these 13-16 year olds together every
> week to plan and implement the restoration of a car they could be proud of.
> These students would be immediately engaged in the project and likewise
> immediately engaged in math; everyone's worst subject in school…It was a
> perfect plan, I just had to drive the ugly thing around town for a while. Naturally,
> just after purchasing the vehicle I called my insurance company to begin
> coverage, so that I could legally drive it home. Everything worked out fine and
> the cards would show up in the mail sometime the upcoming week. Until then I
> had my policy number on a piece of paper. It was a morning a day or two after
> purchasing the Civic that I began to make my way out of downtown [the city] at a
> leisurely, average pace when all of a sudden the noise of a siren robbed my
> attention. Sure enough, I was being stopped by a police officer. My license and

proof of insurance (a policy number on a torn out piece of paper) were ready and I had learned to keep my hands in plain sight, so I did that too. I greeted the officer, who said I had been going five over the speed limit. He took my license only and returned to his vehicle. My thoughts began to wander. My plates were brand new, my license was current and my policy was activated, but I didn't have my cards yet. Would I get a ticket for lack of proof? Would I get a ticket for speeding? I got on my cell phone immediately. The insurance agent said I was currently covered, so I would be able to defend myself. I wondered what would happen and what the officer would say. Well, he asked me the most random question when he returned, "How long have you lived in [the city]?" So, I told him. Then he asked me where I was from. I told him…Finally, he asked me what I was doing in [the city]. I stopped answering his questions and nervously said, "Listen, I don't understand why you're asking me these questions. I'm an educated person and I don't appreciate the way you're treating me." He returned to his vehicle. Within a minute the officer returned with a ticket and a calmer demeanor. Like equals, he explained that sometimes he had to ask questions of people to determine their citizenship and their documentation status, or something like that. He seemed to be communicating to me that he was previously operating under the assumption that I was an illegal immigrant, which is why with a stern tone, he asked the questions he did. He handed me a speeding ticket and left. I drove away completely speechless. This was not the first time I had been profiled, but it was alarming to me that I had just been treated with some disdain because he thought I was an illegal immigrant. How did I fit the stereotype? Maybe it was the cheap car. Maybe my age. Maybe it was my skin color and my eye color. Whatever it was, it was enough to make the officer think I was out of place.

Ben recalled considerable harassment, "when I was younger people teased me about my name…I got mad and angry…depressed, and got into many, many fights…I didn't want to return to school." Iris shared a similar experience regarding harassment around her name and being called, "…a bitch. I was hurt initially but only briefly recognizing the maturity level of the so-called harassers.'"

Qualitative Focus Group Results by Theme

This section includes a description of the focus group dialogues used to further explore teachers' perspectives of their own cultural proficiency on the middle school classroom as it relates to discipline. The responses are categorized by theme outlined in Table 3.9.

Table 3.9

Identified Themes Focus Group Dialogues by School

Themes	MS1	MS2	MS3	Totals
Teacher Perspective on Cultural Proficiency	42	95	63	200
Culture and Discipline	23	21	20	64
Years of Teaching/ Experience	2	39	12	53
Confusion/Fear	7	4	20	31
Experience w/Bias, Discrimination, and Harassment	28	10	3	41
Bridging Gaps	17	5	14	36
Barriers	8	13	13	34

Note. The totals indicate the number of words, phrases, conversations that were identified with each theme.

Teacher Perspectives on Cultural Proficiency. This section describes the participants' views of their own cultural proficiency through their dialogues in the focus

groups and will address the primary research question. The responses are varied and

indicate a variety of placements on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum.

The group discussed where they thought they were on the Cultural Proficiency

Continuum and one female participant suggested "people might be quick to say they're

proficient but really what can you show that you've acted or responded effectively and

affirmingly." Another woman interjects that it may be about where you are at, "Being a

teacher in this situation I'm probably culturally blind because you don't try and bring it

(differences) out so that other people can notice it." A male participant indicated that he

thinks pretty highly of himself, but "after I read the thing (Cultural Proficiency

Continuum) I looked at the italics and I'm probably not as high as I'd like to be."

He went further to say,

I come here and we have no paper for the photocopier and students that I can tell,
when I have an exercise in math class, I say, "Let's flip a coin, take a coin out of
your pocket" and no coins come. It's just quite a bit different. I relate well with
kids, I've connected with an awful lot of them and I feel pretty good about who I
am with them. But it is a whole different world from where I came
from…Parents here, by and large, can't help them [the students]. So it's just a
whole different background I come from and live in than here...I recognize that I
was blessed and my kids were blessed. And these kids, they're not bad kids, they
just don't have any direction.

Another male participant examined his perspective of his placement on the

Cultural Proficiency Continuum,

On the Continuum I think I'm more on the Cultural Blindness because I see the
difference but I try to really not act differently towards any group of students. It's

very different here…And I just think the money is more of an issue than the actual cultural background…There's a lot of Hispanic students throughout all the schools I've been in but nothing like here. It's the majority of the students. And so that's just getting used to how everyone talks and being called "Mister" all the time and that kind of stuff is just something new to me.

This same participant went further to talk about the Hispanic, minority culture being the majority culture of the school,

I was expecting from Hispanic kids to call me "Mister" because I've gotten that in other schools. But I didn't really expect all students to ever call me "Mister" too…So it's like they're getting that behavior from that Hispanic culture background…It's not just Hispanic students, it's everyone…if they are hearing everyone else say that all day long that they do that as well.

A female participant describes her placement as in the Cultural Precompetence category mentioning, "I have some growing to do. It's a different experience and I like it. But I'm not necessarily comfortable."

A male participant questioned his ability to become Culturally Proficient,

I obviously can identify with our kids…I come from a similar background that a lot of the kids come from, or some of them. But for the kids that we have that are from other places like Somalia or from Burma…it says to adapt your teaching and service in response to cultural diversity but if I don't have the tools and I don't know where they come from…then how am I going to respond when I'm teaching to that (student group) if I don't have the proper knowledge and tools to do it…As much as I would like to be proficient, obviously until I have that information, until I know where my kids are coming from, I can't do it.

The conversation continued in the direction of needing the knowledge and tools to become proficient. A female participant stated, "I'm aware of the differences and I

understand the differences that they make. But I'm not sure if I have the tools to respond

effectively to those differences."

Bias, assumptions, preconceptions, etc. play a major role in informing our

perceptions about those around us according to this male participant,

> I wanted to meet with a parent or the parent wanted to meet with me, the student's failing. And I had some discipline issues with him. And I'm told that she is coming tonight and I need to find an interpreter and I have this visual of what this kid's mother is going to look like because of my bias. And I can't find anybody that can speak Spanish that's not tied up. And I go down to the office and, long story short, the mother is very young, very affluent, very opposite of what I expected. And I expected a different person to be upset with me. She was very supportive and between the two of us the kid has gone from an F to an A. And so, guilty. I had a bias about what a Hispanic mother of this kid who sits in the front row and is causing me a pain in the ass ought to be. And I was dead wrong. And so I'm learning that I have some preconceptions. And it wasn't helped by some of the people who said, "Oh you got to have somebody speak the lingo." But this young lady speaks English as well as anybody I know.

Two male participants shared that they felt they would grow from the focus group

experience and being able to talk, "about racial issues and then your own bias because

everyone has them." A female participant agrees that, "having a conversation is making

you aware and to be able to actually do something about it." A male participant responds

with a plan of action for becoming more aware, "I'm going to pay closer attention and

look for this discrimination stuff...I think I miss a lot."

In response to a comment regarding gender discrimination a female participant

shared, "It's like it's so much part of how we talk. But I don't think people understand

the negative effects that it has on girls." A male participant denotes his thoughts on why

the discrimination occurs,

> I think that one of the main causes is ignorance, like two separate causes, just
> ignorance and then also belonging. Needing to belong…I really think a lot of that
> stems from just wanting to belong to the—you aid the popular group.

A male participant admits, "I used to be a little—I'll be honest, I was prejudiced

when I was their (the students) age but I now have some great gay friends…But at some

point, you know when do they learn?" It comes down to educating each other to help

influence perspectives as a female participants noted,

> I pulled two of the Somali boys and had them talk about where they came from,
> what it was like there. And the kids were surprised. They didn't have electricity
> in their houses? They don't have a light switch? They don't have TV? They
> didn't realize that these kids are coming from huts. And I think that it's important
> that we show them that this is where they're coming from.

 One female participant shared, "I think I'm at cultural competence. I don't think

I'll probably ever arrive at complete cultural proficiency…I'm able to recognize the

differences…Differences in color make a difference."   Another female participant

agrees, "That's where I'm at as well (cultural competence)…I really believe that I have

respect for students and people, you know, and acknowledge their individualism and their

culture and try to incorporate as much of that as I can." A third female participant also

agreed with the placement on the continuum for herself, "I'm also probably at cultural

competence…It's not about adapting or taking on those cultures as much as it is about

understanding them and appreciating them for how they're different from your own." A

male participant shared his thoughts, "I…oscillate between the last two categories here (cultural competence and cultural proficiency)…I think it has to do with how comfortable I feel right now with that (diversity in the classroom)."

In being faced with a new culture or in realizing a need for cultural awareness one female participant shared her honest reflection,

> I haven't really taken the time to learn a whole lot about their culture. But the learning that I've had has been just like incidental…I mean it's trying to make those connections too I think that's a challenge for me.

One female participant describes observation as a key tool in her ability to help make connections with and for students of a differing background,

> I want them (the students) to understand that to be successful in a different culture you have to make some adaptations…I'm sensitive to cultural things but the ones that I think will not be useful to them integrating successfully here, I try to help them understand that there's a way we do that here that's different…I think that's about as important as teaching them English, frankly.

In reflecting on the essential elements of cultural proficiency participants identified areas of strength or weakness within themselves as did this female participant,

> I think my biggest struggle so far, as a teacher is…the institutionalizing of cultural knowledge…I feel that very few of us teachers actually really understand the culture of the gangs here in [the city], of what gang life is like, the differences between the gangs, you know just the culture.

She continued her reflection on her cultural precompetence through the sharing of a dialogue between herself and a student who helped her understand a gang related issue that occurred in her classroom. She shared her cultural blindness to the issues, "I

didn't even know that the students were blue and red because they just didn't have the—I

didn't know what the signs were." Since this incident she has, "tried to be a lot more

aware, observant of their behaviors and not make judgments upon their behaviors." A

male participant shared his cultural blindness to the gang issues,

> I see kids sometimes and I just don't see that, oh this is a southsider or northsider, it doesn't register with me…I just don't see it. And, maybe, I don't know, maybe it's a good thing, you know, to see it and not to know…But I do feel naïve about it.

> Grouping and stereotyping people is a reflection of cultural incapacity and

cultural blindness according to Lindsay, (2002). A female participant responded to this

act,

> I believe we do it (stereotype) all the time. Well, you know, why do African students act that way? I don't think anybody has said that, but I think that kind of goes through our mind…They aren't even all from the same country, much less from the same socioeconomic status, much less from the same language group or family.
> A male participant honestly reflects on stereotyping,

> My understanding is that you came from an African country, that you should be very well mannered…I have a preconception, you know, that he should be a better behaved kid because he came from another culture and now he's here…Awareness of your own cultural world view is like I'm assuming that if you come from certain places, you are a certain way. And by not allowing him to be who he is I am imposing my own view…It might be very unfair to the kid.

> Participants express a mindset they have experienced themselves which effects

the classroom,

> I remember about 15 years ago when we were a junior high…I remember wanting to have more White kids in class because I knew I was going to get better

students…I wonder…if that bias exists in the school that kids, White kids are better students and are smarter.

A female participant responds, "Because things are the way they are, that would (successful students) mostly be the Anglo kids, because they're the families that have the incomes. I mean, they've had better educational opportunities from birth." Another female participant responds, "I don't think that people really know their own biases though." Some people, "have them (biases) and know them and acknowledge them" but it comes down to choice, "A lot of times I choose not to confront that bias and deal with that bias" or "acknowledge the fact that they have them (biases)."

As humans, we tend to stay with what is comfortable. A female participant said,

I think so long as things seem to be flowing along okay and nobody's making too much racket about anything we just sort of assume everything is okay and everything is going to be fine. That's what I think. I think it's easier to just let it ride if there's nothing big and overt.

Experiences and relationships affect our perspective as this female participant points out,

I did volunteer work at a school on weekends with students who needed to come in and make up work. And at first, I felt uncomfortable about that and wasn't used to being surrounded by a room full of gangsters…the gangsters who are really seriously into it and take it all pretty seriously, they don't bring it to school anyway. It was very neutral who were there. So he (the husband) helped me with that as much as anything to remember, give them a chance to show you something before you decide whether they can or not.

A female participant said,

I'm sort of cultural blindness…sometimes I look at my kids and I don't see color…But at the same time I know there is definitely a difference in their background as opposed to my difference in how I was raised and my cultural awareness…Sometimes I understand them (the differences), sometimes I don't.

Another female participant shares, "I think I identify best with pre-competence and competence, although I can see pieces in a lot of those [levels]…I see the difference, appreciate the difference, don't' always know how to respond correctly or adequately." In reflecting on his own Cultural Proficiency a male participant wondered if he,

…really would be able to understand them (Hispanic students) and their culture well enough to communicate goals or would there be a disconnect...The Cultural Proficiency for me is something to strive for…How well could you really know culture through a small lens of experience...I definitely float around precompetence and competence.

Race and ethnicity have a major role in informing the perspectives of teachers, but a female participant said, "What I've experienced in [the city] is it doesn't matter what color you are, it's the economics. If you're poor…they just don't have the background knowledge." Another female participant responds, "I don't identify that with poverty. I identify that with life experiences." A male participant said, "Regardless of economic status or race, if a family values education the whole process of how the family goes through life is different than a family that, because of the law, does education."

Teachers were very honest in what they do or don't do in the classroom in regard to cultural responsiveness. One female participant shared,

Well, for one thing, I don't have time to do that (review subgroup data). Maybe I'm supposed to, I don't know…But as far as I'm examining academic and behavior data from that, my first impression is why should I do that?...So maybe

60

that's bias from my point of view. But if I'm supposed to be doing it, I'm not doing it.

A male participant responded, "We look at race, the language, the gender and the socioeconomic factors. And our bias comes into play with how we interpret that data for sure."

Personal experience and/or background can drive current perceptions as one female participant described,

> One bias that I've been more and more aware of is the poverty behavior issue, the assumption that kiddos behave a certain way because their family's impoverished. And just tied to those economic issues and the stereotypes, the negative stereotypes…And it absolutely infuriated me that the assumption was the impoverished behavior or the poor behavior was a result of the impoverished situation at home. And, since I grew up that way, it's like no that's absolutely not the reason, the excuse, the compensation…And I think that we play on that bias too much and say, "Okay, just because you are impoverished, you poor little thing, this is how you are and you need to be forgiven or whatever else, and so we'll do this for you."…So, that's one of the biases that I have.

Another female participant shared her thoughts regarding poverty exhibiting levels of cultural incapacity,

> It's definitely a frustration when students come to class with no supplies. And I know their families are very poor. I have to keep my head—I say it to my head, I try not to let it come out that why can't their parents give them what they need?...It's definitely got to be different than how I value the educational system, because I would not send my child to school without the proper supplies…Somebody's not helping them be successful.
> A female participant clarifies, "Don't you think that stems back to the pride of

the individual and how does that get developed? And I think that goes to parenting

skills." A female participant said, "That's frustrating when the child doesn't have

supplies and everybody has a cell phone."

A male participant reflected on how he communicates with his students and how

his bias contributes,

> And that affects me and how I tell that poor Hispanic student about their "C." And it might affect how I tell the not so poor Anglo students about their "C" because of how I might forecast their future. And is that okay? As an educator noticing those thing has a tendency in me, I just really have to consider those, whether that's a good thing or not.

A female participant detailed an example of her bias playing out in the classroom

in response to the above male participant,

> You made me think of another situation almost in the opposite about my biases that I hadn't thought about until now. A student last year in my…class who' really very bright…I was talking to them about college. He has come from a Latino background and I was talking to all of them about college. And he got really agitated with me. And I didn't say this but clearly my undertone is the expectation is you'll go to college. You guys are all bright in this class. And when he got agitated he said, "I am very proud of my father and I am very close to my father and I am going to do exactly what my father does and I'm all hooked up. When I turn 18, whether I've graduated or not to do exactly what my father does." And I said, "That is fabulous. What does your father do?" This is where my bias comes in. The father works on the kill floor at Swift. That's a hard job. I just said, "That is so fabulous and that is so cool but I'd really love for you to sit down and have a conversation with your dad about what he wants for you." But I didn't think about that until something you said made me think about my prejudices are that if you're bright enough and you have a little bit of umph, you should go to college instead of doing very honorable, respectable, lord knows I'm a red meat eater from [business name], than working on the kill floor that is back breaking physically hard work because I would rather use my brain than my back. But just because I would rather use my brain than my back doesn't mean that that's not what this student will chose but have tremendous pride about doing.

62

And that was really like, take back what you just said and really honor this kid. And of course, it was real important to honor his dad and what his dad does, but to honor this is a choice even though academically he is a student that certainly could be ready for college level work and college admissions.

Participants continued to share how their experiences within the [the city] community differ from their own background,

We'd never been in a [the city] (high school) graduation. They had the students that were the first generation to graduate in their family stand up. And there was at least 80 percent if not more of the students stood up…That was such an eye-opener…I was totally shocked by that. I can't even still get my head around it. I understand it now, but I just—that is so different than my experience, so very different.

A female participant shared,

I feel like I grew up not seeing colors because there was no color. I felt like I didn't have a prejudice because there was nothing to be prejudice against…If anything, I was a little prejudice against them (poor students) because I was afraid for my parents to leave me at school because I saw girls with ripped pantyhose and I'm thinking is that how you dress?...I feel differently now. I do have some bias—I'll be honest—with people that are coming to the country and they don't want to be a part of the country.

Through the focus group sessions, teachers shared where they felt they were on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum and why they might feel this way. While the teachers spoke of being Culturally Competent or Culturally Precompetent the related experiences, phrases, and stories they shared indicated a gap between their own perception and the reality of their own cultural proficiency.

Culture and Discipline. Participants shared their perspectives on how culture

affects the discipline within the school because of prompts in the focus group dialogues.

Participants were asked to identify the current the reality of discipline within their

schools and how it might or might not be affected by ethnic and racial culture. A male

participant shared how his bias played a part in a discipline issue with a student,

> I expected a different person to be upset with me (the mother). She was very supportive and between the two of us the kid's gone from an F to an A. And so, guilty. I had a bias about what a Hispanic mother of this kid who sits in the front row and is causing me a pain in the ass ought to be.

Participants shared examples of discipline issues within the schools and, at times,

a sense of needing something different to happen in regard to students who get into

trouble at school. One female participant explained,

> Like if you're getting the ISS (in school suspension) because you're harassing or something you need to watch a video and answer questions or write a report or paper about harassing and get all your homework from your teachers, but you have to do that at home and turn it in, not just sit there and do your homework all day, be doing alternative assignments and stuff like that…You're going to focus on what you're actually doing wrong in that harassment problem or bullying problem…Because I don't think that they're really getting anything out of that. And those are the guys that really need the message most.

She continues to say, "There's no discipline action that they are afraid of or have

an issue with." A male participant suggests,

> If you get sent to the office for harassing a student, they need to be sent home that same day. You have to come and pick up your kid today. And then the next day when they come back, they're in ISS and they need to go through some pretty intensive training, you know some education, watch videos, write some papers, do some assignments, do stuff like on that and hit them hard with that…and then you have to go sit down with administration and your parents and talk over what you

found that you agree not to do it or some other contract system…I don't think it's going to stop unless it's taken seriously and everyone is all on board and there are some significant consequences for doing it, or it's not going to stop.

A female participant responds to this suggestion,

In addition to consequences, you have in a system like that you also have to make sure that you have some really strong systems in place for teaching kids appropriate behavior and helping them and having them have the opportunity to understand the differences…and re-teaching that information really.

A female participant shared concern with the current system, "I think sometimes we're so far behind on our scores that we just go, go, go, go, go but in the end it costs us more time with all the other issues that we're having in the classroom." Another female participant drew a comparison, "Most of you know I came from New York, taught in east Harlem and Brooklyn before here. And I have to say that here is definitely way more challenging than Brooklyn or east Harlem."

Participants shared examples of discrimination and harassment among student groups within their classrooms. A female participant said, "I don't think we talk about discrimination enough and it goes on all the time here [MS1]."

Another female participant details a situation that occurred in her class,

I think about prejudice and discrimination that I'm hearing too…how in our society it's okay to say, "stop being a girl." Because it happens in my class, and I get really offended. And I'm like, so you're making fun of him by saying that they're like me. I'm so much lower than you that that's what you can make fun of someone. So I think that that needs to be addressed too because especially girls in these cultures and the Hispanic culture, the Somali culture, I mean they're looked

65

down upon. And then I think that that needs to be addressed as well as the racial issues is even those girl things like saying, "Why are you acting like a girl?"

A female participant shared an idea towards resolving issues of discrimination and harassment,

> Whenever I've taken anything about multiculturalism, they're always talking about celebrating differences. And I think that's one that we could really embrace, make it more of a celebration and talk about our differences in a very positive way…And I have done some of that in my classroom, especially I mean a fight will touch off between a Somalian and a Hispanic kid, and I have sat them all down and we have a discussion right then and there about really, what was the point of that, just because what, their skin's a darker than yours?...My classroom is a community and we don't behave that way.

A male participant shared his confusion,

> Yesterday in one of my classes, one student is highly outspoken. And he got into it with several of the other students, and the other students were Hispanic. And he made ethnic remarks. And a little Hispanic girl went up and slapped him. And so, this morning I had to run by here and write a referral for the little girl because she got physical. And I gave the information to the assistant principal about the little boy and his remarks. And I'm not sure what's a worse act…I'm not sure that one was worse than the other. But I think that's the way it's viewed in this school…I'm not sure our penalties are fair or right if this ethnic thing is as important.

A female participant said,

> Kids get into fights and just because—they justify it, well I'm picked on, I'm going to pick on other people. Nothing happens when I get picked on…and I've heard that out of my 6th graders a lot…But I don't really think any repercussions ever happen for these things." Another female participant said, "I don't know what the answer is to it but I think it's become so normal.

A male participant wondered, "I don't know if that's my job as a teacher (to address students about harassment)."

The cultural backgrounds of students and teachers are brought into the classroom and at times clash as in this example from a female participant,

When they first are here (African students) they're very assertive, demanding, aggressive…They push to the head of the line…When they behave in ways that I think will be offensive to the majority culture, I really try to help them change that or at least understand you have some choices about that.

School becomes an area for learning larger societal lessons, "If somebody pushes to the head of the line, we can deal with that (at school) and it's not an incident. But if you go to the movies Friday night and you just cut and walk right to the front of the line, then we might have an incident. And we don't need an incident."

A female participant shared her concern about lack of knowledge around culture,

I feel like we have so many issues that come up constantly that are related to specifically gang issues. But I feel that very few of us teachers actually really understand the culture of the gangs here in [the city], of what gang life is, the differences between the gangs, you know just the culture. And I feel like we could so much better, as a staff and as teachers, respond to gang-related incidents and our gang students when we really understood their culture.

A female participant said,

I think that our kids in the schools, they hear the term 'racist' around and they use it out of context, 'Well that's racist, well your just being racist,' but they have no idea what the context of racist really means…A lot of that being racist means (to the students) observing skin color…They don't understand the difference between being observant and making an observation about race and making a judgment about someone based on their race.

A female participant said,

When you discipline a student or when you correct a student's behavior if you do it one-on-one, you usually get a pretty good response from that student, but do it in a front of the student's peers, and it's a whole different reaction.

Actions/reactions to unexpected behavior at school is varied according to a female

participant,

> I've seen some teachers who, you know, automatically just go into the teacher
> mode where they, you know, yell or they try and correct behavior. And then I see
> teachers who see it as a good teaching opportunity to teach them the reasons
> behind why it's inappropriate or it's not okay.

A male participant said,

> I was just [thinking] how students affiliated with gangs and how very easily
> they're lumped as like guilty or the culprit when often times, yeah they're not any
> more guilty than any other student that's in the school. But I think it's very easy
> and that probably happens more often than not.
> A female participant agrees, "Or even to assume that some people are in a gang

because of certain things."

A female participant said,

> I think one of the things that we, as adults in education, fall victim to is we say
> one thing and do another…it's so easy to generalize to an entire group from one
> little infinitesimally small incident…And so then they come here to work. And
> when something that a child does or says, or a colleague maybe, that triggers the
> memory of that incident…Now suddenly I have a little animosity and my trust
> level is down a little bit. And if I'm going to have to decide who to give a break
> to, it might not be this group today because, I mean it's human nature. But if you
> know it is a possibility, you can do something about it. You know you can self-
> monitor, but if you haven't even thought about it, you don't even know to do that.

A female participant shared,

> So some heavy gang activity recently. And then…we got an email that said,
> "We've heard that there might be a kid pulling a fire alarm, so do not give out the
> restroom pass without permission. So they (students) have to ask your
> permission. Be careful who you give it to. It's at your discretion." And I was
> talking about it with my student teacher and was just wondering, so if all this stuff
> recently has been gang activity, if a Hispanic kid says, "Can I go to the bathroom"

are teachers going to say "no" because they're automatically assuming the kid was going to pull the fire alarm, the [student] is Hispanic and therefore probably going to be a gang member. And then if a White kid comes up to you and says, Hi, can I use a bathroom pass?" you say " You don't look like you're in a gang, Yeah go ahead, use the bathroom. I trust you." Just got to thinking about that.

A female teacher said,

A student I asked to move to the back of the room because he was misbehaving said, 'Uh, you're just making me move because I'm Mexican.' And I said, 'You know, I don't know if you're Mexican or not, but you're not behaving so you've got to move back there.' So it's just right there, it's right in the front of their minds, apparently.

A female participant admits,

I have to monitor myself to not allow myself to go there. By that, I mean when the kid comes into my room and he's got funny-looking long-short pants on and White knee-socks and well I don't know, I just know what they are, and a pigtail and what, I have some feelings that come up immediately. But I can recognize that and self-monitor.

A male participant responded to a clarifying question regarding differing levels of tolerance of acceptable behavior between adults,

There's also a difference in terms of your classroom as opposed to like the public spaces in terms of quantity. Like in the hallway, you know, the number of things that are going on at any give time, you do have to pick your battles to some degree. And it's horrible to have to admit that…I'm sure there are any number of incidents before (larger incidents occur) that weren't addressed, they escalated to that point.

A female participant admits, "I kind of let a lot of things go."

A female participant shared concern about the inability to get a student's parents in to the school, "His parents won't come in. We can't speak the same language they

speak. What can we do, you know. And so they have sort of given up on that child." A

female participant said, "I think some of that frustration that I'm (the student) never

going to have a place in this grand scheme of things mentality produces some behavior

issues." A female participant admits, "There is a certain level of harassment that I accept

as the norm of this age kid. Even though I hate it…there's a certain level I just tolerate

thinking it's all about the age."

Participants expressed concern regarding students coming from a different

country,

> The first week we were teaching expectations…I kept going back to that and the privileges you have by being here and the blessings you've been endowed by being born here. And whether you're born here or not, now you're here. And it's just falling on deaf ears. Then the defensive walls get thrown up. So that's very concerning to me.

Another female participants admits she makes the kids stand up for the Pledge of

Allegiance, "'You're in my country now and I don't care where you come from. I've

been in other countries and I stood up and was respectful.'"

A female participant related a story,

> They (three boys) were picking on this one little boy…They were picking on him and I couldn't get around to all of them because there were 21 kids in the room. And so this kid wrote a note and we found it outside. He had a hit list and he was going to kill these people there was going to be blood and all this kind of stuff. Sure enough, he confessed to it. He got expelled. He was being bullied. Those other three, they (school administration) didn't do a thing to them.

A female participant said, "I know that our learning environment is not right for a lot of those kids." The school environment becomes more restrictive in light of discipline issues according to a female participant, "So it's almost like instead of doing more, there's such issues with behavior and disrespect that you do less and confine more. And it's just like a pressure cooker."

The participants in the focus groups expressed concern regarding penalties and consequences not matching the behavior incidences within the school as well as being, themselves, overly tolerant of unacceptable behavior among students. Bias was also a topic that surfaced in discussing discipline within the schools. The focus group discussions revealed a perceived gap in discipline expectations and appropriate consequences and/or penalties for students not meeting the expectations as well as a disconnect around understanding what and who should be punished in terms of discipline issues within the school.

Years of Teaching Experience. Participants shared their perspective on how their own experiences and years of teaching effects and informs their worldview and perspectives on their own cultural proficiency. Life experience creates the lens of bias according to a male participant, "I think it (experience) automatically creates a bias because you use the stuff that you already have and your experience." A female participant shared,

I'm a new educator…I had to take a couple of multicultural classes. And so I learned a lot. It was really exciting to me…And I did a bunch of work bringing multicultural art to a classroom and how you infuse that.

A female participant said,

I think that just because of a lot of the work that I've done in the past, because before I wasn't there (cultural competence). And it wasn't a denial kind of thing or anything but I think that, as you have more experiences in life too, you learn more things.

Another female participant agrees that she is at cultural competence even though,

I don't have many years of teaching experience of life experience, compared to some people…When you've been in the field for a long time and you've had a lot of different situations that you've had to deal with and learn from that I haven't had yet. But I think, from being a history major and then a geography major, it was part of my study to find out cultural differences.

A male participant said,

I remember when I first came to this school…I was at the other end of the spectrum (Cultural Proficiency Continuum)…as I have moved on in so many years teaching now…I oscillate between the last two categories here (Cultural Proficiency and Cultural Competency).

A female participant described a situation between rival gang members in her class and said, "I didn't know what the signs were. I knew the [gang] colors but they weren't wearing colors…new teachers, we just don't know those things (the signs of gang activity)." A male teacher responds, "But that might not just be because you're a new teacher. I mean I'm not new…and even though I've been teaching this long, I still feel pretty naïve." A female teacher suggests, "I think age gap has an effect on it too

(perceptions). It's like when I see baggy clothes, I don't think anything of it because

that's what I'm used to…that's what I went to school with."

A male participant shared,

I'm between cultural competence and proficiency because of all the experiences
not from growing up, after growing up from 18 on…the first year at CU is like
going into a melting pot…I had to live with the diversity….I was overseas in the
service…I was in South Korea…I was invited into the homes because I was one
of the few people that didn't walk around like I owned the country. I wanted to
learn about the culture. So I got a totally different experience than my
buddies…And then 20 years in the school systems…it's the accumulation of
experience. 20 years ago, I would not have put myself there (between Culturally
Proficient and Culturally Competent).

A male participant said, "I have a different perspective than everybody I've taught

with that came out of the business sector, something other than college to teaching has

the life to make the application."

A female participant wondered,

I was thinking was our culture and what we were about and how we did it, was all
that more well-defined in the 60s and 70s? I think so. The melting pot that we
are and have become and will continue to become, that piece is going to become
more intense.

Another female participant said,

And if you started (teaching) in '78 and I started in '77, we come from about the
same time…And I said a lot of things don't bother me but that does (students not
standing for the Pledge). You're in my country now and I don't care where you
come from. I've been in other countries and stood up and was respectful.

Participants shared their thoughts regarding how their number of years teaching

and years of professional experience have influenced their mindset. Many participants

expressed their thoughts regarding the need for students to assimilate to the dominant culture. This desire for assimilation surfaced as a result of conversations around past personal experiences in other cultures where the individual was the minority. However, despite the personal experiences in a culture other than the one an individual is a member of there was a lack of empathy for students who were new to the culture in this Colorado school district.

Confusion and Fear. In this section, the primary research question will be addressed through the focus group dialogues. Participants expressed feelings of confusion regarding understanding the affects of culture on themselves and those around them.

A female participant shared a recent time she was confronted with a fear,

One girl gave me a DVD. This is Indian music but it's Somalian words…I took it home, I couldn't even make it play at home…The girl and another couple boys worked on it until they could get it to come up and so I could kind of see. But I haven't got to the part about the dancing…I'm almost scared to look at it because there are these four guys, turbaned guys sitting behind a counter. I don't know what I think is going to happen if I look at it. It looks political…[I fear] it is going to be something political, not something like Indian dancers of Indian music and Somali words.

A female participant said, "You're afraid of what you don't know sometimes."

A male participant shared his confusion, "I've been hearing a lot of the perverse what men are saying, like 'man up' or 'grow some'…really baffles me that they would be telling someone to grow some…Where do they get that?" A female participant said,

"Actually with kids [they] are not sure how to respond to each other, sometimes knowing whether what some say to them is intended to be insulting or not."

A male participant shared,

There's a free bullying video, like a 45-minute video with some teaching material that came with it…And part of me—and the thing it's like I want to show it to some students…but it's just hard for me to say like show it. And I just have these reservations that they're (the students) not going to get the point of it. They're going to just say, "oh, they're saying gay and faggot" and all these other words and think it's funny and miss the whole point of it…I just think it would be so valuable for them to see and hear but I just don't know if it's going to have the intended result of them realizing what they're doing is wrong and how hurtful it can be to people.

A female participant said,

I started looking at some You Tube videos and I was scared to show them (anti-bullying, harassment videos)…but when I started looking up harassment and bullying, it scared me. I was like I'm not touching this because those guys (school counselors) already have started working with the kids on bullying and harassment.

A female participant said,

What I'm seeing is they (students) don't even know what their culture is…And our kids are in that generation that they speak English their parents speak Spanish. They don't know what their culture is. They don't get it at all. And I don't know if I can really help them but I'm going to try.

A female participant commented,

I think sometimes teachers just have to have those somewhat uncomfortable conversations in order to make things relevant and to make them (students) understand it and appreciate it…I think it's uncomfortable for adults and probably young people too to address race issues head-on, especially in an organization or an institution.

A female participant said,

There are some adults in this building that are scared. I mean they're scared of confrontation. They're scared of having their classroom feel out of control. They're afraid of what a student is going to do and what all the other students are going to do in response to that one student.

A male participant said,

I don't think that we really know the culture that these [students] are coming from as a staff. We are really in the process of just starting to perceive the culture we're teaching and comparing it to the one that we came from.

A female participant shared, "I see no allegiance and that's scary when I think about if there was a war with Mexico or some other." A female participant admits, "This one kid…I swear one day you will hear his name on the news that he brought a gun and he shot somebody. I don't know if it's going to be when he's 45 years…he was being bullied." A female participant said, "I don't know where we can fight it (lack of parent involvement). I don't know that we can fight it."

Participants expressed confusion and fear around topics of race, discrimination, harassment, and bias. Teachers expressed a desire to do something to help students understand each other and to avoid bullying practices within the school, but when faced with having to directly approach the issues with students a sense of fear resulted and caused teachers to avoid those difficult conversations with students.

Experience with Bias, Discrimination, and Harassment. Participants shared their personal experiences with bias, discrimination, and harassment which helped to

further inform the researcher about the participants' perspectives on their own cultural

proficiency in understanding their own background and biases and/or the background and

biases of others.

The experiences shared by the participants were either experienced directly by the

participant or was an experience they viewed as an outsider and relate to the school or

schooling system.

A female participant shared an example of discrimination/bias against the school

as a whole,

> I think the community in [the city] as a whole, everybody that I talk to when I say
> that I'm teaching at [MS1] are like, 'Oh, I'm so sorry, oh my gosh, good luck, oh
> my gosh those bunch of gangsters.' Like our whole city's view on [MS1] and the
> students and the families here is biased.

A female participant said,

> The first year I taught here, I don't know how many times those kids called me
> racist…And my general response was trying to save myself from being
> persecuted on a continual basis. This year and in the last two years, that hasn't
> happened at all, period.

A female participant agrees, "I think my first year here it was constant…And now

you'll still hear it randomly."

A female participant shared about a tally of number of times discrimination and

harassment occurred during one of her class periods,

> I was sure that it was going to be in the 30s, 40s maybe even 50s for harassing
> other kids…there were 8…I did a tally…so just talking to them [about

discrimination/harassment] was working a little bit…but when my new trimester class came in, I tallied it…and there were 42 comments.

A male participant said,

I've been noticing a lot more harassment and I think a lot more because of the fact that I'm not actually in the front of the room teaching, I'm kind of floating around seeing a lot of stuff, some really mean, nasty stuff that I've been observing. Just yesterday, I wrote a referral for a student…for harassing another female student and me at the same time…He kept telling me that I was Irish because I had a beard. To me, it was like okay whatever, you know. But then he started going up to red-head student, you know, just laying into her all this you're Irish…you dumb red-head and all this stuff and just really going after her…and then me too…That's one example but there's been so many just cruel things that I've been overhearing the students say to each other.

A female participant shared,

He [male student] gets teased a lot about being gay…not being masculine enough and that he wears eye make-up…This is a point of criticism or harassment that he experiences. I haven't ever talked to him about it…But I know that he's aware of it…So I started paying attention to my attitude about that…For kids that don't mean to be mean but they don't think anything about it…nobody's ever talked to them about what that's like for someone else, it seems to me like for some kids anyway that's they're response to that.

A female participant shared,

I had a group of Hispanic girls harass a White girl. We were talking about careers and it became know that one of the Hispanic girls and this White girl…both wanted to be models. And they started harassing the White girl, literally loudly in my room…I stopped it and talked to them and talked to her. And then it happened again in a different classroom or something, I think, or in the hallway where I wasn't present…and she was in tears…It's over and so it did get dealt with. And I don't know what…was said to them…but the harassment stopped…I could tell she felt like an outsider.

A female participant said,

I just had an eighth grade girl call me a 'hater' in seventh period…And I said, 'I'm not a hater, I'm an educator.'… 'What is a hater?' and she goes, 'Someone who hates.'…You know they don't know what that word even means but yet they're calling people that.

A female participant said, "I've had the blue and reds (gang activity) and that sort of thing…go at it in my classroom outside before…I can be naïve about it…but just because I'm Hispanic, I don't know why they do it."

A female participant shared,

A teacher really verbally attacked a child in a wheelchair who was destined to die within the year. And the child rolled his wheelchair into the lounge to buy a soda pop to give to his mother. They were living in a homeless shelter but he had a little money given to him by the campus monitor, so he was going to buy a soda for his mom. And the teacher just laid him out verbally for being in the teacher's lounge. You don't have permission. You might be in a wheelchair but you're not special.

A female participant shared,

I went in there [store name] looking for clothes. And this saleslady came up to me and said, 'Can I help you?' and I said, 'Yeah, I need some clothes for work.' And she said, 'Oh, well where do you work?' and I said [name of school].' And she said, 'Oh, are you the cook?' And I said, 'No, I'm a teacher.'…even within this district when I went to the district office one time when I was thinking about changing schools. And I went down to the main office to human resources. And I said, 'I'm looking for a job transfer.'…And the lady said, 'we have no classified positions available.' And I said, 'No, I'm not classified, I'm certified.'...not all Mexicans are cooks and janitors, you know.

When prompted to share in the focus group dialogues about instances of bias, discrimination, and/or harassment that the participants have either experienced themselves or have witnessed, each person had a story to share. Each person had a resulting emotional reaction and/or impact that they clearly remember and has affected

them in some way. While each person was able to share instances of experiencing bias, discrimination, and/or harassment, very few participants were willing to share their own bias directly. However, the focus group dialogues revealed some bias that exists within the participants.

Bridging Gaps. Lindsay (2003) suggests that the six points along the Cultural Proficiency Continuum indicate unique ways of seeing and responding to differences or bridging the proficiency gaps which exist within a school or system. This section addresses how participants view their ability to bridge the proficiency gaps based on their own perspectives on their cultural proficiency and/or ideas they have regarding bridging gaps within their school.

A female participant said,

We take so much for granted until I started educating myself on that. I was sort of appalled at how White I am, my privileges. We have so many privileges we don't understand. But when you have to start recognizing them, then you're kind of like wow. And so those are the differences that we can start embracing and celebrating.

A female participant shared, "Probably at least three or four years I've been using [materials about bullying] as part of a language arts curriculum." A female participant shared, "In our Cultural Awareness committee we're talking about trying to get some money together to have parents come and cook from their cultures together in our kitchen and then share that out." Another female participant said,

We did international food day…They (students) all had to get their favorite recipe from their family. They typed it up…and we had celebration and they all brought

80

food…I got some of the kids' parents. They couldn't even speak English and they brought food and it was a great way to make connections with those parents and their child."

A female participant said, "I started after our last focus group right away talking to my classes about differences."

A male participant said, "Somebody mentioned advisory, being a smaller class, and maybe we should have a curriculum, some planned, scheduled discussions, tutoring video what have you to help educate the kids." A female participant shared,

I want to keep working with my kids on talking about differences…what I need to do…is really concentrate on finding artists to talk to them…people of culture and art that they can relate to and just see those differences.

A female teacher said, "We've got two classes that they are teaching for the parents in the community here in English."

A female participant said, "Have the clubs go out and help clean up the community…bake cookies and take them to the…houses that are around [the school] and show them some community outreach." Another female participant shares an idea about having students act as ambassadors when neighboring schools arrive for sports or other activities.

A male participant said, "It's about relationships…but if you break down the barriers, then it doesn't really matter." A female participant shared, "Let the kids identify their passions, whatever it would be, fly-tying or crochet, etc. and once we have some of those common pieces, the total group is diverse." Another female participant

responded, "It's an interest level so the focus is not on each other but the activity." The first female participant responded, "It was magic because their passions were the same so their backgrounds didn't matter. They could communicate and be motivated by the same thing." A female participant said, "Community service is another piece" and a male participant replied, "A common experience."

A female participant said,

I know some of the schools that have higher test scores, they have more family engagement…the parents are required to spend so many hours a week doing something at the school, after-school activities or helping in the classroom or running off papers, that's a requirement.

A female participant shared,

I wholeheartedly believe in a family having a personal connection with a teacher. And we call it advisement group but it's not personal enough, it's not inclusive enough, it's not taking care of the whole kid. We don't have the opportunity to advocate…And then you have a whole building of people doing the same thing.

A female participant asked, "Why don't we have some special program that is a hook? You know not a special program that's based on [academics]…it's something to celebrating their strengths and building on those." Participants shared in a thought about having "a spaghetti dinner or something like that, invited all the families and not talk about any academics," "Just make it social."

Participants were moved to discuss possible plans of action in regard to bridging gaps within the cultural proficiency of their schools. Teachers shared how they felt personal relationships with students were needed as well as reaching out to the

community. Teachers suggested that not only would working on relationships and building community capacity within the school bridge the cultural proficiency gaps, but may also improve student academic achievement.

Barriers. Lindsay (2003) suggests there are two caveats in effectively responding to resistance to change in regard to moving towards cultural proficiency: 1) Presumption of entitlement and 2) Unawareness of the need to adapt. This section exhibits the perspectives participants have on the barriers they perceive as well as exhibit their own sense of entitlement and unawareness of the need to adapt.

A male participant shared,

> But for the kids that we have that are from other places…I mean it say to adapt your teaching and service in response to cultural diversity but if I don't have the tools and I don't know where they come from, I don't know what it's about, then how am I going to respond when I'm teaching to that if I don't have the proper knowledge and tools to do it.

A female participant said, "When there's so many different culture, it's hard to adapt your teaching to all the different cultures. Like how do you adapt it to five different cultures in one classroom?" A male participant shared, "Parents don't seem to be involved, whether it's money…or education or a culture thing." A female participant responded, "Maybe it's also because if they don't speak English, when they come in to help, it would be scary." A female participant said, "I'm assuming that's what it was about was discrimination but I never could get [at the issue]—that class was so hard to deal with."

A female participant said,

Well like the Somali girls, this is their first experience [in school]. So we pop them in, they're in the middle of a trimester and okay, sit in a desk and they don't know what sitting in a desk is or for or what its about. And so there are a lot of educational things that we need to be aware of as well so that we can help them. Because they're not going to get it at home. They don't have it at home because this is their (the family) first experience as well.

A female participant said, "But now, because we're so structured (within the curriculum), you know it's like we can't do that part of the thing for the community and have the community come in and present things." A change in the way sports at the middle school level is run spurred this comment from a male participant, "I don't know if charging them (families) is what's preventing them from coming or what." A female participant said, "When kids go to school that is not in their neighborhood, especially young children…you lost buy-in." A male participant shared,

Well, when I came here, the school was 35 percent [poor families] and the rest were middle class and upper class…And just in the last four or five years, it has peaked to where we now get the poorest families in [the city]…And that changes things and I don't know how aware we are of that reality here.

A female participant said,

Our demographics have changed somewhat in that regard to where we were at before. But it's the people who have the means that are able to transport their children to another school, which is why we are left with the poorer kids here.

A female participant commented about the idea of having a program that welcomes visitors to the school, "We don't do anything like that, and that's not that hard

to do unless the state is on your butt constantly about your test scores." A female

participant said,

> I know that in this district, we move turkeys (misbehaving students) from school
> to school…Usually you can turkey up (mess around) that school a while, then you
> can go turkey up another school for a while…And I think that hurts us…Because
> they have an opportunity to negatively impact hundreds of kids.

A female participant shared her thoughts regarding barriers,

> The language barrier for one thing. We want to call parents a lot of time and we
> don't communicate with them. We don't speak Spanish, they don't speak
> English…kids tell us well we don't have a car or we don't have any gas to come
> to parent teacher conferences…So, there's a socioeconomic piece and we have the
> language barrier. And not only the language barrier, the cultural barrier because I
> think some of the families they don't know how to interact and don't understand
> the education process.

A female participant said, "I don't think we have a lot of community support for

the school district…I've been many other places across the United States and I have felt

less community support for the public schools here than any other place." A female

participant said, "If I weren't so busy testing and all this other kind of stuff, I mean the

last thing I have time to do is call my advisement parents."

A female participant shared,

> Even the little end of the year sports meeting get-togethers. Families aren't even
> involved in those. It's done right after school and the coach and assistant coach
> and the kids have a pizza whatever in the cafeteria but that's because of the
> busing. They have got to get them home.

A female participant said in regard to creating additional opportunities after

school for students,

It would take extra time and so, and at this point if we asked the teachers, 'Okay, we're going to have this social and we want you to come after hours' a lot of them are going to say… 'I'm not doing it.'

Another female participant responded, "That contract crap. You got to throw some of that out."

Teachers' Perspectives on Parents and Community. Through the focus group dialogues a theme around teachers' perspectives on parents and the community surfaced. Participants shared their thoughts about parents' involvement or lack of involvement in the school and why they felt the involvement level is what it is. A male participant shared,

> …Parents here, by and large, can't help them (the students). So it's just a whole different background I come from and live in than here...I recognize that I was blessed and my kids were blessed. And these kids, they're not bad kids, they just don't have any direction.

A male participant shared a bias regarding a parent,

> And I go down to the office and, long story short, the mother is very young, very affluent, very opposite of what I expected. And I expected a different person to be upset with me. She was very supportive and between the two of us the kid has gone from an F to an A. And so, guilty. I had a bias about what a Hispanic mother of this kid who sits in the front row and is causing me a pain in the ass ought to be.

A female participant shares, "His (the student's) parents won't come in. We can't speak the same language they speak. What can we do, you know. And so they have sort of given up on that child." A male participant shared, "Parents don't seem to be involved, whether it's money…or education or a culture thing." A female participant

responded, "Maybe it's also because if they don't speak English, when they come in to help, it would be scary."

A male participant shared,

Well, when I came here, the school was 35 percent [poor families] and the rest were middle class and upper class…And just in the last four or five years, it has peaked to where we now get the poorest families in [the city]…And that changes things and I don't know how aware we are of that reality here.

A female participant shared her thoughts regarding communication with parents,

…We want to call parents a lot of time and we don't communicate with them. We don't speak Spanish, they don't speak English…kids tell us well we don't have a car or we don't have any gas to come to parent teacher conferences…So, there's a socioeconomic piece and we have the language barrier. And not only the language barrier, the cultural barrier because I think some of the families they don't know how to interact and don't understand the education process.

Much of dialogue regarding parents seemed to be focused around the language barrier between school and home. Participants shared that they felt parents not coming into the school exhibited a lack of involvement while others felt parents not coming into school was a result of a language barrier. The participants expressed their thoughts regarding the negative effect the lack of parent involvement had on the students in the school. In either scenario, the participants expressed a desire for parents to assimilate to the dominant culture in how they communicate and participate with the school.

Qualitative Results Summary

In summary, participants expressed their perspectives on their own cultural proficiency directly and indirectly through the focus group discussions and how these perspectives related to the middle school classroom. Aspects of the Cultural Proficiency Continuum were evident throughout the dialogue and provided insight into the results of the quantitative portion of the study. Participants exhibited varying levels of cultural proficiency in the focus group mirroring the results displayed in Table 3.4 in Appendix D. Lindsay, (2003) suggests, "Culture is a predominant force, you cannot NOT be influenced by culture (pg. 6)." This force was evident in regard to the dialogue on discipline as well the barriers Lindsay (2003) outlines.

Chapter Six: Mixed Methods Results, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe how teachers' perspectives on their own cultural proficiency impact their work in middle school classrooms and schools. A multi-site, sequential mixed-methods design was used to gather different but complementary data on the same topic. In this study, quantitative data were gathered to assess the perspectives of teachers of their cultural proficiency using a 25-question Self-Assessment for Teachers survey from the *Colorado Department of Education Equity Toolkit for Administrators* (2010). Following the administration of the survey volunteers participated in a focus group at three of the four school sites using guided reflections and discussions. The reason for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data was to bring together the strengths of both forms of research to expand understandings of the complex topic. This chapter will (a) summarize the quantitative and qualitative data relative to the research, (b) share conclusions that may be drawn from the study, (c) revisit the literature review and make connections to this study, (d) describe the limitations of the study, and (e) provide recommendations for further research.

Study Overview

In this research study, teachers discussed how the deep underpinnings of culture and background affect the middle school classroom. A Colorado school district was chosen because it is a setting where student demographics have changed considerably over the past decade creating a majority minority student population while the teaching population reflects a predominately white population. The cultural mismatch in schools (mostly White teachers instructing a majority of minority students) made contrasting worldviews readily apparent. This setting also lent itself to discussions on the relationship between teachers' perception of race and ethnicity and effects on education.

The study was originally designed to examine the effects ethnic and racial culture has on the middle school classroom specifically in regard to discipline. Although this question could not be addressed with quantitative the researcher accessed, teachers' journals and focus group discussions indicated that cultural proficiency—and lack thereof—impact the classroom in many ways. Reflections and discussions were carefully analyzed to determine what experiences and/or mindsets were most meaningful to participants. In addition, the reflections and discussions fostered a process whereby the participants could reflect on how they formulated their own mindsets and/or biases that might affect their teaching practices.

According to Bennett (2002), some of the elements of increasing cultural responsiveness must include (a) curriculum that expands knowledge of ethnic groups'

cultures, histories, and contributions; (b) processes for students to become multicultural in their attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors; and (c) action strategies for understanding and resisting racism and other forms of domination. Throughout this study participants examined their worldview and how their worldview impacts their students in the classroom. Participants began by reflecting on their cultural proficiency by taking the Self-Assessment for Teachers survey (see Appendix A). Volunteers were selected to participate in the focus group at each school site where guided discussions took place around bias, discrimination and harassment, and community and family engagement. During this experience the focus group participants wrote in their reflective journals responding to prompts (see Appendix).

Mixed Methods Summary

In this study, perspectives on Cultural Proficiency and its effects on the middle school classroom were examined quantitatively through the administration of the Self-Assessment for Teachers survey from the *Colorado Department of Education Equity Toolkit for Administrators* (2010). All middle school teachers had the opportunity to participate in the survey and focus group participants took the survey a second time after the completion of the focus group experience. Qualitative data were collected through guided reflection and discussion within the focus groups.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were used to bring together strengths of both forms of research to corroborate results and increase the validity and credibility of the research conclusions. This section will summarize the results.

The results of this study indicated a lack of cultural proficiency throughout the middle schools as well as a sense of confusion and fear among teachers within the schools in addressing issues around bias, discrimination, and harassment. The qualitative data reflected the lack of cultural proficiency and the range of placements of participants on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum from the survey results. The qualitative data provided insights into the perspectives of participants' on their own cultural proficiency as it related to discipline.

The correlation between numbers of years of teaching and the score teachers received on the survey was statistically significant showing a small, negative correlation. The correlation between the average score from the survey of each school site with the overall percent of Hispanic students receiving discipline referrals was not statistically significant indicating no relationship exists between the average cultural proficiency score at each school site and the proportion of discipline referrals given to a student within the Hispanic student group.

Discussion of Findings

In this section, findings will be discussed in the following order: demographic findings, sample findings, and major findings.

Findings Introduction

In Chapter Four the quantitative and qualitative results were presented by research question and by theme, respectively. In this section, the findings of the qualitative and quantitative data were compared to determine the extent to which the qualitative findings validated the quantitative findings.

Quantitative data (survey results and discipline data) and qualitative data (reflection journals and focus groups) were integrated to strengthen the findings of the study. Qualitative responses were quantified to better determine which themes were more prevalent.

Quantitative and Qualitative Findings Summary

The reflection journals and the focus groups helped the participants to discuss their own mindsets and worldviews. Both forms of qualitative data provided a way for participants to share and discuss their thoughts on this process as well as reflect on their own cultural proficiency. Themes emerged from the introspection and quotations were used to provide support for the identified themes.

The qualitative data from the focus group revealed the perceptions teachers have regarding some Hispanic students. Words and phrases such as "gangster," "Mexican kid," "those Hispanics," "little bad-assess," "families who are gangsters," "those kids," "hard to build community with those kids," "[the city] Hispanic," "rough, tough Hispanic group," "real bad Hispanic kids," "tough kids," and "hard core," are examples of the

negative perceptions teachers hold regarding Hispanic students. "In any educational setting where children are regarded as academically deficient, and where the adults view large numbers of them as potentially bad or even dangerous, the fixation on control tends to override all other educational objectives and concerns (Noguera, 2003, pg. 345)." The abovementioned words and phrases tied to the Hispanic students within the middle schools school district expose the negative adult view of some Hispanic students within the middle schools and perhaps even a fixation that is overriding other educational objectives and concerns. "Because the outcomes of such practices often closely resemble larger patterns of success and failure that correspond with racial differences in American society, they invariably have the effect of reinforcing existing attitudes and beliefs about the nature and significance of race (Noguera, 2003, pg. 445)."

The negative perceptions and expectations of the teachers in regard to the Hispanic students continued to be prevalent through the conversations in the focus groups such as the comment this female participant made regarding Hispanic students showing low academic performance, "They'll be passed until they drop out (of school) in a couple or three years." Another female participant shared her surprise about there "being more parental support than I expected" exhibiting her low expectations for family support.

A male participant admits,

I have a perspective that this student is Hispanic, they probably live in a certain neighborhood because they're Hispanic…I see a Hispanic student who might grow up on the other side of town, other side of the tracks, are they going to

college?...they are facing the odds…they will probably do what their parents have done or a variation.

Assumptions about the guilt of students in regard to detrimental behavior taints the perspectives of teachers as this male participant shared, "I was just thinking how easy students are affiliated with gangs and how very easily they're lumped as like guilty or the culprit when often times, they're not any more guilty than any other student that's in the school." Another male participant said, "I think with gangs…I think that they're (students) written off…and they're just not here (at school) to do anything…that's definitely putting them in a box and that's what their abilities are in the classroom as well."

The perspectives of the teachers regarding the largest student group in [the city] are deeply affecting the classroom as a female participant points out, "I don't think we're teaching. We're teaching a lower standard. We're not teaching the normal seventh grade, sixth grade, and eighth grade. We're not teaching it. We're not teaching because of our population." A male participant made a similar observation,

> The test scores are low because we're not teaching—we don't know how to teach the students that we have and we're not aware at the level that we need to be in order to teach them well…I would say that it's very easy to want to expect students to change so that they can learn from us and not expect us to change so that we can teach them how they are.

Another male participant admits, "I remember wanting to have more White kids in class because I knew I was going to get better students."

95

The perspectives teachers have of the Hispanic students in [the city] are being driven by a pervasive, negative tone causing teachers to not expect certain behaviors from certain student groups while assuming those negative behaviors are pervasive within other student groups. The correlation between the number years a teacher has been teaching and the score on the Self-Assessment for Teachers yielded a small negative correlation [r (104)= −0.214, p=0.032]. It would seem that newer teachers are further along the Cultural Proficiency Continuum than their more veteran counterparts. A female participant shared, "I'm very conscious of it (diversity in the classroom) because I had to take a lot of classes (on cultural proficiency) with my Masters and with my teaching certificate because education really picks up on that because the populations have changed in the classroom. And so that's very important in getting your teaching certificate." This female participant, at least, feels that teacher preparation courses are better reflecting the changes in the demographics of students in the classroom creating a more culturally responsive teaching force.

A relationship was not identified between the average school site score on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum and the number of Hispanic students who received discipline referrals. However, there is room for further research to identify if a relationship exists between an individual teacher's cultural proficiency score and the number of referrals that particular teachers writes for Hispanic students.

Limitations of the Study

This research study was subject to the following limitations:

1. This sequential mixed-methods study consisted of a sample of 104 middle school teachers at four different school sites. Of those 104 teachers, 24 teachers volunteered and participated in the focus groups. It is possible that those who volunteered to participate had a particular interest in the topic of this study or a particular vested interest.

2. The discipline data were collected by each school site and not by individual teacher. Optimally, it would have been better to obtain individual teacher data to look at the correlation between an individual teacher's score on the Cultural Proficiency survey and the proportion of discipline referrals the individual teacher wrote. Individual teacher data were not available for this study.

3. The study participants were from a Western region; therefore their survey responses may differ from responses of teachers in other regions of the country.

4. The researcher, a White woman, tried to control bias during the focus group process. The researcher also made a strong effort to look objectively at the analysis of the data. However, there is always the possibility of unintentional bias.

5. Inconsistencies exist between the schools on how and what discipline referrals are recorded into the district data management system.

6. The numerical ranges assigned to the Cultural Proficiency Continuum from the survey responses was not part of the *CDE Equity Toolkit for Administrators* (2010); the numerical ranges were assigned by the researcher in collaboration with a CDE consultant.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were derived from this study:

1. Personal experiences and education have an effect on how a teacher perceives the students in their classroom whose background differs from their own. Reflecting on how past experiences shape one's own bias and addressing those biases as a means of being culturally responsive within the school system can have a positive effect on the classroom.

2. This group of teachers was consistent with their scores on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum survey, demonstrating strong negative perspectives of the Hispanic student population in their schools.

3. Confusion, fear, and barriers around culture exist within these middle school sites. A professional development system within the district to address the confusion, fear, and barriers existent is of great importance to close the behavioral gap,

however, the state-recommended intervention tool used in this study (the focus groups) did not have any apparent effect on the participants' views.

4. In these school sites, newer teachers (within their first five years of teaching) score higher on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum than their more veteran counterparts. Differentiated professional development within the school district to address specific needs of veteran teachers and new teachers in regards to developing cultural proficiency may allow for all teachers to best meet the needs of the students being served by the school district.

Recommendations for Further Research

After completing the study, the researcher identified five additional studies that would provide greater clarity on how Cultural Proficiency affects the classroom.

1. A similar study that utilizes teachers from K-12 as the sample to determine the perceptions of cultural proficiency.

2. A replicated study where the researcher is someone other than a district employee would decrease the possibility of unintentional bias.

3. A study that analyzes more than dichotomous student groups in terms of discipline referrals. Also, gathering data at the individual teacher level in order to look at the correlation between an individual teacher's perspective of their own Cultural Proficiency and the proportion of discipline referrals attributable to each of the student groups.

99

4. A similar study utilizing multiple school districts rather than schools within just one district as well as looking at districts in multiple states would allow for some generalizability.

5. A similar study utilizing the *CDE Equity Toolkit for Administrators* (2010) analyzing the relationship between perspectives on cultural proficiency and another aspect of the educational system such mathematics scores or community and family engagement in the school and/or district. A four-point scale should be used for the self-assessment survey within the toolkit.

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105

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Appendix A

Self-Assessment for Teachers

	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never
I am aware of my own racial, ethnic, and cultural background, and understand how it affects my perceptions and values			
I seek opportunities to learn about the cultural practices in our school community, including staff, families, and students.			
I regularly reflect on my own bias and how I view and treat people with cultural practices that are different than my own.			
As a faculty member, I feel supported and valued for my own identity and perspectives.			
I value the diverse perspectives and cultural practices of my colleagues.			
I regularly examine academic and behavioral data for achievement gaps by race, native language, socio-economic status, and gender.			
I review data to inform instruction in ways that best meet the needs of individual learners, and collaborate with colleagues in data-based decision-making.			
I create positive relationships with families so that we can work as a team to best meet their child's needs.			
I engage in professional development to examine my own cultural awareness and develop culturally relevant teaching strategies.			
I encourage all families to give me feedback and volunteer in my classroom.			
I participate in action research focused on equity to better meet my students' needs and improve my instructional strategies. I monitor student engagement within this research.			

Students and families feel comfortable when reporting inequitable practices or incidents, whether parties involved include me, students or fellow colleagues.			
Communication is available to families in multiple languages.			
I make sure that there are translators available to improve school and family communication.			
Art work and photographs embedded in communication and classroom décor reflect the demographics of the students positively and are age appropriate.			
I act as a student and family advocate. I openly confront my colleagues if I see practices that I feel are inequitable.			
I preview visual media to make sure that it is culturally relevant and ant-bias.			
My behavioral expectations and policies have taken into account the varying cultural expectations and norms in my student demographics.			
I review curriculum and assessments for historical accuracy, cultural relevance, multiple perspectives, and anti-bias.			
Culturally relevant lessons are embedded in my day to day teaching, rather than taught in isolated units.			
I differentiate to meet the needs of students from varying backgrounds and have high expectations for all. I provide the support needed to reach expectations.			
Holidays are equally represented and celebrations are sensitive to the varying religions and cultural practices of my student population.			
I actively dispel racial and cultural stereotypes in my curriculum, assessments, materials, and classroom décor.			
I am comfortable in leading discussions about race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation,			

and religion with students.			
I avoid imposing my personal values and opinions and assist students in learning the difference between fact and opinion. I encourage the sharing of opinions that are different than my own and looking at multiple perspectives.			

CDE Equity Toolkit for Administrators (2010), pg. 28-29

Appendix C

The following guiding questions were the general format for all focus group sessions beginning with identifying the current reality in regard to bias, discrimination/harassment, and community and family engagement:

1) What is our current reality (regarding bias, discrimination/harassment, or community and family engagement)?

2) Where do we need to heal as a community?

3) What can we do differently?

The following guiding questions were used during the first session of the focus groups around bias:

1) Did the self-assessment reveal any biases?

2) Where do biases show up in our school community?

The following question was used from the toolkit for the reflection journal prompt:

What is your earliest memory of seeing another person being treated unfairly or without respect due to prejudiced attitudes or actions toward someone because of

ethnicity, gender, class, religion, disability, etc.? What impression did it have on you?

The following guiding questions were used for the second session of the focus group around the topic of discrimination and harassment:

1) Have there been incidents of discrimination or harassment in your school?

2) What are the sources or causes of such incidents?

3) Are such incidents more prevalent at certain grade levels or ages?

The third focus group session focused on community and family engagement and followed the general question format mentioned above.

Figure 1. Percent of Colorado Students by Racial/Ethnic Groups 10 year trend.
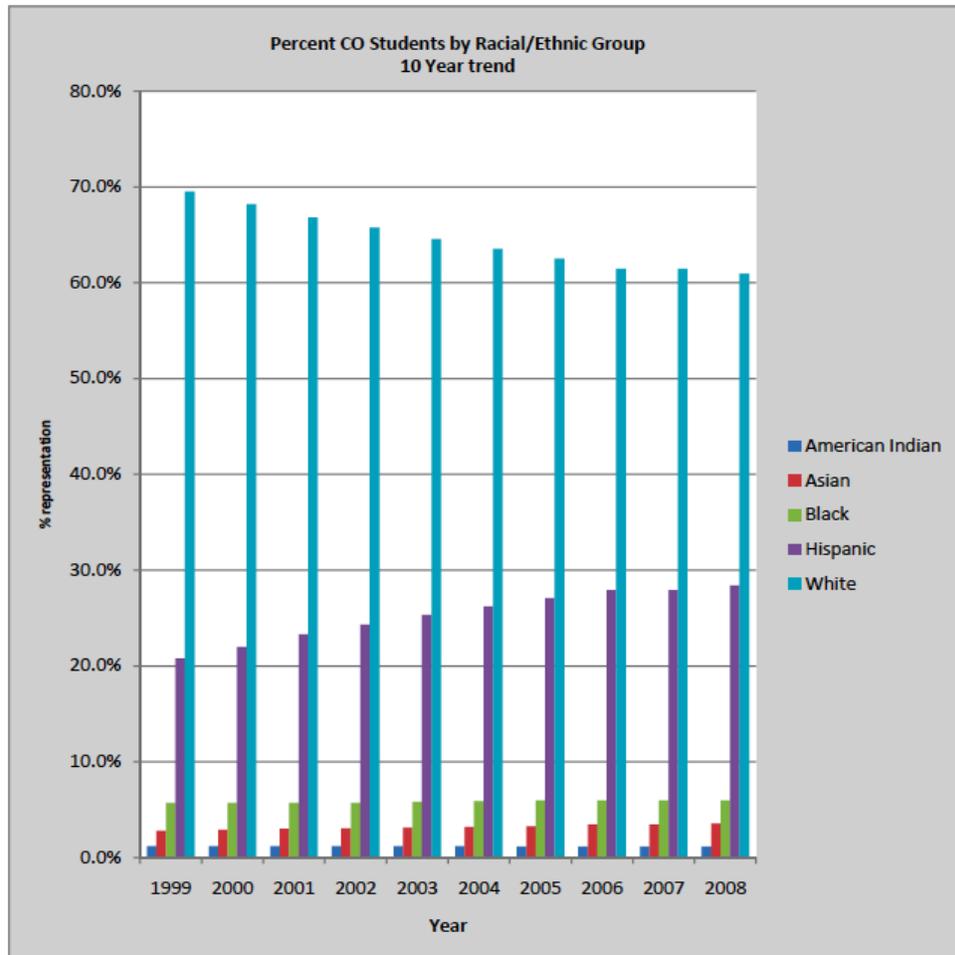
(Colorado Department of Education, 2010)

Figure 2. Annual dropout rate by Race/Ethnicity 10 year trend for the state of Colorado.

(Colorado Department of Education, 2010)

Appendix D

Table 3.4
Survey Scores by School

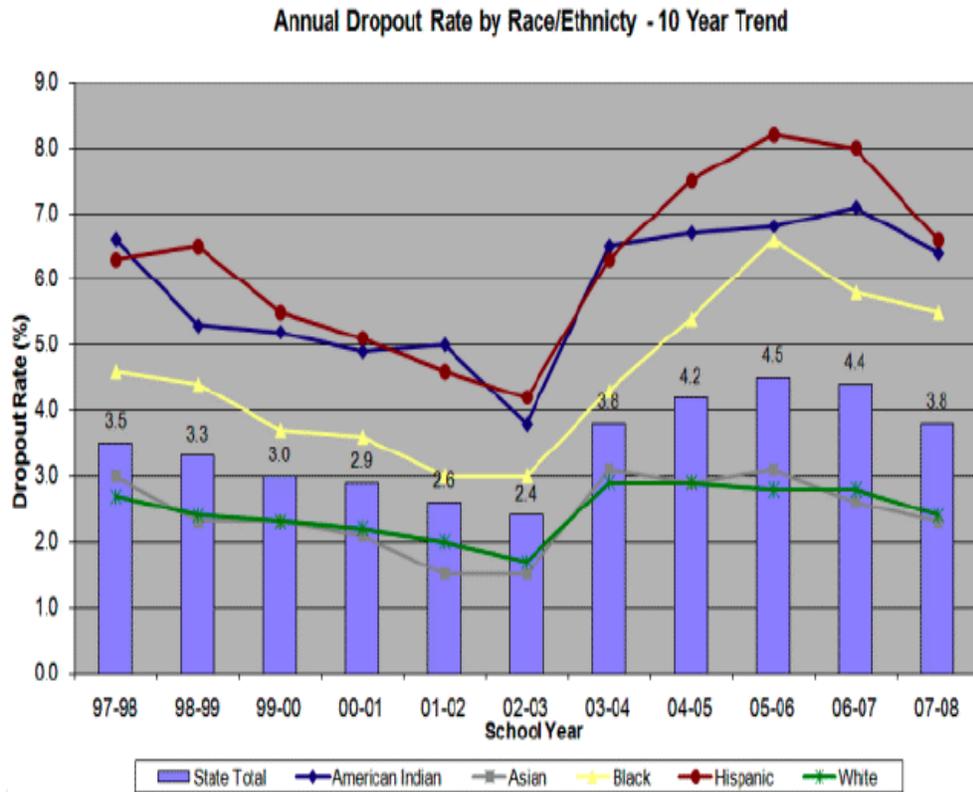| School ID	Teacher ID	Raw Score	Proficiency Level
MS1	20000476	62	Cultural Precompetence
MS1	20003373	52	Cultural Blindness
MS1	19998052	49	Cultural Blindness
MS1	20062124	68	Cultural Competence
MS1	20056464	66	Cultural Competence
MS1	20108168	52	Cultural Blindness
MS1	20078621	61	Cultural Precompetence
MS1	20107332	52	Cultural Blindness
MS1	20109272	58	Cultural Precompetence
MS1	20067034	52	Cultural Blindness
MS1	19947840	56	Cultural Precompetence
MS1	19994359	61	Cultural Precompetence
MS1	20076249	68	Cultural Competence
MS1	20040134	64	Cultural Precompetence
MS1	19868074	47	Cultural Blindness
MS1	19769680	59	Cultural Precompetence
MS1	19976961	65	Cultural Competence

MS1	20091775	66	Cultural Competence
MS1	19846456	57	Cultural Precompetence
MS1	20066103	61	Cultural Precompetence
MS1	20009426	56	Cultural Precompetence
MS1	20051510	64	Cultural Precompetence
MS1	19971728	54	Cultural Blindness
MS1	20056651	69	Cultural Competence
MS1	19695002	57	Cultural Precompetence
MS1	20025697	73	Cultural Competence
MS1	19677287	66	Cultural Competence
MS1	19860629	62	Cultural Precompetence
MS1	20024190	52	Cultural Blindness
MS2	20091990	45	Cultural Blindness
MS2	19835858	45	Cultural Blindness
MS2	20100610	56	Cultural Precompetence
MS2	19717204	65	Cultural Competence
MS2	20104330	63	Cultural Precompetence
MS2	19734443	63	Cultural Precompetence
MS2	20036542	71	Cultural Competence
MS2	19828468	50	Cultural Blindness

MS2	19932901	54	Cultural Blindness
MS2	19857458	56	Cultural Precompetence
MS2	19934585	54	Cultural Blindness
MS2	19870271	47	Cultural Blindness
MS2	19793599	44	Cultural Incapacity
MS2	19869264	64	Cultural Precompetence
MS2	20060910	63	Cultural Precompetence
MS2	19921121	50	Cultural Blindness
MS2	20019093	65	Cultural Competence
MS2	20107636	69	Cultural Competence
MS2	20085022	62	Cultural Precompetence
MS2	20102155	68	Cultural Competence
MS2	N/A	56	Cultural Precompetence
MS2	19924371	49	Cultural Blindness
MS2	19919657	69	Cultural Competence
MS2	19931513	58	Cultural Precompetence
MS2	19685692	66	Cultural Competence
MS2	20098093	53	Cultural Blindness
MS2	20099411	64	Cultural Precompetence
MS2	19817277	48	Cultural Blindness

MS2	20096360	66	Cultural Competence
MS3	20104571	65	Cultural Competence
MS3	20012997	58	Cultural Precompetence
MS3	20104794	57	Cultural Precompetence
MS3	19942904	48	Cultural Blindness
MS3	19997604	59	Cultural Precompetence
MS3	20096546	68	Cultural Competence
MS3	19779835	61	Cultural Precompetence
MS3	19908411	68	Cultural Competence
MS3	20097366	64	Cultural Precompetence
MS3	20102103	66	Cultural Competence
MS3	20061163	60	Cultural Precompetence
MS3	20096303	67	Cultural Competence
MS3	20084978	63	Cultural Precompetence
MS3	20038094	69	Cultural Competence
MS3	19958226	63	Cultural Precompetence
MS3	20095534	67	Cultural Competence
MS3	20064643	63	Cultural Precompetence
MS3	20080298	64	Cultural Precompetence
MS3	20105061	52	Cultural Blindness

MS3	19770886	52	Cultural Blindness
MS3	19798870	62	Cultural Precompetence
MS3	20093064	66	Cultural Competence
MS3	20077465	65	Cultural Competence
MS4	N/A	59	Cultural Precompetence
MS4	19946850	69	Cultural Competence
MS4	19980200	68	Cultural Competence
MS4	19986309	56	Cultural Precompetence
MS4	19849493	73	Cultural Competence
MS4	20036509	63	Cultural Precompetence
MS4	N/A	68	Cultural Competence
MS4	N/A	61	Cultural Precompetence
MS4	20089873	64	Cultural Precompetence
MS4	19925447	52	Cultural Blindness
MS4	19734012	48	Cultural Blindness
MS4	19961120	69	Cultural Competence
MS4	N/A	62	Cultural Precompetence
MS4	19827092	66	Cultural Competence
MS4	19910282	65	Cultural Competence
MS4	20022781	58	Cultural Precompetence

MS4	20065353	66	Cultural Competence
MS4	19996209	62	Cultural Precompetence
MS4	20108016	64	Cultural Precompetence
MS4	19942591	52	Cultural Blindness
MS4	19695250	55	Cultural Precompetence
MS4	19830877	70	Cultural Competence
MS4	19849851	56	Cultural Precompetence

Appendix E

a Priori Themes for Qualitative Data Coding identified prior to coding from the review of literature and *CDE Equity Toolkit for Administrators* (2010)

1. Teacher perspective on their own cultural proficiency

2. Discipline and culture

3. Years of teaching (experience) effect on perspective of cultural proficiency

4. Experience with Bias, Discrimination, and Harassment