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# Multicultural education and cultural competence in the high accountability era: A study of teacher perception

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Multicultural Education and Cultural Competence in the High Accountability Era:

A Study of Teacher Perception

by

Jennifer Morley

A Dissertation submitted partially in fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
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ABSTRACT

As America's public schools become more diverse, the achievement gap between white students and students of color persists. These gaps are even more apparent in urban areas that serve large numbers of poor students of color. Because the population of aspiring teachers is increasingly white and middle class, theorists and teacher trainers often recommend multicultural education as a solution to working successfully in these schools.

Multicultural education theorists claim that their suggestions for K-12 practitioners have not been infused into classrooms and schools, and so maintain that additional training opportunities should be provided for teachers. Although there is ample literature regarding multicultural education, there is scant research discussing teachers' perceptions and experiences with multicultural education, especially experienced teachers at the secondary level post-No Child Left Behind (NCLB). While one of the main purposes for the accountability measures in NCLB is to eliminate the achievement gap, these current political policies are at odds with the ideals of multicultural education. Further, historical and sociological analyses indicate that teachers have not been able to systematically alter school practices or outcomes in urban schools. Therefore, there is a gap between multicultural education theory and practice, as well as a gap between

multicultural education theory and policy. The purpose of this study was to further investigate teacher perceptions of the factors in schools that affect the gaps between theories, practice and policy.

Seven teachers who embrace multicultural education and work in urban secondary schools serving large populations of students of color were interviewed to further explore their experiences when implementing multicultural practices in their classroom. The results of this research suggest that multicultural education theory may be flawed in the way it approaches teacher training and the unique conditions of urban secondary schools, especially in the high accountability NCLB era. Teachers in this study understood the theoretical foundations of multicultural education, but believed that the goals of multicultural education were beyond what could be accomplished in classrooms. The findings of this study address some of the theoretical inconsistencies related to the institutional contexts of urban schools, teacher retention, and multicultural education teacher training models.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### *Background of the Study*

America's schools are becoming ever more diverse. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) report (2004) shows that the percentage enrollment of students of color is rapidly escalating. In 2001, more than 40% of the students enrolled in America's public schools were students of color (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In California, Florida, and Texas, white students have become less than 50% of the total student population (Darling-Hammond, 2004). Schools in major urban areas consist mainly of African American and Hispanic students, and the U.S. Census Bureau (2000) predicts that by the year 2050, people of color will make up approximately 47% of the country's population.

Diversity itself is not problematic, but white students and students of color do not have similar outcomes in schools. The disparities in achievement levels between these two groups are commonly referred to as the "achievement gap" (Bennett et al., 2004; Orfield, 2001; Rothstein, 2004). Since the completion of the Coleman Report, *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (1966), scholars have debated whether achievement differences between white students and non-white students are attributed to inequalities in schooling or to family background. The achievement gap is usually discussed in terms of test scores, but there is also an extensive gap in other educational

outcome measures such as special education placement, vocational education assignment, drop-out, and college enrollment rates (Orfield, 2001). The gap in school outcomes, though it narrows, still exists even when researchers control for socio-economic and familial structure factors (Rothstein, 2004). This gap is especially prevalent in urban schools where the majority of enrollees are students of color (Orfield, 2001). Researchers have attempted to explain and pose solutions for closing the achievement gap in a number of ways, and solutions for eliminating the achievement gap vary according to the perspective of the person or group offering suggestions. Generally, failure for students to achieve in school is attributed to biological, family or cultural deficit, as well as to institutional factors within schools or society in general.

While the student population is growing more diverse, America's teachers and prospective teachers are increasingly from a white middle class background (Banks, 2004a; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Jordan-Irvine, 2003). Theorists in teacher education and preparation training believe that the cultural dissonance between teachers and their students is partially to blame for the achievement gap, and so many of these teacher educators propose training programs that emphasize multicultural education to address cultural mismatch between teacher and student (Banks & Banks-McGee, 1993; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Gay, 2000; Howard, 1999; Jordan-Irvine, 2002, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2000; National Collaborative on Diversity, 2004; Nieto, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Multicultural education attempts to incorporate and validate multiple perspectives and realities in order to increase student achievement, and includes attention to curriculum, methods of

teaching, content and textbook selection, as well as to school culture (Banks, 2004a). Scholars often prescribe critical or reconstructive pedagogies for fusing politics and education, and see teachers as catalysts to ignite social change in schools and society (Weiner, 1993). The majority of multicultural theoretical perspectives propose that teachers be “change agents.” In other words once they are “trained,” their responsibility is to go out into their respective schools and transform educational environments and practices so that schools are responsive to all students.

Teacher educators and educational researchers are concerned that their suggestions to increase achievement for minority students have been ignored. Theory has not translated successfully into practice, or into policy. Although there is an ample body of research detailing multicultural methods to address the restructuring of schools and practices within them in order to serve diverse students, there is little transmission of these methods into classrooms (Grant, 2004; Nieto, 2004). When teacher education literature confronts this gap between theory and practice, the implications are that more training, better training, or different training for teachers will result in the success of multicultural education at the K-12 level, as well as the eventual elimination of the achievement gap (Banks & Banks-McGee, 1993; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Gay, 2000; Howard, 1999; Jordan-Irvine, 2002, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2000; National Collaborative on Diversity, 2004; Nieto, 2004).

However, this assumption fails to consider the history of educational reform as well as with current national policy. Historically, teachers have had little to no power in reforming schools, school systems, or society, and so are limited in their ability to

be the transformational change agents multicultural theorists would like them to be (Cuban, 1993; Tyack, 1974; Weiner, 1993). Public schools, especially urban secondary schools, because of their bureaucratic nature, have been powerfully resistant to change, and according to some researchers, act to maintain the structural inequality in society (Anyon, 1980, 2005; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Oakes, 1985). Additionally, the political climate of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century is dictated by standardization and accountability with emphasis on outcomes, evidence, results, and effectiveness (Cochran-Smith, 2004), and influenced by the recent passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also called the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). No Child Left Behind (2001) has brought new attention to the achievement gap and teacher qualification but neglects direct attention to diversity in the student body, or to any cultural mismatches among teachers and students (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

### *Statement of the Problem*

In the past three decades, teacher educators and educational researchers have advocated for multicultural education to make schools more responsive to students of color and to aid in alleviating the achievement gap. There is extensive literature detailing multicultural education theory, as well as prescriptions and suggestions for multicultural practice. Yet, multicultural education, as envisioned by theorists, has not been widely implemented or infused into educational practice. There are clear divisions in multicultural educational theory and multicultural educational practice in

K-12 settings, as well as distinct divisions between multicultural theories and national policy.

Multicultural advocates attribute the absence of multicultural methods in K-12 classrooms to teacher deficit or lack of teacher training, and so researchers often recommend additional multicultural education programs to increase training opportunities for teachers (Banks & Banks-McGee, 1993; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2002; Gay, 2000, 2004; Howard, 1999; Jordan-Irvine, 2002, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2000; Nieto, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). “Value added” and “efficacy” research also concludes that teachers are primarily responsible for student outcomes, and so solutions for increasing student achievement are based upon reforming and expanding teacher training (Burns & Noell, 2006). However, another extensive literature body focuses on the institutional context of public education, especially in urban areas, and demonstrates that teachers, or teacher training programs, have been ineffective in changing political realities either outside or inside schools (Anyon, 2005; Cuban, 1993; Tyack, 1974; Weiner, 1993).

There is no doubt that teachers have a large impact upon students, and it certainly may be beneficial for teachers to understand the cultural implications of their education practices, but multicultural education theories that suggest teachers transform institutions may be suffering from what Lois Weiner (1993) calls “historic amnesia” (p. 8). Teacher education scholars concentrate on individual attitude change of teachers, but neglect the institutional context of urban schooling, as well as the effects of the larger social, economic, and political environment on classroom practices and outcomes. Once novice teachers complete their education programs, they

are sent to work in firmly established bureaucratic settings, in policy contexts that negate acknowledgment of diversity, yet are expected to promote institutional change in their schools. When pre-service teachers participate in pre-service multicultural training programs, instead of acting as change agents, the majority of them return to their prior belief systems after working in schools (Jordan-Irvine, 2003). Few studies explore the barriers teachers face in implementing the practices recommended by multicultural teacher training programs. Multicultural education theory may be limited in neglecting the historical and institutional context of schooling as well as expecting teachers to be transformational agents.

Multicultural researchers have observed, analyzed, and come to consensus which traits and classroom practices are considered effective in increasing achievement for students of color, and propose training programs to increase these behaviors in pre-service and practicing teachers. According to the literature, these programs have not become infused into daily classroom practice (Grant et al., 2004). However, despite clear constraints, some teachers are acclaimed for their implementation of multicultural practices in urban classrooms, and so have been successful in combining theory and practice. They are considered knowledgeable and expert in their field. Why do these teachers succeed where others fail? What have their experiences been? What institutional impediments do they face in urban schools? How do they overcome these impediments to implement their practices? What can practicing teachers tell us that would give further clarification to the gap between multicultural theory and K-12 practice? This study seeks to shed light on these, and other questions, by examining the institutional experiences of urban secondary teachers who embrace the use of

multicultural practices. Research in this area will help us to understand the nature of the gap between theory and practice.

### *Purpose of the Study and Rationale*

The existing literature contains extensive perspectives from teacher educators and from pre-service teachers advocating strongly for multicultural education, yet there is little to no focus on the perspectives of practicing teachers, especially at the secondary level. Only a few studies specifically explore how educators cope with restraints imposed through institutions and political or economic climates (Little & McLaughlin, 1993; Metz, 2003). The purpose of the study was to investigate the issues urban secondary teachers confront when they try to implement recommended multicultural classroom practices. This study of practicing urban secondary teachers who successfully use multicultural practices can provide insights to better understand the reason for, and the nature of, the gaps between multicultural theory, practice and policy and also to provide new or different ways to analyze teacher education programs, and their relation to educational policy and educational outcomes.

### *Qualitative Research Questions*

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What reasons do urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education offer to explain the achievement gap?
2. What do practicing urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education currently understand about multicultural theories and practices?

3. What institutional barriers do urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education confront when attempting to infuse multicultural practices in their classrooms?
4. What are the perceptions of urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education on the impact of the accountability movement on their teaching?
5. What role do urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education see themselves playing in educational and societal reform?

#### *Definition of Terms*

**Achievement gap:** This term refers to recognized achievement difference between white students and students of color; recognized by disparity in test scores as well as grades, special education enrollment, vocational educational enrollment, drop out rates, and college enrollment (Orfield, 2001).

**Diversity:** This term generally refers to a variety of cultures and ethnicities, including language, but also may include religion, social class, gender, sexuality, age, and exceptionality.

**Multicultural theory:** For the purpose of this study, multicultural theory refers to theoretical perspectives of researchers and teacher trainers regarding multicultural education (Banks, 2004a).

**Multicultural practice:** This term refers to the utilization of multicultural theories in K-12 education.

**Practice:** This term refers to classroom instruction and teaching.

Students of color: This term refers to students who are non-White; classified by school districts as “minority”; the majority of students of color in urban schools are classified as Hispanic or African American (Frankenberg et al., 2000; Orfield & Lee, 2006; Orfield & Eaton, 1996)

Title I schools: Title I schools are schools in which at least one-half of the population is considered living in poverty, as assessed via the percentage of free or reduced lunch recipients in the school; “compensatory programs aimed at schools and communities with disadvantaged children” (Orfield & Eaton, 1996, p. 91).

Teacher educators: This descriptor refers to university level teacher trainers; generally work in colleges of education with pre-service teachers.

### *Conceptual Framework*

The study was informed by both critical and ecological theories, as well as by the professional contexts and experiences of the researcher as a scholar, teacher-educator, and practicing urban secondary school social studies teacher. In the Methods section, there will be further discussion regarding the possible bias of the researcher given these professional contexts and experiences.

Critical theories are based on the belief that existing institutions and social arrangements contribute to the perpetuation of inequity. Critical theorists have long held that schooling practices may replicate, rather than erase, hierarchies and social class divisions in American society, and that schooling practices are set in place to benefit societal interests rather than students (Anyon, 1980, 2005; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Oakes, 1985). Critical paradigms hope to inform and then transform participants

within these institutions and social arrangements. Critical race theories, coined by law scholar Derrick Bell (1993), specifically question race-based hierarchal arrangements thought normative by the majority of society (Ladson-Billings, 2004). Critical theories are considered post-modern because biography, autobiography, and narrative are used as valid scholarship (Ladson-Billings, 2004). Although this study was informed by many of the concepts inherent in critical theories, the idea of the teacher as transformational agent, given the institutional construct of public education, was questioned.

Ecological theories are based on the idea that place, context, relationships, politics, and socio-economic arrangements have a great influence upon outcomes (Bowers & Flinders, 1990). Early ecological theories in the 1960-70's analyzed child development within the "layers" of existence; newer ecological perspectives also analyze whole systems from the viewpoint of overlapping relationships (Furman & Greunewald, 2004; Greunewald, 2003; Weiner, 1993). Ecological strategies address the entire web of relationships that influence school practices, instead of isolating classroom instruction alone as a service delivery model to correct. Ecological theories offer a perspective that suggest that the macro-political context in which schools operate have a much greater impact than the individual practices within, and most importantly, reform "depends on the active participation of *all* constituencies to reorganize relations within the school community" (Weiner, 1993, p. 94).

### *Organization of Remaining Chapters*

Chapter 2 contains a review of the relevant literature regarding the achievement gap, multicultural education including cultural competence, institutional contexts of public schools, and the related literature regarding the impact of national policy on classroom practice. Chapter 3 describes the methods that were used to obtain data for the study. The section will restate the research questions and present an overview of the design of the study, including sampling criteria and qualitative methods that were used to report experiences and perceptions of the practicing teachers in the study. In addition, the researcher's background and methods to control potential bias will be explained. Chapter 4 describes the results and general themes of the research, and Chapter 5 includes the participants' responses to the research questions, discussion of implications and further research, as well as a general conclusion. An autobiographical reflection is also included after Chapter 5.

## Chapter 2

### Review of the Relevant Literature

#### *Introduction*

The relevant literature reviewed includes definition and existing explanations for the achievement gap, and a few of the proposed remedies to eradicate the gap. The population of America's schools is becoming increasingly diverse, and the majority of students of color reside in the country's urban areas. Multicultural education theory has been strongly advocated for teachers by teacher educators as a solution to the achievement gap between white students and students of color, and existing literature has documented and suggested methods for practice. The rationale and purposes for multicultural education are summarized. According to research, multicultural theories have not been successfully infused into K-12 classrooms and schools. Although many theorists attribute this lack of infusion to teacher training, an alternative explanation offered here is that the institutionalized bureaucratic constraints and socio-cultural contexts of urban public education, factors that may be further influenced by the mandates required by No Child Left Behind, have constrained teachers' efforts to use multiculturalism in their classrooms. An explanation of this rationale is included.

*Diverse Populations and the Achievement Gap*

The population of America, and of America’s public schools is becoming increasingly more diverse. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2004), the national percentage of white students declined between 1975 and 2003 at the elementary, high school, and college levels. In 1975, 77% of all elementary and high school students were white, but the percentage was reduced to 60% by 2003. There was no major difference in the proportion of students who were classified as Black in 1975 and 2003. However, the proportion of students who were classified as Hispanic increased from 6% in 1975 to 18 % in 2003. Students enrolled are shown in Figure 1 by ethnicity, as well as the percentage of the total school population.

Ethnic Group	# Population in schools	% Population in Schools
White, non-Hispanic	28,272,486	58.7
Black, non-Hispanic	8,240,184	17.1
Hispanic	8,902,337	18.5
Asian- Pacific Islander	2,118,678	4.4
Native American- Alaskan	680,374	1.2

*Figure 1.* Ethnic Composition of U.S. Public Schools 2003-04. Source: National Center for Educational Statistics. (2005). State Non-Fiscal Survey of Public Elementary and Secondary Education, 2003-04). Total population U.S. Public Schools 48,123,966

More importantly, students of color, as a group, have consistently achieved at lower levels than white counterparts. The achievement gap in standardized testing is usually one half to one full standard deviation; in other words, if white students score, on average, at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile, minority students may score, on average, at the 23<sup>rd</sup> percentile (Rothstein, 2004). Current standardized test measures of achievement generally use criterion-referenced tests to determine if students can exceed a certain competence point in order to determine whether they are on grade level (Orfield, 2001; Rothstein, 2004).

The achievement gap does not pertain only to test scores. Students of color are also over-represented in special education programs, vocational curricular tracks, drop out of school more frequently, and enroll in post-secondary education at lower rates (Artiles et al., 2004; Berlak, 2001; Orfield, 2001; Rothstein, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). African American students are more likely to be placed in restrictive special education classroom settings than white students (37% vs. 24%) and are less likely to receive therapeutic services (Artiles et al., 2004). Artiles et al. (2004) point out that the National Longitudinal Transition Study shows that “disabled students in cities (where minorities constitute the largest segment of the school population) are almost three times as likely to be segregated in separate schools and far more likely to be kept out of challenging academic programs than their suburban counterparts” (p. 723). By the age of 15 to 17, close to 50% of African American males have fallen behind in school (Orfield, 2001), and drop-outs rates average about 40% to 60% for students of color in many major urban areas (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). Despite growth in numbers, only a little over one half of African American or Latino students enter college, compared to

two thirds of white high school graduates (Zusman, 2005). In 2000-2001, African Americans earned fewer than 9% of all Bachelor's degrees, and Latinos earned only 6% (Zusman, 2005). In addition, many African American and Hispanic students live in poor segregated urban areas, with little to no contact with individuals of other ethnic or socio-economic groups (Frankenberg et al., 2000; Massey & Denton, 1993; Orfield & Lee, 2006; Orfield & Eaton, 1996).

Although students are becoming more diverse, the pre-service and practicing teacher populations are coming largely from a white, middle class background. In 2001, 90% of public school teachers were white, 6% were black, and fewer than 5% were from other ethnic groups (Jordan-Irvine, 2003; National Collaboration on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004; Wilson, 2001). James Banks (2004b) calls the cultural gap between students and teachers the "demographic imperative," and Lisa Delpit (1995) names it "our future's greatest challenge" (p. 167). Some recommendations have been to recruit more teachers of color (National Collaborative on Diversity, 2004; Jordan-Irvine, 2002), but others have suggested that training for white teachers based on multicultural education theory can alleviate concerns (Banks, 2004; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Sleeter, 2001). Sleeter (2001) and Jordan-Irvine (2003) studied white teachers and found that the majority were not at levels of multicultural awareness acceptable for working with diverse populations, were not competent in cross-cultural practice or in understanding structural inequity. Grant et al. (2004) found that the majority of white teachers believed that racism was the "victim's" fault, and that most white teachers, upon viewing acts of racism, do not intervene. These researchers recommend training programs so that teachers may be

more prepared to handle increasing diversity in classrooms. Multicultural education is often offered as a solution so that these teachers can improve minority student achievement and therefore reduce the achievement gap.

### *Multicultural Education*

Various explanations have attempted to address reasons for gaps in educational achievement and attainment between white students and students of color. Most explanations can be placed into one of several categories. Genetic deficit or biological models claim that intelligence is innate, and that academic achievement correlates with inherited abilities (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Valencia, 1997). Cultural deficit models theorize that deficient or pathological families, communities, or peer groups are at fault for producing inadequate outcomes (Banks, 2004b; Coleman, 1966; Foley, 1997; United States Department of Labor, 1965; Valencia, 1997). Critical theories question institutional and societal context, and, in education, critique the socio-political-economic role of American schooling (Anyon, 1985, 2005; Artiles et al., 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2004; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Oakes, 1985). Historically, educational prescriptions for diversity have been based on deficit ideas (Cochran-Smith, 2004), but multicultural education, as recommended by theorists, is based more upon critical theoretical models that address the changing of school and classroom practices as a way to ultimately help transform society (Banks, 2004a; Nieto, 2004; Sleeter, 1996).

Multicultural education began with African American scholarship in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, progressed into the intercultural movement in the 1930's-1950's, and became

even more popular during the civil rights era of the 1960-70's (Banks, 2004a; Sleeter, 1996). Multicultural education goals are to reform schools for increasing "equal education opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class and cultural groups" (Banks, 2004, p. xi). Sonia Nieto (1994) claims that the purpose of multicultural education is "not to promote human relations, not to make kids feel good, or to preserve their native languages and cultures," but "there is reasonably unanimous agreement among the major theorists in the field that that these purposes are secondary to the primary purpose of advancing student learning" (p. vii). For the purposes of this study, multicultural education theory concerns the study of teacher cultural competence, curriculum construction, and whole school reform, while multicultural practice includes the everyday application of the above principles in K-12 classroom settings.

Although specialists have come to a consensus regarding major principles, concepts, and directions, multicultural education is an eclectic field (Gay, 2004). Multicultural education theorists have argued for reforms addressing pedagogy, teaching materials, curriculum and methods that restructure schooling to be responsive to equity concerns, and charge teachers with the responsibility of being change agents to facilitate whole school reform (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Banks (2004a) has proposed five dimensions of multicultural education: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture. Sleeter and Grant (1987) similarly categorized the various approaches to multicultural education as Teaching the Exceptional or Culturally Different, Single

Group Studies, Human Relations, Multicultural Education, and Education that is Multicultural and Social Reconstructivist.

Many multicultural theorists go a step further and claim that multicultural teaching is teaching for social justice. Cochran-Smith (2004), Darling-Hammond (2002), Nieto (2004), and Sleeter (1996) as well as other theorists agree that teacher education must move to critique and transformation in order to affect both existing schooling practices and society. Cochran-Smith (2004) believes teachers must learn critical dissonance to “teach against the grain” (p. 25); in other words, to learn the difference between university programs and K-12 practices, to link theory and practice, and “to raise their voices against teaching and testing practices that have been ‘proven’ effective by large scale research” (p. 28). Cochran-Smith (2004) admits that teachers who work against the grain are in the minority, and that programs to foster critical dissonance have not been effective. Cochran-Smith (2004) claims that programs that plan to encourage critical dissonance are “intended to be transformative” (p. 26), but fail partly because conservative “cooperating teachers who do not have reflective skills themselves co-opt the effort” (p. 26), and that “teachers who work against the grain are often at odds with their administrators and evaluators” (p. 28).

There is indeed a large divide between theory and practice. Although multicultural theorists recommend curricular, educational, and ultimately, societal reform, few changes have occurred according to scholars in the field. Since multicultural education’s modern inception in the civil rights movement as an activist, collectivist, social and political movement (Sleeter, 1996), theoretical literature regarding multicultural education has increased dramatically. However, the practice of

multicultural education in K-12 settings is often characterized by token addition of diverse content into the curriculum or by diversity training for teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Sleeter, 1996). Grant et al. (2004), along with a team of researchers, examined over 1200 published articles regarding multicultural education and found that little pertained to practice; the majority of the literature was theoretical or prescriptive in nature. Only 28 articles related to practicing teachers, of those 28, 18 related to individual teacher attitudes and only 10 related to curriculum or programs (Grant, 2000). Additionally, Grant et al (2004) point out, “a contradictory parallel exists between the academy and prekindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms (PK-12), with the former beginning to explore the hierarchal power relationships between and among socially constructed categories such as race, class, gender, ethnicity, ability, sexuality, language, and religion”... “In contrast, PK-12 classrooms are primarily concerned with how to work with specific groups in the realm of classroom instruction” (p. 184).

Documentation of successful multicultural practice does exist. The Center for Multicultural Education, founded by James Banks of the University of Washington, obtained a joint 4 year grant from the Carnegie Corporation along with the University of Maryland’s Common Destiny Alliance (CODA) to examine major studies and reports concerning multicultural education, as well as to synthesize papers that discuss successful multicultural programs (University of Washington Center for Multicultural Education, 1999). The Center’s webpage highlights the programs that have been successful in K-12 settings. However, with the exception of just a few, most of the 13 programs mentioned were implemented at elementary and middle school levels, and

all research was conducted pre-No Child Left Behind (2001). Those programs which have been considered successful in secondary schools concentrated on school restructuring including smaller school-within-a-school models, as in the Boykin designed D.C. Talent Development High Schools, “untracking” models that brought lower achieving students into higher level classes as in California’s Achievement Via Individual Determination (AVID), and intensive writing projects as in the Webster Grove Writing Project (WGWP), which also examined cultural bias (University of Washington Center for Multicultural Education, 1999). Both the Talent Development High School and the AVID program were considered successful with high-poverty urban students, although AVID was originally developed for poor students who were bussed in to middle class areas (University of Washington Center for Multicultural Education, 1999). These successful projects attempt reform that moves beyond teaching models and individual classrooms.

Interestingly, achievement issues, when examined via the above-mentioned writing project, were eventually assessed from a different perspective: “The issue of underachievement, initially conceived in terms of linguistic clash, was ultimately recognized as an issue of cultural estrangement (especially for Black males) from the White, middle-class, female world of the typical classroom. As a result, the focus of WGWP shifted toward building healthy relationships in a truly multicultural context” (University of Washington Center for Multicultural Education, 1999). However, this program was implemented in a school that was 25% minority, and 75% White, and was not considered an “urban” area with a large percentage of students living in poverty.

Cochran-Smith (2004) claims that although research has dramatically expanded, political conservatism and backlash to the civil rights movement is dismantling multicultural education, and so “it is the best of times and the worst of times” (p. 931). Sleeter (2004) and Brantlinger (2004) agree that political conservatism, especially personified by White, middle-class female educators, has maintained the dominance of White middle-class values in schools, and has reduced multicultural practice to depoliticized constructs, “individual agency and personal attitudes over power structures and institutions” (Sleeter, 2004, p. 252-3). McLaren (1994) claims that current multicultural education does not contain a transformative political agenda, and so is “just another form of accommodation to the larger social order” (p. 53). These theorists agree that the emphasis of multicultural education has shifted away from collectivist social and institutional reform, and toward reforming individual personal attitudes.

Pre-service teacher training programs especially emphasize this shift away from social reform and toward individual agency through emphasis on teacher cultural competence as the major component of multicultural education. Interestingly enough, many of these programs have had an effect of changing attitudes and perceptions only temporarily: attitudinal benefits of pre-service diversity training quickly disappear during actual teacher practice (Jordan-Irvine, 2003). Even when teachers do have successful training or experiences in their early career, Jordan-Irvine (2003) suggests that a “U-curve” effect exists that erases benefits of these programs, and, without positive support systems, trainees return to their prior belief systems. The U-curve phenomenon refers to the idea that cross-cultural training produces positive change in

attitude, but then gradually dips until prior beliefs are regained. Jordan-Irvine (2003) believes that work environments in urban schools are partially to blame for teachers returning to their negative belief systems regarding working with students of color. As multicultural theorists continue to advocate strongly for teacher preparation programs that will increase cultural competence of educators in the field, the experiences of teachers in urban schools trying to implement these programs should be considered.

### *Cultural Competence*

Cultural responsiveness, cultural sensitivity, cultural synchronization, cultural appropriateness, and cultural competence all are terms that denote communication methods within a classroom that are part of the multicultural education prescription for successful cross-cultural practice. Culturally based instructional methods filter “curriculum content and teaching strategies through their cultural frames of reference to make the content more meaningful” (Gay, 2000, p. 24), build “bridges between instructional content, methods, and the cultures of students who are being taught” (Irvine, 2000, p. 2), or use “student culture in order to maintain it” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 17). Cultural competence does not address funding, institutional-based school reforms, the recruitment and assignment of teachers, or administrative leadership, but is only concerned with the skills and attributes of the teacher (Gay, 2000). Weiner (1993) names the emphasis on teacher competencies and divorce of teacher curricular practice from the surrounding institution “new change agent” theories (p. 89).

Gay (2003), Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995, 2000), Jordan-Irvine (2002, 2003), and Foster (1997) have documented the existence and success of teachers using

instructional strategies considered culturally competent within their classrooms, and it would be safe to assume that similarly effective teachers work in all districts. All of these projects were comparable in that they were implemented by university researchers, and came to conclusions that successful educators of minority students demand excellence from their students, believe strongly in the profession, get to know students on a personal level, acknowledge cultural differences without a deficit perspective, use content that is relevant, and instructional strategies that are active, cooperative, constructivist and possibly subversive. The research mostly focuses on what successful teachers do in their classroom, and does not discuss in detail the impediments or constraints that teachers face. This literature concentrates on practices in elementary schools (K-8), and includes discussions of pre-service, novice or very experienced veteran teachers prior to the implementation of NCLB. Ladson-Billings, in a study documenting 8 sixth grade teachers, 3 White and 5 Black, found that successful teachers of African American students used a “subversive” pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 128) similar to Cochran-Smith’s idea of critical dissonance, that is, they ignored district or bureaucratic prescriptions when they found it necessary, and quietly and independently implemented what they thought best for their students. In a second study of student teachers, she found that (White) student teachers who preferred to work in urban high schools had gone through some kind of transforming life experience themselves (2001). Jacqueline Jordan-Irvine (2002) studied African American elementary and middle school teachers with an average of 16 years of experience, and concluded that teachers who see with a “cultural eye” (p. 28) can act as mentors and mediators for their students. Foster (1997) researched oral

histories of 20 community nominated African American teachers, and discussed agreement among many African American teachers that their students in pre-integration schools were “creative, inquisitive, and bright” (p. XLV), but were not served well by desegregated schools or by White teachers who had lowered expectations for them (Foster, 1997). Lisa Delpit, alone (1995, 2002) and with Theresa Perry (1998) analyzed discourse patterns and suggest alternative views for the “culture of power,” concluding that teachers should be familiar with and should teach “code switching” to students of color. These studies did not address experiences of secondary school teachers. The structure of secondary school is much different than that in elementary or middle school. Students have contact with more teachers everyday through subject area class changes, but that contact is briefer and more impersonal. Classes are generally larger. Students are more separated by ability and area of interest, and they may be in a school wide group that is populated by a much larger student body. For the same reasons, teachers also have different experiences working in the context of secondary schools. Up to this point, literature describing and prescribing practice has not explored in depth the everyday impediments that experienced secondary teachers who embrace multicultural practices face while working within a larger system.

Villegas and Lucas (2002) concentrated on university level teacher preparation and briefly address the institutionalized factors that prevent teachers from being culturally responsive agents of change. They argue that the hierarchical and bureaucratic nature of the school system, insufficient time and opportunity for collaboration, along with the simple challenges of learning to teach, do not allow new

teachers to pursue the goals of their pre-service training. They add that there is frequently resistance by those in privileged positions to address the validity of equity issues (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Although teachers become more efficacious in their teaching skill, the majority of institutional issues affecting new teachers, such as bureaucratic constraints and insufficient time, do not change as teaching experience increases (Weiner, 2000).

Other institutional factors impede teachers' ability to affect outcomes for students. High stakes testing acts as sorting device to prevent opportunity and to increase dropout rates for students of color (Orfield, 2001; Sacks, 1999; Sunderman et al., 2005). Ability group tracking further separates students not only by ability, but also by ethnicity (Banks, 2004b; Oakes, 1985; Wheelock, 1992). Students of color are over-represented in both vocational and special education classes and under-represented in advanced placement and upper level courses (Artiles et al., 2004; Oakes, 1985; Orfield, 2001). African American males especially suffer more from overzealous school discipline practices such as suspensions, and more often participate in the "school-to-jail pipeline" (Brown, 2003; Denbo, 2002). Residential segregation and the decreasing efforts of federal government to address integration in public education are accelerating trends toward a two-tiered educational system that provides differentiated educational opportunity (Artiles, 2004; Frankenburg & Lee, 2000; Massey & Denton, 1993; National Commission on Teaching and American's Future, 2004; Orfield & Lee, 2006). These impediments to achievement may prove too great for teachers in the classroom to overcome.

Weiner (1999) states that there is an important distinction between “two concepts that are frequently confused- acknowledging the causes of a problem and excusing it” (p. 21). Although institutional circumstances outside the control of teachers and students often create and exacerbate problems and affect achievement, especially in urban schools, an examination of teachers’ perceptions of issues that affect their everyday practice is in no way an excuse for ineffective practice. Instead, such an examination is intended as a way to offer a more ecological and contextual look at urban teachers’ experiences when addressing the variables involved in reducing the achievement gap. Thus, research that investigates experiences of secondary urban teachers, who embrace multicultural education, could inform future reforms in teacher preparation and classroom practice.

### *Context of Education*

Nieto (2004) claims that multicultural education is too often “approached as if it were divorced from the policies and practices of schools and from the structures and ideologies of society” (p. 2). So too, are suggestions from multicultural theorists who propose that teachers should act as change agents to reform institutions. Sociologists and historians have offered various constructs and perspectives to analyze the structure and purposes of schooling, and these perspectives can effectively demonstrate how difficult, and maybe impossible, it is for teachers alone to reform schools and schooling practices.

Most teacher education models, including those authored by multicultural theorists, often do not incorporate broader sociological, political, or historical

perspectives into their prescriptions. Schools are organized as hierarchical, bureaucratic systems of power and control (Larson & Ovando, 2001). Sociologists believe that schools and their differentiated curriculum act almost as an arm of the state to maintain society's social class structure, and therefore economic stability (Artiles et al., 2004; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Larson & Ovando, 2001; Oakes, 1985). The proposed "transforming" of schools inherent in multicultural theories could affect this type of stabilizing mechanism, and be threatening to the nation's social and economic structure. Educational sociologists view schooling in terms of group outcome, and distinguish three perspectives in determining purposes of school in society: functionalist, conflict, and interpretive/ critical (Knapp & Woolverton, 2004). Functionalist perspectives propose that schools sort, select, and transmit social values and technical skills in order to provide societal stability and economic mobility to the chosen few (Knapp & Woolverton, 2004). Functionalists see schools as machines, and the optimal school runs smoothly and without conflict (Larson & Ovando, 2001). Conflict theorists believe in schools' transmission functions, but also recognize that the sorting function of schools indoctrinates values differentially and so benefits the interests of the "elite" (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Knapp & Woolverton, 2004). Interpretive and critical perspectives question hegemony and dominant power in social structures, and assume that individuals have the ability to question and transcend their environments through transformation (Knapp & Woolverton, 2004). Multicultural theorists neglect incorporating these ideas into their proposals.

Educational historians demonstrate that in the last one hundred years, American schools have been steadily moving toward standardization (Callahan, 1964; Tyack,

1974). State and federal politics increasingly affect all public schools, and broad liberal visions of education have been marginalized in favor of accountability policies that equate learning only with standardized test scores (Metz, 2003). Such policy often has little to do with systematic investigation and analysis. Instead popular cultural assumptions about teaching, learning, and school organization now dominate school structure and practice (Metz, 2003; Orfield, 2001).

Educational historians have also examined the tendency to place responsibility for educational change into the hands of teachers. Larry Cuban (1993) describes new teaching practices as quickly encapsulated and separated from the mainstream as a result of bureaucratic, political, and cultural processes that are imbedded within schools. He claims that “teacher bashing-- blaming teachers for resisting instructional change” (p. 262) causes reformers to see teachers as both the problem and the solution, and results in individualizing the issue instead of understanding situational contexts (Cuban, 1993). He concludes in his study that “when attentive policy makers systematically and thoroughly put into practice policies aimed at fundamentally altering teacher behaviors” (p. 16), practices changed. Weiner (1993) quotes Cuban in concluding “fundamental alterations in schools are linked to political changes outside school” (p. 8). In other words, in a top-down bureaucratic system such as public education, context and policy changes must precede and support attempts to alter what teachers do in classrooms. This potential for reform may also be critiqued from a perspective that Derrick Bell (1993) calls “interest convergence:” that policy allows advances only when and if it furthers the agenda of those in power. However, it is also noteworthy that bureaucratic top-down policy prescriptions do not immediately and

readily translate into everyday practice, and that clear tensions exist between hierarchical control and teacher autonomy (Metz, 2003).

Weiner (1993) claims that training programs that call for teachers to reform schools, especially in urban schools, are suffering from “historical amnesia” (p. 8). She calls the attempt to explain poor, minority student school failure in terms of either teacher or student attributes an “educational dead-end” (Weiner, 1993, p. 10). Marilyn Cochran-Smith (2004) also implores researchers to avoid “amnesiac renderings” (p. 9) that ignore the historical tension between technical and liberal aspects of teacher education, as well as the educational and political movements such as “the standards movement, the accountability movement, the initiatives to privatize education and other public and consumer services” (p. 8).

Although structural and technical aspects in educational systems have been standardized, community social class, especially in urban schools, may have a larger impact on the relational variations and “organizational character” within schools (Anyon, 1980; Metz, 2003). Urban schools were specifically designed with bureaucracies intended to insulate the school from the demands of poor and working class parents, and to socialize students for their roles in society (Tyack, 1974; Weiner, 1990). These schools in particular make education impersonal and inflexible, with an assumption that treating everyone the same provides equality of educational opportunity (Callahan, 1964; Larson & Ovando, 2003; Metz, 2003; Tyack, 1974; Weiner, 1990).

Analyzing teaching, and training teachers, for urban schools is nothing new. As early as 1914, urban normal schools were training teachers for their own special

populations (Weiner, 1993). In 1932, Willard Waller recommended viewing education contextually and within a framework of social interconnections (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Studies from the 1960-70's such as the *Holmes Group* and *Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession* shared assumptions that specialized teacher training was the way to success for urban schools, and created programs such as *Trainers of Teacher Trainers (TTT)*, which included extensive liberal arts education, and the *Teacher Corps*, which had an urban cultural immersion component that trained pre-service teachers to be "change agents" (Weiner, 1993). Such programs were short-lived and unsuccessful as interns trained to be change agents clashed publicly with established school staff (Weiner, 1993). Studies completed 20 years ago in New York City schools concluded that conditions in urban schools such as inflexible school rules, no control over teacher assignment, overspecialization, excessive organizational procedures, custodial treatment of children, and course content dictated only by tests severely impacted teachers' ability to make their classrooms function, and conditions have not changed (Weiner, 1993). These institutional impediments in urban schools, rather than lack of teacher training or competence, may be at fault for preventing infusion of multicultural education theory into urban K-12 school programs. Research that investigates teachers' current experiences in schools serving students of color of may provide an inside perspective and more detailed information regarding institutional impediments today.

It seems apparent that the ideas proposed by multicultural education theorists, while well-intentioned, have neglected some of the sociological, political, and historical perspectives that would effectively preclude multicultural practice from real-

world school settings. Sociological and historical perspectives reveal mostly unsuccessful attempts by teachers to promote reform in a bureaucratic institution that is structured for larger purposes. Institutional impediments are powerful and may greatly affect teachers' ability to even promote change in their classroom, and so school wide changes may prove more daunting, and even impossible. These obstacles may partially explain why teachers tend to revert back to their prior belief systems once they work in schools. In keeping with conclusions reached by Cuban (1992), Metz (1993), Tyack (1974), and Weiner (1993, 2000), when addressing classroom practices and school reform it may be more realistic to assess and incorporate analyses with an ecological perspective that also takes into account the national, state, and neighborhood socio-political-economic systems. Although multicultural theories propose that teachers can act as change agents to change school and society, institutional impediments of national, state, and neighborhood socio-political-economic systems greatly affect outcomes in urban classrooms and schools. A study that investigates the experiences of urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural practices may shed light on how such impediments affect practice. This study can further bridge the gap between multicultural theory and practice.

### *No Child Left Behind*

In addition to a disconnect between multicultural theory and practice, there is also a divide between multicultural theory and policy. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2001 defines the new accountability movement and dramatically expands the role of federal government in public education. The legislation specifically addresses the

educational needs of several subgroups of students: those from racial or ethnic minorities, those who are economically disadvantaged, those with disabilities, and those who have limited English proficiency. Under the legislation, each subgroup will be expected to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward meeting state standards (No Child Left Behind, 2001). NCLB includes provisions to address the achievement gap in student populations through school improvement plans, family involvement, professional learning communities, teacher training, and most importantly, accountability standards measured with testing and disaggregating data of those subgroups of students (No Child Left Behind, 2001).

NCLB assumes that accountability and sanctions based on test scores will force teachers to improve, and that these market mechanisms will lead to whole school reform (Sunderman et al., 2005). “Supplementary services” (tutoring) are provided for students who do not make progress, school choice requirements allow students to transfer out of “failing” schools, and Title I funds are withheld from schools should states not adhere to new mandates (Sunderman et al., 2005). NCLB requires “highly qualified teachers” to staff schools, but defines highly qualified teachers as those with subject certification or content knowledge alone (Gay, 2004; Meier & Wood, 2005).

Clearly, NCLB is attempting to remediate some inequities in public education, but researchers claim policy makers “seemed less aware of the institutional and organizational impediments”... “and did not have a well-articulated implementation strategy to address these issues” (Sunderman et al., 2005, p. 18). Critics of NCLB claim that the vast inequality of educational opportunity nationwide is not acknowledged, and that proponents of the law believe in what Mary Metz (1993) calls

“real school”-- basically that all American public schools have similar facilities, resources and students, when in fact, they do not (Meier, 2005). Additionally, these critics claim “push-outs” have contributed to rising test score averages in some areas, shallow curriculum has increased as a result of the high-stakes testing environment, and that privatization agendas are the ultimate goal of accountability reform (Meier, 2005; Orfield, 2001). NCLB measures of achievement include standardized tests as the primary measure for inter- and intra-group comparisons, but more importantly, use student test scores to assess teachers and whole schools (NCLB, 2001). The validity of standardized testing to assess entire staffs and institutions is also highly questionable (Orfield, 2001; Sacks, 1996). Bowles and Gintis (1976) point out that test scores measure submission and ability to conform to the institutional norms of social order, Gardener (1983) and Sternberg (1988) both claim that standardized tests do not measure creative or practical abilities that are valued in the workplace, and Orfield (2001) demonstrates that test scores do not necessarily correlate with success in life after school.

While NCLB is seen as a vehicle to promote educational opportunities for disenfranchised groups and to help alleviate the achievement gap, discussion regarding cultural issues of student or teacher populations is completely absent. Advocates of multicultural education believe that a variety of assessment techniques is an essential component of multicultural education (Cochran-Smith, 2004), but NCLB uses a one-dimensional measurement of achievement, does not recognize or address variations in students, including cultural mismatch of teachers and students (Artiles et al., 2004; No Child Left Behind, 2001). Although NCLB addresses inequity in student outcomes,

these national policy recommendations are, in fact, antithetical to the goals of multicultural education. School reform that uses assimilationist standardization as its basic *modus operandus* is in direct opposition to the pluralistic goals of multiculturalism and can be expected to even further exacerbate the gap between multicultural theory and practice (Gay, 2004). It would logically follow that teachers may have more difficulty in implementing multicultural education methods post NCLB. To what extent has this national policy effectively negated the goals of multicultural education among practicing teachers? This is a critical question for future theory and practice. A study that addresses the experiences of practicing urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education may provide more information regarding the impact of No Child Left Behind on the gap between multicultural theory and practice.

### *Teacher Perception*

In Michele Fine's (1991) work on drop-outs, she introduced a section on educator's experiences by stating that "It soon became clear that that a closer look at life for educators was critical for understanding what was being framed as the 'drop-out problem'" (p. 139). The study initially intended for predicting potential drop-outs quickly became reframed instead as a problem of institutional failure, and Fine believed that teachers' perspectives were vital for further analyzing schooling outcomes. Her work detailed educators belief systems, or "practical consciousness" that developed as a result of working within a context of "overwhelming evidence of

school failure” (Fine, 1991, p. 154). She discusses the rhetoric that calls for teacher empowerment, but shows the inherent contradiction in such arguments:

The bureaucracy organizes toward anonymity as well as hierarchy, for students and for teachers. The language of accountability demands that teachers be monitored, evaluated, tested, supervised, observed, and fed back to, with little such attention paid to the effectiveness of administrators, much less to educational policies, structures, and institutional practices that construct and constrict educators in their daily work (Fine 1991, p. 158).

School improvement models, in multicultural education as well as in mainstream education, concentrate on changing or improving teachers, while teachers systemically are denied a voice in the practices in schools. These ideas are even more relevant post-NCLB (2001). She concludes the section with a strong argument for an analysis regarding the way that economic and state institutions deflect responsibility for social problems, and she emphasizes that an acknowledgment of teachers’ “disempowerment” (Fine 1991, p. 159) is necessary first before schools can be improved.

Further, a teacher survey regarding No Child Left Behind conducted in spring 2004 showed that teachers’ perceptions of their schools were in agreement with the quantitative ratings given through accountability programs (Sunderman, 2005). In other words, because teachers’ perceptions or beliefs were completely in accordance with the statistical information provided by the study, teachers’ beliefs or perceptions may provide viable and reliable sources of information. Larry Cuban (1993) believes that the freedoms teachers have in classrooms may be small, but they are still

historically significant, and so using the language of policy making and leadership when discussing what teachers perceive and do in their classrooms lends validity to studying teacher practice (Cuban, 1993).

### *Summary of the Related Literature*

Increasing diversity, the achievement gap, disparity in teacher-student populations, and No Child Left Behind require renewed attention to solutions for inequitable outcomes in schools. Multicultural education theory aims to improve educational opportunities for students of color, and proposes that teachers act as change agents within schools to address social justice and transformation of schools and society. Multicultural theorists recognize institutional restraints to equity, but expect teachers to systematically change educational practice and outcome. Many researchers and teacher training programs recommend cultural competence, or successful cross-cultural practice as an important component of multicultural education. Extensive literature regarding practices and perceptions of teachers who successfully use multicultural practice, including cultural competence, have generated ideas on successful pedagogical methods to address diversity in individual classrooms. Cultural competence, or the ability to work cross culturally, is a component of multicultural education that has been characterized by researchers as demanding excellence from students, believing in the profession, knowing their students well, understanding their content, and using active, constructivist instructional techniques. Perhaps most importantly, these successful teachers were seen as “teaching against the grain,” or

exhibiting critical dissonance, a subversive attitude that discarded officially sanctioned attitudes and practices.

Multicultural theorists have lamented that a gap exists between theory and practice in K-12 school settings, and so they often recommend additional training opportunities for teachers. However, such suggestions ignore the context where teachers do their work. Schools have traditionally functioned to maintain, not eliminate, inequity in the larger social, economic, and political system (Anyon, 1980; Bowles & Gintis, 1976), and classrooms are part of a larger system that includes schools, neighborhoods, districts, states, and political climates. In the past, educational reform has only succeeded when imposed through policy and top-down political change. If institutional, social, historical and political context are at odds with the goals of multicultural education, it is unlikely that this prescription could be successfully implemented. Teacher training and teachers cannot change components of a larger bureaucratic system. Should teachers choose to utilize multicultural practices, they must “teach against the grain,” or be subversive. Predictably, some discord occurs when attempting to utilize practices that are not harmonious with the larger political and social agendas of schooling.

Institutional factors like bureaucracy, attention to standardized testing, tracking, discipline practices, overspecialization, control of teacher assignment, excessive procedures/ excessive school rules, custodial treatment of children, course content dictated by testing, a plain lack of time, as well as the residential segregation that affects school placement, have been mentioned in previous literature as being impediments to multicultural practices and positive outcomes in urban schools

(Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Weiner, 1993). The No Child Left Behind (2001) high accountability movement has contributed even further to the marginalization of multicultural education. Color-blind policies measure progress of students, teachers, and schools only through test scores, and impose sanctions should adequate progress not be maintained.

Neither teacher training literature nor policy recommendations of the accountability movement seem to adequately address the inconsistencies in theory, research, policy, and practice. Additionally, the voices and perceptions of practitioners who use multicultural practices, and who are attempting to create culturally responsive classrooms, have been neglected. Research that addresses the institutional conflicts faced daily by these urban secondary teachers while navigating the contexts of schools is needed. It is useful to address what these teachers perceive to be obstacles in achievement for students of color, what teachers have experienced regarding multicultural education practices, both as pre-service and in-service teachers, what impediments they face while attempting to use multicultural practices, how teachers see the accountability movement as affecting their practice, and if teachers perceive themselves as the change agents theorists see them as. Although the orientation of such a study may appear to be pessimistic or negative, this research could help provide answers about why there is a gap between multicultural theory and practice, and would present conclusions and suggestions that could inform policy and teacher training programs. The ultimate purpose of this research is to shed light on the institutional impediments inherent in teaching in urban schools, in order to ultimately increase educational and economic opportunity for the students in these schools.

## Chapter 3

### Methods

#### *Introduction*

This study utilized qualitative research methodology. Any conclusions given were subjective, were given from the perspective of the participants, and were based upon an array of varied personal experiences. Although a quantitative study may provide a variety of information relevant to the topic, qualitative research is “rich in description of people, places, and conversations, and not easily handled by statistical procedures,” and concerned with “understanding behavior from the subject’s own frame of reference” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 2). Qualitative researchers are concerned with context and analyze information inductively (Bogden & Biklen, 2003). As research progresses, theory emerges from the collection of various bits of information. Qualitative study can offer a more comprehensive perspective than quantitative measures alone, and so would be more appropriate for the nature of this study.

In this chapter, information regarding sampling techniques used to obtain participants will be relayed. Additionally, the procedures that were used to collect and analyze the data will be discussed.

*Participants and Sampling Characteristics*

The participants for the study came from a large west Florida school district. It is believed that many areas of the nation will soon resemble the demographics of Florida, especially regarding its rapidly increasing Hispanic population. The district was chosen for both convenience factors and because the demographics of the district closely mimic both the changing demographics of the entire state as well as the predicted changes of the nation as a whole. Figure 2 below shows the student demographics of the state of Florida.

Category	# students	% students
White, Non Hispanic	1,276,578	47.75%
Black, Non Hispanic	624,620	23.36%
Hispanic	624,899	23.37%
Multi Racial	80,158	3.0%
Asian Pacific Islander	59,422	2.22%
American Indian Alaskan Native	7886	.29%
Other Ethnicity	0	0.00%
Total Students	2,673,563	99.9%

Achievement: State Means Scores FCAT Grade 10 (passing score 300) (Source: Florida Department of Education)

Reading	Math
296	322

*Figure 2.* Florida State Student Ethnicity Demographics (Florida Department of Education, 2005)

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2005), the entire west Florida district chosen for the study is not considered “urban,” but is considered “urban fringe,” which means it surrounds an urban area. "Urban" districts include large or mid-size cities (NCES, 2005). The district is large, composed of both urban and suburban areas, and even has some rural areas. NCES (2005) shows that the total population of residents under 18 is 253,138, of which 168,466 are White, 51,785 are Black or African American, 55,404 are Hispanic or Latino, 5,336 are Asian /Pacific Islander, 1,041 are American Indian or Alaska Native, and 195 are other. Further, 16,811 are considered from some other race alone, and 9,699 are considered two or more races. The total number of district schools is 237, the total number of students is 181,900, including 18,928 who are English Language Learners (ELL) and 28,458 who are students with individualized education plans (IEPs) (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005).

The participants of the study were chosen from schools designated by national guidelines as qualified Title I schools. Title I schools are schools in which at least one-half of the population is considered living in poverty, as assessed via the percentage of free or reduced lunch recipients in the school (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). Title I programs are “compensatory programs aimed at schools and communities with disadvantaged children” (Orfield & Eaton, 1996, p. 91). According to Harvard Civil Rights Project, Title I students are more likely to come from minority backgrounds, more likely to be retained in grade, to be absent from school, to be suspended, to receive lower grades in reading, language arts, and math, and to be judged poorly by

teachers (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). The demographics and achievement data means of the district's high-poverty schools are depicted in Figure 3 below.

SCHOOL #1

Category	# students	% students
Economically Disadvantaged	1000	52.55%
White, Non Hispanic	546	28.69%
Black, Non Hispanic	948	49.82%
Hispanic	320	16.82%
Multi Racial	59	3.10%
Asian Pacific Islander	25	1.31%
American Indian Alaskan Native	5	0.26%
Other Ethnicity	0	0.00%
Limited English proficient (LEP)	89	4.68
Students with Disabilities (SWD)	290	15.24%
Total Students	1903	

Achievement: School Means Scores FCAT Grade 10 (passing score 300) (Source: Florida Department of Education)

Reading	Math
291	318

*Figure 3.* Demographic Characteristics of Schools Targeted for Study (Source: District Website School Improvement Plans, 2005)

SCHOOL #2

Category	# students	% students
Economically Disadvantaged	998	52.31%
White, Non Hispanic	341	17.87%
Black, Non Hispanic	631	33.07%
Hispanic	838	43.92%
Multi Racial	56	2.94%
Asian Pacific Islander	36	1.89%
American Indian Alaskan Native	6	.031%
Other Ethnicity	0	0.00%
Limited English proficient (LEP)	212	11.11%
Students with Disabilities (SWD)	221	11.58%
Total Students	1908	

Achievement: School Means Scores FCAT Grade 10 (passing score 300) (Source: Florida Department of Education)

Reading	Math
294	319

SCHOOL #3

Category	# students	% students
Economically Disadvantaged	1080	59.50%
White, Non Hispanic	368	20.28%
Black, Non Hispanic	205	11.29%
Hispanic	1142	62.92%
Multi Racial	56	3.09%
Asian Pacific Islander	35	1.93%
American Indian Alaskan Native	9	0.50%
Other Ethnicity		
Limited English proficient (LEP)	408	22.48%
Students with Disabilities (SWD)	241	13.28%
Total Students	1815	

Achievement: School Means Scores FCAT Grade 10 (passing score 300) (Source: Florida Department of Education)

Figure 3. Continued

Reading	Math
276	311

SHOOL #4

Category	# students	% students
Economically Disadvantaged	1331	64.46%
White, Non Hispanic	223	10.80%
Black, Non Hispanic	1396	67.60%
Hispanic	239	11.57%
Multi Racial	43	2.08%
Asian Pacific Islander	40	1.94%
American Indian Alaskan Native	4	0.19%
Other Ethnicity	0	0.0%
Limited English proficient (LEP)	60	2.91%
Students with Disabilities (SWD)	300	14.53%
Total Students	2065	

Achievement: School Means Scores FCAT Grade 10 (passing score 300) (Source: Florida Department of Education)

Reading	Math
295	325

Figure 3. Continued

Teachers who were chosen for the study were a purposeful sample of secondary social studies educators, nominated by the subject area supervisor of the district, and chosen for their perceived commitment to multicultural education as well as their “cultural competence” in working with the diverse populations in Title I schools. A full discussion of sampling characteristics is presented in the next section.

The researcher constructed a checklist (Appendix A) that helped identify participants who may be categorized as committed to multicultural education and cultural competence. This checklist incorporates a cross section of traits and practices

compiled through integrating ideas of the multicultural theorists as well as the cultural competence researchers mentioned in the literature review (Banks, 2004a; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Gay, 2000, 2004; Ladson-Billings 1994, 1995, 2000; Jordan-Irvine, 2002, 2003; Foster, 1997; Nieto, 2004; Sleeter, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Most scholars were consistent in describing traits of multicultural educators as well as in assessing “cultural competence:” acknowledging culture difference without a deficit perspective, using active, constructivist instructional methods, expecting excellence from their students, believing in the teaching profession, knowing their students, understanding their content, believing in equal opportunity, but also being somewhat subversive and working with a “critical dissonance” (Banks, 2004a; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Gay, 2000, 2004; Jordan-Irvine, 2002, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2001, NCSS, 1991). At least 5 of the 8 traits, or a majority, were the requirements for selection in the study, and all nominated individuals met and far surpassed this qualification, with 6 of the 7 participants scoring 8 of 8, and one participant scoring 7 of 8.

The district social studies supervisor, as well as a representative of the district’s accountability and assessment department, read a summarized copy of the research proposal and approved it. Permission from the district to conduct the study was granted before the study began, with the condition that the name of the district be deliberately omitted or disguised. The name of the district will not be mentioned in either the discussion of the study, or in the reference list to meet this requirement. The district supervisor met formally with the researcher in order to discuss the study, and was provided with a checklist for each participant. He then suggested 6 participants

who would meet the conditions of the checklist. Five additional participants came from a snowball technique of those nominated participants naming like-minded individuals who would be willing to participate in the study, for a total of 11 potential participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Such techniques are useful to discover potential participants who are not as well known by the supervisor, as well as to prevent “cherry-picking” of politically correct participants, a practice that may contaminate and distort the data. Because the nature of the questions may involve critique of school systems, possibly jeopardizing employment, the teachers’ identities were concealed in the final write up.

The district supervisor nominated 6 participants, and those nominees suggested 5 additional participants. Of those nominated, four were African American Females, two were African American males, three were White males, one was an Irish-Asian female, and one was a White female. Several nominees were not qualified because of the length of their teaching experience. The study specified that the participants have between 5-10 years of experience, but several who had been recommended had been teaching for too short a time, and others had been teaching for too long. Seven teachers were eventually interviewed. Attempts were made for a large cross section of participants, but pragmatic issues precluded a sample that included participants representative of all ethnic, racial, socio-economic, educational, and gender groups. The eventual participants include 4 female teachers who identified as African American, 2 male teachers who identified as white, and one female teacher who identified as Asian/Irish. Only one White female was nominated, which is noteworthy given that the majority of educators are White females. However, the statistics for

educators nationwide are slightly skewed as many more White females work in elementary schools, but in secondary schools, the teaching force consists of 45% males and 55% females (NCES, 2005).

Social studies teachers were spotlighted, both for convenience factors and also because the nature of social studies readily lends itself to multicultural education. The National Council on Social Studies (NCSS) the prominent national authority in social studies curriculum creation officially sanctions multicultural education. The NCSS position is that “1. Ethnic and cultural diversity should be recognized and respected at individual, group, and societal levels; 2. Ethnic and cultural diversity provides a basis for societal enrichment, cohesiveness, and survival; 3. Equality of opportunity should be afforded to members of all ethnic and cultural groups; and 4. Ethnic and cultural identification should be optional for individuals” (NCSS, 1991). According to the NCSS, multiculturalists believe that concepts and events should be viewed from diverse ethnic and cultural perspectives (NCSS, 1991).

In order to add to the body of research and to gain new perspectives regarding classroom experiences, participants of this study were secondary teachers in the mid-range level of experience (5-10 years). Teachers in this range of experience have had more experience and knowledge of the school system than pre-service or new teachers, but also may have more recent and relevant teacher training experience than veteran educators, especially as the diversity and policy of our nation changes in the post- No Child Left Behind accountability era. Because the amount of time elapsed since teacher training is relatively short, there should be more recall of teacher training content and experience.

Because the participants teach in secondary high schools in Florida, they experience the demands of the accountability movement. Florida is on the cutting edge of the accountability movement, and has state initiatives to proactively address the impending mandates set in place by NCLB. The Florida Department of Education Accountability, Research & Measurement (ARM) department houses three offices. The Assessment and School Performance office handles the wide array of state testing services, the Education Information and Accountability Services Department improves “education by increasing the quality of decisions through the use of data” (Florida Department of Education, 2006), and the Evaluation and Testing office compiles data and issues reports, including “School Report Cards.” The report cards rate schools in several categories, but are especially dependent upon data from the state mandated Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) (Florida Department of Education, 2006). Students, teachers, and whole schools are being evaluated and rated using data from students’ standardized test scores.

Once participants were initially located, an additional instrument was used to qualify them for the study. The second instrument, the Ponterotto Quick Discrimination Index (QDI), was used to assess cultural sensitivity of educators, and to provide further validity of the selection by the district supervisor. All participants scored at levels high enough to qualify them for the study. The QDI was developed to measure attitudes toward multiculturalism, and the total score for the QDI measures “overall sensitivity, awareness, and receptivity to cultural diversity and gender equality” (Utsey & Ponterotto, 1999).

### *Delimitations*

This study investigated the perceptions and observations of urban teachers who use multicultural practices, who work in secondary schools, teaching grades 9-12, in a west Florida school district. Some threats to external validity do exist. The supervisor of the district nominated the teachers in the study, and so some selection bias is possible. The teachers chosen to participate also partook in two separate measures prior to the interviews that may create reactivity and affect their responses to the interviewers questions. Reactivity of interviewees may occur also because of the sensitive nature of the topic. Discrimination and ethnic bias is often socially objectionable, may have personal implications, and so participants may not have been completely honest in their responses (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2002).

The nature of the design of the study, as well as the small sample size of participants, does not ensure, or even suggest, that the results can generalize to a larger population. The district does closely resembles Florida state demographics regarding ethnic composition of students and teachers, and so may provide some valuable information, but, because geographical and personal considerations may have an impact upon cultural perceptions, the study may not be replicable in other school districts. Additionally, while multicultural education, including cultural competence research, concerns all students of color in all types of schools, this study concentrated on secondary social studies teachers who successfully use multicultural practices in high-poverty urban settings. The choice of these teachers and these types of schools was first, to narrow the scope of the research, and second, to highlight the complex

interactions and socio-political conflicts inherent in these urban schools that primarily serve students of color.

### *Limitations*

Although attempts were made to limit threats, possible internal validity threats, including researcher bias and confirmation bias may occur. Researcher bias describes including *a priori* assumptions, or previous beliefs, that may influence the researcher in interpreting the responses of the participants (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2004). Confirmation bias describes the tendency of the researcher to attempt to confirm pre-existing beliefs, and this bias may possibly occur during the study in the data analysis and data interpretation stages (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2004). The researcher is a teacher in an urban high school, has experienced institutional impediments, and so may have preconceived beliefs that impact the study. However, the beliefs of the researcher are also strongly supported by academic literature (Anyon, 1980, 2005; Fine, 1991; Ingersoll, 2001; Oakes, 1985; Tyack, 1993; Weiner, 1993, 1999).

In an attempt to prevent the above threats to both external and internal validity, structured interview, member checking, peer checking, and grounded theory in analysis helped to guarantee that the data was meaningful. These measures will be further explained later in the next section.

### *Procedures*

The focus of the research was on qualitative procedures, primarily interviews. The paradigm of the research falls into a phenomenological approach, more specifically,

symbolic interaction. Phenomenological approaches utilize participant perspectives, view perceptions as subjective and acknowledge that there are many ways of understanding situations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Symbolic interaction assumes that “human experience is mediated by interpretation” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 25) and that “individuals act with help of others- people from their past, writers, family, television personalities, and persons they meet in settings in which they work and play” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 25). Very little research regarding schools is based upon perceptions of teachers, especially secondary teachers. Because teachers have intimate knowledge of what occurs in schools everyday, they may be able to add valuable information to the existing dialogue regarding the institutional issues in urban schools that may affect the practice of multicultural education, including outcomes for urban students of color.

Prior to the actual start of the study, the University of South Florida’s policy regarding use of human subjects was addressed. The researcher has completed the CITI Basic Course in the Protection of Human Research Subjects, and an Internal Review Board (IRB) application was completed to approve the study. The application included a description of the study, informed consent forms, all questionnaires and interview instruments, a statement of confidentiality, a full disclosure of investigator interests, the investigators statement of assurance, and all appropriate signatures.

Structured interview, member checking, peer checking, and grounded theory assisted in preventing the previously mentioned possible threats to credibility of research and analysis. Structured interviews maintained consistency among the participants via the use of identical questions asked in each interview. In order to

verify that the information given by participants was accurate and interpreted without bias, member checking and peer checking occurred once the interviews were transcribed. Transcripts were electronically mailed to each participant, and participants were encouraged to delete or add information. Two participants elected to make corrections on the transcripts and edited some comments that had been interpreted incorrectly. Peer checking took place both during transcription and in analyzing the data for categorization and coding. Three individuals of various backgrounds, two Ph.D. candidates and one Ph.D., all in education, read the interviews as well as the completed Results draft in order to confirm that the category themes were valid, as well to ensure that comments were interpreted without bias.

Grounded theory is a process in which the researcher collects data and does analysis at the same time (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Tashakori & Teddlie, 2003). In grounded theory research, no particular theoretical interest is committed to, as conceptual development emerges from the data (Strauss, 2003). No specific hypothesis was formulated prior to the study, but instead, conclusions came during interpretation of the data.

#### *Instrument and Interview Format*

The first instrument was the checklist to qualify the participants. Once the participants were identified, the Ponterotto Quick Discrimination Index (QDI) was administered to further qualify the participant as committed to multicultural education. This second instrument assesses cultural sensitivity of educators, and was developed by Joseph Ponterotto of Fordham University (Ponterotto & Burkard, 1992). The QDI

was developed to measure cognitive and affective discriminatory attitudes, and awareness of cultural diversity and gender equality. The QDI is a 30-item self-report measure with each item measured by a Likert type scale, and consists of three subscales. Low scores on the QDI reflect negative attitudes toward minority ethnic groups and women, and high scores reflect nonracist and nonsexist attitudes. A score from 25-50 indicates that the respondent is very insensitive to and unaware of minority and women's issues. A score from 51-75 indicates low sensitivity and little awareness of minority and women's issues. A score between 76-100 indicates moderate sensitivity to and knowledge of minority and women's issues. Score of 101 and above indicate high sensitivity to and knowledge of minority and women's issues. Ponterotto and Burkhard (1992), in a pilot study, provided score reliability and evidence of internal consistency, but also admitted that the instrument needs additional psychometric testing regarding content, criterion, and construct validity (Utsey & Ponterotto, 1999). The test contains internal reliability measures. One half the test is worded and scored in a positive direction, and one half the test is worded and scored in a negative direction, and so needs to be reverse scored in order to ensure consistency within the survey (Ponterotto & Burkhard, 1992).

An interview schedule guided the structured interview questions. Demographic and personal data concerning the participants were also collected. Before the interview, participants were asked to offer age, gender, ethnicity, educational background, school information including population demographics and achievement data, and any other pertinent information that may have influenced their reasons for

becoming a teacher. The interview was structured, partially in order to prevent researcher bias caused by leading or additional questions.

However, probes were utilized in order to ensure that participants understood the questions, were at ease and would discuss topics freely. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) discuss the importance of using probes to keep the interview moving smoothly. Each participant was asked to take part in a 1-3 hour interview. Interviews were recorded via audiotape, and were then transcribed by the researcher into print format. Once interviews were transcribed, a copy of the transcription was electronically sent to the participant for member checking several weeks after the interviews. Participants were afforded the opportunity to clarify or correct the transcript, and, if warranted, additional interviews could be arranged. Two participants did in fact, correct comments made on the transcript, but no further discussion or interviewing was required.

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What reasons do urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education offer to explain the achievement gap?
2. What do practicing urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education currently understand about multicultural theories and practices?
3. What institutional barriers do urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education confront when attempting to infuse multicultural practices in their classrooms?

4. What are the perceptions of urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education on the impact of the accountability movement on their teaching?
5. What role do urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education see themselves playing in educational and societal reform?

The following interview schedule (Appendix C) was used to address the five research questions:

**Research Question #1: Stem: Is there an achievement gap between white and non-white students at your school?**

*Prompt: If so, can you describe the difference? What do you think accounts for the gap?*

*Prompt: If not, why do you think that your conclusions are different from county and national data?*

**Stem: What roles do schools play in closing the gap?**

**Research Question #2: Stem: Can you give some examples of what you believe are multicultural practices?**

*Prompt: Do you believe differences in culture should be addressed? Why or why not? How can a teacher address differences?*

**Stem: Have you had any training in multicultural education?**

*Prompt: What is your perception regarding the goals of multicultural education?*

*Prompt: What educational or life experiences have influenced your viewpoints?*

**Research Question #3: Stem: Do you use multicultural practices? Why or why not?**

**Stem: What issues do teachers confront when attempting to infuse multicultural practices in their classrooms?**

*Prompt: What have your experiences been when trying to infuse multicultural education or culturally competent practices into your work as a teacher?*

*Prompt: How do other teachers at your school view such practices? Administrators? Students?*

**Stem: Do you see any school-wide or school system factors that hinder your ability to infuse multicultural education practices into your teaching?**

*Prompt: Researchers have claimed that institutional factors such as bureaucracy, standardized testing, tracking, discipline practices, control of teacher assignments, excessive rules and procedures, custodial or impersonal treatment of students, and residential segregation affects educational outcomes. Can you comment on whether the above factors affect your classroom practice or that of your peers?*

**Research Question #4: Stem: Can you describe the effects No Child Left Behind has had on classroom practice in your school?**

*Prompt: Can you describe how NCLB has changed your classroom practice?*

*Prompt: Has the increased attention to testing, FCAT in your case, affected classroom practice?*

*Prompt: What do you believe are the positives and the negatives of the accountability movement?*

**Research Question #5: Stem: What impact do you believe that teachers have on educational outcomes?**

*Prompt: What can teachers do to reform or improve schools?*

*Prompt: How could schools be improved?*

*Prompt: What do you believe is the purpose of the educational system?*

*Prompt: What type of reform is beyond the scope of teacher or classroom practice?*

*Qualitative Analysis*

The interviews were tape recorded and then transcribed to complete data collection. Constant comparisons, or comparing similarities in responses, coding, and developing core categories, were used to attempt to discover themes in the data (Strauss, 2003). In keeping with the methods of grounded theory, these categories and codes developed as the research progressed, and included peer checking at various stages. No software was used in the analysis.

As Strauss (2003) specifies, the researcher should first make links among concepts, and these links will help to create conceptually dense theory that strengthens as additional links are formulated. Theory is then verified through new inquiry and new data. Integration occurs when the researcher decides which dimensions and distinctions in the data are most important (Strauss, 2003). Re-examination of the data

took place throughout the research, and final integration took place during the writing (Strauss, 2003).

## Chapter 4

### Results

#### *Introduction*

After interviewing the participants, making notes, and transcribing interviews, formal analysis of the data began. Informal analysis, including the notation of prevalent themes, actually began during interviews and during transcription. However, extensive notes, identification of themes, and color-coding were completed once the interviews were transcribed, keeping in mind the research questions presented for the study.

#### *Participant Information*

The participants all teach or have taught in high poverty Title I secondary schools grades 9-12, are secondary social studies teachers, embrace multicultural education, and have between 5-10 years of experience. Although there are currently 5 Title I high schools in the district, at the time of this study, there were only 4 such schools. One school was omitted from the study because it was a brand new school, had not opened yet, and did not have employees during the timeframe the interviews were conducted.

The goal of the researcher was to obtain at least 8 participants. However, this was not possible. The secondary social studies supervisor in the district nominated 6 participants, all of whom qualified, and 5 additional potential participants came from a

snowball technique of the existing participants nominating like-minded peers. All were located and were willing to participate in the study. However, upon further screening, it was discovered that several did not qualify for the study. Although those nominees fulfilled the qualifications on the initial checklist, they had been teaching for either too few or too many years. Those nominated but not selected consisted of 2 African American males who were too new to teaching, a White male who was also too new, and another White male and a White female who had both taught for too many years to qualify. It was not possible to locate additional participants who fit all the desired criteria from the four high-poverty secondary schools in the district, and so the completed study consists of responses given by seven qualified participants. Of those seven participants, only two teachers, the White males, are still in the classroom positions they held in the Title I schools, as two African American females transferred from the high poverty schools to teaching positions in more suburban settings, two African American females were promoted to administrative positions, and the Asian-Irish female was promoted to supervisor of an online program that has no direct student contact.

In order to conceal the identities of the participants, pseudonyms were created for identification. The narrative that follows to describe the interviews does not attribute comments to particular participants as they comment on the various aspects of their daily lives working in classrooms and schools. Although the reader may find it slightly cumbersome or confusing, there are two reasons for omitting the identities of each speaker. First, it is the purpose of this study to keep the focus upon the conditions in classrooms and schools. There is a tendency, at times, to “psychologize” qualitative

research, or an effort made by the reader to analyze why each speaker perceives events a certain way based on their personal characteristics. Too often, rather than the situation and the conditions that the speaker is describing being the primary focus, the commentators' perceptions are questioned and diagnosed. Second, there was a deliberate effort to avoid identifying or citing each speaker's comments so as to protect their professional interests. Several participants felt that they were "silenced," or unable to honestly speak to the conditions they worked in, and that there would be repercussions should their comments be made public. The researcher ensured that all comments would remain anonymous before the interviews took place.

Specific information regarding participants is presented here:

**Peter** is a 38 year-old white male in his sixth year of teaching who began teaching to "make the world a better place." He scored a 135 on the QDI instrument, indicating a very high level of sensitivity to multiculturalism. He was formerly a child abuse investigator, has a B.A. in International Studies, an M.A. in Social Science Education, and some Ph.D. coursework completed. He described his school as "racially diverse," with a "teacher friendly administration," and a "large number of students living in poverty."

**Andrea** is a 30 year-old Black female also in her sixth year of teaching, who taught in two different high-poverty schools in the district, and who scored a 133 on the QDI. She entered the teaching profession especially to "affect young girls" and provide "mentorship." She has held positions in sales, NBA marketing, and collections. Her

degrees are a B.A. in Political Science, and M.A. in Sports Administration, and an Ed.S. in Educational Leadership. She described the school she works in as “a ‘D’ school in the Florida rating system three years in a row,” and that it “attempts to balance a non-responsive community, apathetic parents, and students, with district and government expectations.” Since the interview, because of the “D” rating, all the administrators but the Principal had been relieved of their duties at her school, and she has become an administrator.

**Jane** is a 30 year-old female who describes herself as Asian-Irish. On the QDI, she scored a 117. She is in her seventh year of teaching, and has completed a B.A. in Social Science Education. Before teaching high school, she was a pre-school teacher and was influenced by a previous administrator who asked her to consider teaching as a profession. She describes her school as “75% low income neighborhood students, and 25% magnet students.” She has left the formal classroom and is a supervisor for the district’s computer based accelerated education program.

**Ken** is a 39 year-old white male in his sixth year of teaching who previously had taught conversational English in Japan. His score on the QDI was 105. His qualifications included a B.A. in History, an M.A. in Social Science Education, a graduate certificate in Diversity, as well as Ph.D. coursework. He teaches because he likes history, and would rather teach than be “stuck in a cubicle.” He describes his school as “acting and operating as if it was 1975. They do not accept the demographic changes that have swept over them.”

**Elisa** is a 27 year-old Black female in her fifth year of teaching, and scored 120 on the QDI. Before beginning teaching, she had been a full-time student. She has a B.A. in Sociology, a B.S. in Psychology with Biology and Education minors, a M.Ed. in Secondary Education as well as some completed Ph.D. coursework. She began teaching to “make a difference,” and describes her school as “racially segregated- both teachers and students” with “ill-prepared teachers and lackluster administration.” She has left the high-poverty school to work at a different high school in a more suburban area.

**Josephine** is a 26 year-old Black female who is in her fifth year of teaching after being an office manager at the local university. She scored 114 on the QDI. She has a B.A. in History, a B.A. in Social Science Ed, and some M.A. coursework completed. She decided to teach because she “wanted to help,” and because she didn’t like the science of her pre-dentistry major. Her school is a “nice facility,” with “mostly Black” students. Since the interview, she has also left the Title I school to work at a different high school in the district.

**Halle** is a 26 year-old Black female who scored a 111 on the QDI. She is in her fifth year of teaching and did not have another prior occupation. She has a B.A. in Social Science Education, a M.Ed., and some Ph.D. coursework completed. She became a teacher because she loves education and loves to learn, and describes the school she works in as “Unique. Misrepresented in a lot of ways. Good school, good students, has a sense of community.”

There are some similarities in the participants. All participants qualified in at least 7 of 8 categories on the required checklist. According to the quantitative data provided by the QDI instrument, the selected teachers did in fact score above 100, a level deemed highly sensitive to multiculturalism. The scores ranged from 105-135. All are under 40 years of age, which could be a result of the selection criteria, specifically requiring mid-range levels of experience. Many of the participants had careers prior to teaching. All are highly educated, with the majority (5 of 7) having not only a liberal arts bachelor’s degree, but also graduate degrees and coursework. Of the 7, 4 have Ph.D. coursework completed, and 1 has completed an Educational Specialist (Ed.S.) degree. Most of these teachers entered teaching for altruistic reasons: “to make a difference,” “to mentor,” “to make the world a better place.” All participants mentioned relevant life experiences that were very important to their understandings of and leanings toward multicultural education. Judging from the analysis here, these teachers were not affected by teacher training as much as from their life experiences, as every participant mentioned some kind of transforming experience related to

ethnicity. Further analysis of the impact of life experiences may be informative in order to seek teacher candidates who are successful with diverse student populations. Every participant, without exception, discussed some type of life event that influenced their viewpoints regarding the goals of multicultural education. One participant simply stated, "I've traveled all over the world and seen how people learn in different contexts, and so it gives me an idea that there is more than one system."

Analyzing the characteristics of the individuals suggested for the study brings to mind the Haberman (1988) model for selecting and predicting success in urban schools. Haberman (1988) claims that colleges of education have been largely unsuccessful in training teachers for urban schools, and that new models must be examined. The Haberman (1995) STAR urban teacher model contains a pre-screen interview as well as a formal interview to ascertain whether the candidate will be an appropriate choice for working in urban schools. The Star program is based upon the ideas that successful teachers in urban settings are over 30, are persistent, have physical and emotional stamina, and are able to navigate bureaucracy (Haberman, 1995). Additionally, STAR teachers choose to work in urban schools, protect and advocate for students, and teach rather than sort (Haberman, 1995). However, while Haberman (1988) recommends alternative certification programs (ACP) for urban teachers, all of these teachers had some training in colleges of education.

Each of the 6 talked about the life experiences that influenced their leanings toward multicultural education in more detail:

Well, growing up in New Jersey, I had, I went to school where there was one Black family, one Jewish family, and everyone else was white. When I came to Florida, I was in massive culture shock. I thought why was I not exposed to all of this growing up? I kind of felt robbed. All these wonderful cultures were denied me. So, I think it is the role of a teacher to bring these things to a classroom.

My life experiences? I was raised on an Army base, so I really didn't understand the concept of color until I moved from North Carolina to Tampa, Florida. That is the first time I was really introduced to color. So that sort of dictates the way I see things and the world. Also, I had all White teachers from the time I was seven until I was sixteen, so that is what I saw. I didn't even know Black teachers existed really. But then I went to college and I went to historically Black colleges, and I saw a different type of student and a different world. Then I was in Texas, so the environment there is very different and it dictates the way I see things.

My mother is Indian, so culturally we do things that are different. When my friends were dating at 16, I was studying, going to school in the summer and talking all the classes I could possibly take because my mother was like you have to go to school, you have to learn....even to this day she is like you have to get your Masters, you have to get your PhD, and I am like I am married, I want to have kids. Education is really driven in my family, especially with my mother. In my elementary class I would tell my classes I am American Indian: I am half American, half Indian. My father was Irish, but you know, American. The kids

would make fun of me. Kids should have a better idea of where each other is coming from.

My mother, being from Jamaica, creating a very multicultural background, doing all kinds of things. Also living in Miami my entire life. Then, going to UF, a lot of times, being of color and being from a place where there were many people of color, I completely forgot white people existed. And the whole idea of going to UF gave me the opportunity to see that white people have flavor, too. White people have culture, too. When talking about multiculturalism it is geared toward Black, and Hispanic, and Asian, and Native American, but white people have culture, too.

Coming from the Caribbean, my family is mixed with many different things. Culturally we have a very different background, culturally, moral wise. Also, coming to this country to go to college and being exposed to the idea of what is truly race for the first time at the age of 17 opens your eyes to a lot of things.

High school. The high school I went to was a diverse school. In elementary, I was pulled from my neighborhood school and I had to go to elementary school in Plant City because that is where my mom worked, and she said that it was more important for us to go to school with her in Plant City instead of Ruskin. We were a one-car family. She said it was more important for us to go to school where she worked in case we got sick or anything. So, being one of the few Black students in Plant City. Now that I am older, looking back on it, I don't think I realized I

was like the only Black. You know, when you're young and you're innocent, and you weren't taught to look at color, you don't realize those things. Now I look back and I think, wow, I think I was the only one. So I think that exposure [to diversity].

Teachers in the study, selected for their perceived commitment to multiculturalism, all went through some kind of transformational life experience that affected their practice. The orientations of these teachers reflect the conclusions of Jordan-Irvine (2003) who found that many urban educators contradicted the “portrayals of incompetent and disinterested urban teachers” (p. 9), and also reinforced the conclusions of Villegas and Lucas (2002) who found that life experiences may affect teachers more than training.

### *Qualitative Research Questions*

The following research questions informed the interview protocol and the data that were produced through using it:

1. What reasons do urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education offer to explain the achievement gap?
2. What do practicing urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education currently understand about multicultural theories and practices?
3. What institutional barriers do urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education confront when attempting to infuse multicultural practices in their classrooms?

4. What are the perceptions of urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education on the impact of the accountability movement on their teaching?
5. What role do urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education see themselves playing in educational and societal reform?

### *Themes*

Several strong themes immediately emerged in the interviews, notably the most prevalent: tracking and racial segregation. This theme dominated all conversation, especially came up during the first research question (explanations for the achievement gap), the third research questions (institutional barriers to multicultural education practices), the fourth research question (the effect of the accountability movement on teaching), and was apparent before transcribing and reading the transcripts. All three peer reviewers, after reading the transcripts, agreed that discussions of tracking and segregation were very dominant throughout. As the transcripts were typed and analyzed, notes were entered onto the transcripts and 5 more themes emerged that were discussed frequently in the interviews: bureaucracy and bureaucratic mandates, multiple perspectives and inclusion, resistance, testing and accountability issues, and time, for a total of 6 major themes. More minor themes included communities and resources.

Once identified as prominent, issues were color-coded in the transcripts. Tracking and segregation were pink, bureaucracy and bureaucratic mandates were blue, mention of multiple perspectives was yellow, resistance was orange, testing and testing issues

were green, and time was red. The minor themes were not color-coded, but were counted to assure that they were in fact mentioned consistently. Each theme will be discussed.

### *Theme 1 Tracking and Segregation*

Tracking and segregation themes were difficult to separate as participants combined them as one concept. Mickelson (2001) details the incidence of segregation within schools via academic programs and names it second-generation segregation. Without exception, all participants mentioned this type of tracking and segregation in schools while answering the interview question regarding the causes of the achievement gap. Villegas and Lucas (2002) claim that teachers do not become change agents because they lack “sufficient awareness of inequalities in schools to be inspired to be agents of change” (p. 57). Darling-Hammond (2002) also assumes,

A second challenge is in enabling teachers to understand the social context in which schools operate and students develop and learn. The fact is that the U.S. school system is structured such that students routinely receive dramatically unequal learning opportunities based on their race and social status simply is not widely acknowledged, and few teachers will have information about inequalities in schooling (p. 205).

This study reveals that teachers *do* see the inequities in schools, at least these teachers who teach in high poverty schools with large populations of students of color. One teacher, when asked about the cause of the achievement gap, replied simply, “Tracking of students,” and another, before the interview officially began, described

her school as, “mostly black, students tracked into Honors (White), and Traditional (Black).” The following observations, made by two different teachers, demonstrate that, at least in their schools, there is a noticeable difference in the student ethnic composition in classrooms. “Well, one of the first differences would be the classes that students take, the classes that Black and white students are enrolled in,” and

The difference that I see is, well, we have different level of classes: we have regular, we have honors, and then we have AP. You see a clear distinction in the races of kids between the regular and the honors and the AP. So, obviously that [segregation] says a lot right there about the achievement gap.

In the same vein,

Most of the kids that are white are usually in the magnet program, and they have special agendas, special programs, special counselors, as opposed to the traditional students, that are pretty much there because they are neighborhood kids. Their classes are pre-selected, and the goal is pretty much just to get them to graduate.

After explaining that the students in his school were segregated by ethnicity, the same teacher added how the categorization in the school district worked:

You have regular required classes that kids have to take for credit. Then you have Honors classes, which supposedly is for, I guess, for kids who are college bound. Then you have AP, which is definitely college bound. When I think about, for example, World History, regular is for kids who are definitely not going to college. They just want to graduate from high school.

All four of the above participants further explained that the ethnic compositions of the classes were often correlated with the supposed level of difficulty of the class, with

students of color mostly placed into the lower level classes. One teacher in the group, agreed that classes were segregated, but believed that communication from schools to parents, as well as parent social capital played a role in student placement in classes:

There are many children, mainly Hispanic, who are not in what you would call gifted or Honors programs, but could be if their parents knew the type of processes it took to get them in there. There is not a lot of communication with parents.

The above comment demonstrates the philosophy also held by many researchers who claim that parents who are poor and often uneducated themselves do not always have the social capital to successfully navigate school systems for the best interest of their children (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). Limited English language skills may confound the problem even more. These parents trust that school officials will take the necessary roles to advocate for their children, but often these parents are incorrect, and instead students fall through the cracks, and are enrolled in low-level classes, whether they have low-level ability or not. Additionally, Tozer et al. (2002) claim that “Hispanic and Asian families may actually see themselves as being more helpful by maintaining a distance from the school” (p. 497), and so, often their children are not well-served.

Other remarks regarding the achievement gap point out segregation in the school, but mention student motivation factors and the existence of magnet programs in the school as a contributing factor to achievement gaps.

I think what accounts for the achievement gap at my particular school is the fact that we’re a magnet school for technology and engineering, and the majority of the students who are in the program, first off, are white, are highly motivated, and have reasons to achieve.

The above observation also discusses segregation and separation of students in classes, but couches it in terms of student motivation level, and that students of color are not as motivated in school because they are not in the magnet program (magnet programs require admission and a certain GPA level to remain in the programs).

Observations about tracking and segregation were all made during the very first interview questions without hesitation, showing that teachers did not even really have to carefully consider what they see everyday in their schools before commenting. All teachers very matter-of-factly discussed not only the clear segregation of students in their classes, but how issues directly relating to the type of student in the class affected curricular decisions and the level of multiculturalism that was used in instruction, either positively or negatively. For example,

I think that I haven't had a lot of challenges simply because of the environment that I work in. But I think that multicultural ed is sometimes viewed as African American History. If you view multicultural education as African American History, and you teach at a primarily Black school, and you teach a lot of African American history, you won't get a lot of objections.

A teacher at a different school had a similar analysis: "I get the support of the students. My student body is mostly minority. If my students were different, I might have some roadblocks." In these cases, the type of student in the class clearly influences how the curriculum is taught, and to what extent the teacher brings in lessons that include multicultural content and methods. Participants believed that classes consisting mostly of students of color facilitated the infusion of multicultural

education, and so, in some ways, segregation aided their choices to use multicultural education.

The teachers also described the students and the segregation using an informal “code” of labeling students, often switching between “White,” “magnet,” or “honors” to describe classes consisting mostly of White students, and “traditional,” “liberal arts,” “regular,” or “neighborhood,” to describe classes that consist mostly of students of color. While there are, of course, exceptions, “Predominantly, Hispanic and Black students are usually enrolled in lower track classes or vocational track classes. White students, even if they are not prepared for an Honors curriculum, or a college level curriculum, are usually enrolled in honors classes.” This teacher believed that not only were students of color tracked into lower level classes, but that White students were somehow purposely placed into high level classes, even if their academic achievement level did not warrant it.

Only one teacher attributed student placement in classes to other teachers. This participant believed that teachers acted as gatekeepers to keep certain students out of high level classes, and that stereotyping often influenced their decisions: “You know, they go by teacher recommendation in my school and so it is not an open system that anyone can get in if they try. It is more like who you know, and the type of relationships you have.” The same teacher, later in the interview, discussed this idea with more detail and example:

Teachers give recommendation to bump kids up to the gifted classes. I have this student--- who wears a doo-rag, and looks like a gang member, real tough guy, but brilliant, real smart guy. If you left it up to the teachers, he would be tracked out of

college prep classes because of the truancies, and the doo-rag, and all. So, tracking happens.

It is plausible to assume that students might not get the chance to enroll in higher level classes at times because teachers or other decision makers do not look past the superficial qualities of students before making recommendations for class placement to allow students to enroll in high-level classes.

These teachers see and understand the inequities in their schools. Teachers openly discussed the segregation of students in their classes, but what did not come out in the transcripts was the tone they used during the course of the discussions. Not only did the participants notice the segregation at their schools, mention segregation more frequently than any other topic, they were impacted emotionally by it. The tones varied from amazement or incredulousness, to frustration, to clear anger. One teacher made a comment that was somewhat ironic:

Segregation of students. Even amongst my Global Studies classes, they were segregated. I would have the regular level and the honors level, and of course, the regular level were students of color, and the honors level, well, they were White. So even amongst the Global Studies classes where we are supposed to be teaching and learning about different kinds of people, they are segregated.

While they openly discussed what they observed and experienced in their schools, teachers in this study did not seem to agree with school practices that segregated students, and appeared to feel disoriented and upset, but sometimes resigned, when working in the midst of events that were antithetical to their belief systems. This

criticism of differentiated curriculum addresses the historical orientations of the purpose of schooling:

I think that Horace Mann, as demented as he was in certain areas, I think he was right in making schools the great equalizer. They need to give everybody a chance to be successful. They shouldn't be like Jefferson wanted, a big sorting machine.

Another participant made a similar comment regarding the purpose of schools: "I think it is to help students get a fair start because some students come from an environment where they start far behind others. I think all students, regardless of ethnic background, should have a fair start in life." In other words, teachers prefer the common school model that offers equal opportunity instead of the meritocratic model that separates students according to perceived ability.

Because classrooms are segregated and tracked in their schools, teachers do not feel empowered to make change, and are therefore impeded from pursuing the goals of multicultural education theories. Multicultural researchers who conclude that teachers who do not "work against the grain," or do not become change agents because they do not see inequality may be incorrect. Teachers in this study did not feel that they had the capacity to make change in their schools, and often did not even feel comfortable discussing the changes that should be made in the context of settings that addressed school improvement, for example, faculty or committee meetings: "So, at what point are teachers allowed to tell the truth about the gap? When you say it, you get in trouble and who wants to risk that?" Marilyn Cochran-Smith's (2004) asserted that "unlike researchers who work outside schools, teachers who work against the grain are not at

liberty to publicly announce brilliant but excoriating critiques of their colleagues and the bureaucracies in which they work” (p. 29).

Not only are teachers unable to change and transform their environment by eliminating segregation and tracking, they are sometimes silenced, or unable even to openly discuss the issues they work with daily. As mentioned in the literature review, Cochran-Smith (2004) also warns, “teachers who work against the grain are often at odds with their administrators and evaluators” (p. 28). The same participant mentioned, “I think schools need to have a more open environment where we can talk about things that aren’t popular. We need to talk about it. Teachers try to hide it and students try to hide it, we’re lying to ourselves, and if we never talk about it, the achievement gap will never get closed.” Another teacher pointed out, “It is easier said than done because we all live off a paycheck.”

Clearly, the issues described by Oakes (1985) and Mickelson (2002), the separation of students by ethnic group and the variance regarding what goes on in the differentiated classes are still very prevalent in educational practices, at least in these secondary schools serving large numbers of poor students of color. Because tracking practices increase as grade level ascends, the literature regarding multicultural education in elementary and middle schools is not as relevant to discussions of the practices in secondary schools. The practices of segregation and tracking impede teachers’ ability to infuse the ideas of multicultural education into their classroom practices, but teachers do not feel enough professional autonomy to make change in their workplaces. Teachers are not nearly as capable of being change agents in their workplaces as theorists would like to believe. The segregation and tracking teachers

observed in this study show that emphasis on the specific institutional contexts of high schools, contrasted with that of elementary and middle schools, should be further addressed. In short, teachers' attitudes toward making change at work can be summed up with this: "We can't do anything but take orders if we want to keep our job and be happy."

### *Theme 2 Bureaucracy and Bureaucratic Mandates*

The second most commonly mentioned theme was bureaucracy and bureaucratic mandates. Bureaucracy was also revealed in standardized instruction. All 7 teachers explained that, in this district, and especially in schools that had not done well on the state standardized test (Florida Comprehensive Assessment, FCAT), certain classroom instructional practices, particularly reading strategy instruction, were mandated. These teachers did not object to reading strategies, but believed rigidity and inflexible mandates were not always in the best interests of the students and the school culture. Although "standards" can be met in many ways, completely standardizing instruction is oppositional to multicultural education theories. Multicultural education does not just include cultural content into the curriculum, but also proposes that instructional methods and assessment be personalized and adjusted to the diversity of students' cultures and learning styles (Banks, 2004a). Multiple ways of assessing what students know through projects, writing, individual and group projects and presentation is recommended (Thompson, 2004). Teachers in this study did not have freedom to create lessons that best met their students' needs, but instead had to meet the district or school guidelines. This practice is also detailed in the literature regarding the highly

bureaucratic and standardized nature of urban schools (Cuban, 1993; Fine, 1991; Tyack, 1974; Weiner, 1993).

Although many of these mandates are specifically attached to testing, a separate category included here refers to specific administrative practices, at the school level or higher, that affect teachers' ability either to do their jobs effectively, or to perform educational tasks with some degree of professional autonomy. Teachers, for the most part, did not make a case that administrators individually make a difference at their school, except for one participant, who argued that school leadership could improve schools "The Principal--it comes from the top." Other participants did not make extensive mention or critique of leadership, leadership styles, or of individuals. Instead, teachers discussed administration and administrators in terms of impersonal and inflexible implementation of district guidelines and bureaucratic mandates. Teachers described excessive meetings, instructional mandates, and administrator observations to ensure compliance with district guidelines. Teachers also felt that administrations, in order to protect their own jobs, did not allow too much deviation from any practice that could be questioned with discussion like, "The culture of the administration will either let you do that [multicultural practices] and support you or come down on you," or "The administrators are more worried about a lawsuit or how will this look bad for the school."

Another common complaint was that the bureaucracy at school was reflected in too many meetings. One teacher had worked at different types of schools serving very different populations and saw the difference between the two schools in the number of meetings required of faculty. She claimed "As far as bureaucracy, too many meetings

talking about the achievement gap,” and further explained that there seemed to be more time spent in meetings talking about the achievement gap in the school that had a large population of students of color, and that not enough time was spent in strategies to really address the gap.

One participant mentioned how increasing standardized instructional mandates changed her classroom practices: “I don’t do projects anymore. My projects are, I used to do a lot more how do you feel things. Now I am a rubric person. Everything has to have a rubric. It needs to look like this.” Another agreed and stated “Everything is focused on skill-building. Which makes it more interesting because you can only dress up a KWL chart so many ways before your kids realize it is just another FCAT training.” These commentaries show the narrowing of curriculum in high poverty schools. Another made a similar comment regarding mandated reading strategies:

In our department, they say you have to teach a reading class once a week, and they actually give you the lesson. Every Friday we’re supposed to teach the lesson they give you. They give you the lesson, and you have to chunk, and do KWL, and RAF’s and all that mumbo jumbo.

In this school, reading initiatives demand that teachers use reading strategies the first 30 minutes of each class:

We spend so much time focusing on reading and highlighting, and cannot focus on group activities. The first 30 minutes of class, we are supposed to be reading, and the AP’s come around to see if you are highlighting and doing those kind of things. I think it is good to show kids these things, but it doesn’t have to be a daily thing. The interactive notebook is good, but on top of the interactive notebook and

on top of doing what we do, the mandates come down from the AP offices, there are the worksheets, and the strategies, and the highlighting...

The teacher here is explaining that all classes, without exception, must begin with 30 minutes of reading and reading strategies. The administrators check to see if the teachers are complying with the mandates. While teachers have no complaint about reading strategies in general, the practices removes decision making from the teachers regarding their instructional and curricular choices, and also prohibits any lesson longer than one hour, including cooperative activities recommended by multicultural theorists, from taking place due to time constraints (the block scheduling at these schools includes 90 minute class periods). Additionally, not all students benefit equally from reading strategies, including “highlighting.”

Many references were made to the practice of administrators performing “walk-throughs,” and how those observations and mini-evaluations of teachers’ classroom performance affected stress level and choice of class activities and instructional material. Bureaucracy and bureaucratic mandates mentioned here show that social studies teachers, in schools serving high poverty students of color, instead of having the curricular choice and freedom required by multicultural education, are given daily directives on not only what they need to teach, but also how to teach it. To ensure compliance, they are audited with frequent administrator “walk-throughs,” or unannounced class visitations intended to assess compliance with district or school mandates. The following two commentaries discuss the practice of administrators’ mini-evaluations, or “walk-throughs,” and how those observations are putting undue stress onto teachers:

As far as outside of that, the walk-throughs, on behalf of the admins, they [administrators] want to see if, you know, where the district guidelines are being met. That sometimes gets hard. Sometimes I've had to stop my teaching to explain in detail what we were doing, and that's been a problem.

People want to make sure that when the walk-throughs come, they [teachers] look good. They [teachers] are so worried about that walk-through and they are so stressing about that walk-through that they [teachers] are not really connecting with the kids, they are not teaching the subject matter, they are teaching to the test without teaching students because they don't want to be the weak link in the school.

Teachers are more worried about administrator evaluations than in teaching students, and often have to take additional time from teaching to explain to administrators exactly what they are doing in their classrooms. It is also more difficult to implement the "subversive pedagogy," or "teaching against the grain" detailed by theorists (Gay, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 2004) when administrators make frequent and unannounced visits to classrooms.

Bureaucracy and bureaucratic mandates affect students, too, with limits on accessibility to teachers and school resources. The comments described below, as well as above, reflect the sociological idea of goal displacement as described by Gross and Etzioni (1985): that the initial goal of the organization becomes lost as increased rules are strictly enforced, and humane and professional considerations are displaced. School practices dictated by administration such as the tardy practice discussed here take students out of the classroom, and away from instructional activities and

materials. “Another problem I think is maybe the TAP program. Do you have a TAP program at your school? It is the lock-out program for kids who are late to class. It is the program where if students are late, they are locked out of your classroom for the whole class.” Students will not be instructed at all if they are not in class. School hours are also limited by the requirement in some schools that students immediately leave the building after school:

Another thing I would call into question is hours of operation. I know teachers in general want to get back home, but I’ve never seen a place for students be more interested in getting the kids out at the sound of the bell. They are immediately on the PA [public address system], telling kids to get out. Schools are not just a place for academic learning. Some students come from poor homes, a bad environment, and they enjoy being at the school. They do not always want to go right back to that.”

The same teacher continued with, “kids come from all over the county, and because they come from so far away, they get bussed. Kids can’t get involved in social or club activities-our school has a real problem with club activities- because kids need to get on the bus immediately after school to go back home. Otherwise, their parents, who are mostly working class, have to come pick them up. “Some of the bureaucratic policies and practices like the school lock-out program to control tardies, and the insistence that students immediately leave the school building after school are good examples of the goal displacement theory described above. When students are late, they are kept out of class altogether, and after school, students are immediately shoed out of a building that was designed to educate students.

These points mirror those made by Lois Weiner (1993) who claims that teaching in a high-poverty urban school, especially when dealing with student differences, is a “Herculean task” (p. 108) because of the lack of teacher support and bureaucratic constraints that impede the very individualized instruction that multicultural education theory requests. She further explains that urban teachers learn to teach in settings that impose “institutional pressure for custodial treatment of children,” in classrooms that “fare poorly with the standardized instruction urban schools rely on so heavily” (p. 129). Procedures mandated at these high-poverty schools also reflect some of the assessments made by Anyon (1980) and later by Metz (2003), who both claim that whole neighborhoods are tracked into their respective rungs on the social class ladder through purposeful school cultures. Lower and working class schools are often taught docility and obedience through mechanical, rote behavior, and are evaluated by their compliance with following the right steps, here in highlighting and completing mandated reading strategies (Anyon, 1980).

### *Theme 3 Multiple Perspectives and Inclusion*

Teachers most commonly discussed multicultural education practices as teaching from multiple perspectives, as well as finding ways to include all students in the educational process. References such as “it is important for all students, regardless of race, to be cognizant of the other people’s stories,” “no ethnic group should be left out. You teach so you don’t leave anyone out,” and “You want to be able to use the type of knowledge children have, and bring it out, so that everyone in the class can make use

of it.” Such comments demonstrate that teachers want to make sure to acknowledge differences so that they can address all students in their daily activities.

Most participants mentioned practices that are categorized as Human Relations models of multicultural education, according to the research completed by Sleeter and Grant (1987). While all teachers discussed teaching multiple perspectives, their purposes for doing so were more in lines with the “getting along” and the building political and historical understanding inherent in the Human Relations model, and not a politicized Multicultural Education model or an activist Social Reconstructionist model recommended by many multicultural theorists (Sleeter & Grant, 1987). For example, statements such as: “I think the ultimate goal, in my belief, is to reduce misunderstanding, to improve tolerance is the major goal,” “I think we should look at the advantages that certain cultures have, the similarities as well as differences, and show people there are more similarities than differences, I think that would alleviate some of the problems,” and “In order for your classroom to run smoothly, you want all your kids to feel welcome and to feel comfortable, and coming from different populations where they may not have encountered people from other races, it is good for them to understand different types of cultures, so that you limit tension in the classroom.” The statements of teachers in this district demonstrate a human relations orientation, show that the teacher’s belief for teaching about difference is mainly for cooperation, and not for any type of broad reaching social change outside the classroom. These ideas also reflect Banks’ prejudice reduction dimension of multicultural education. Every teacher made a statement regarding the importance of using methods of multicultural education to broaden students’ educations, such as “I

think culture should be addressed in the classroom. It doesn't matter if it is History or English or Math, you know you can always incorporate these things." The following references to multiple or alternative perspectives of history may also illustrate examples of the Human Relations model (Sleeter & Grant, 1987) in the way that alternative perspectives of history are taught in order to "expose" students to perspectives of other groups or cultures. These two teachers strongly believe in using multiple perspectives:

I think back to the primary purpose of classes like American Government and World History, and I think that simply including perspectives of different groups of people outside the textbook is a very strong way of including multicultural practices.

Incorporating all types of history in the classroom. For example, American History can be taught from many different perspectives. I think bringing in outside sources, primary documents from different races. Looking at specific historical time periods, and how they affected all races, during that time period, are all good ways for kids to be exposed to multicultural education.

Another teacher made a very similar comment:

Well, I think one major aspect is teaching from different perspectives. If you want to teach about World War II, you want to teach from an American perspective, but you also want to include a Japanese perspective, a German perspective, and a Russian perspective. I think that should be a main piece of a social studies class. What else can teachers do to teach multicultural education? I think to encourage

students to learn other languages, by promoting travel, and understanding different cultures.

This teacher agrees:

For me, teaching American History, I taught World History, and American Government. I always like to look at what the 'other' actually is. If that means in an American History class looking at a multiple perspective view of, for example WWII, or the Vietnam War, or of the 1980's. If that means World History and looking at maybe Europe in the 1920's to the 1950's and looking at everyone who was involved in the reconstruction of Europe.

While all of the above cited teachers have very similar reasoning in bringing multiple perspectives to a social studies class, the following comments reflect an orientation that is consistent with the Teaching the Exceptional and Culturally Different model of multicultural education as described by Sleeter and Grant (1987). This model is considered an even lower level of multicultural education than Human Relations, and is seen as a way to "fit in" those who are different than the mainstream.

Including different groups of people and the differences between people, you know that we're all different and teaching that at school. At my school, because they are all from the same community I think sometimes they don't know diversity. They are all minority but they don't know diversity, and so it bothers me because when they leave school and go into the workplace with a variety of people, will they be ready, will they be equipped? They will not be in their communities for the rest of their life. Will they able to go into the workplace?

Because we are preparing our kids for a life after school, and the world is full of different cultures, and we need to teach them about different cultures so they will be aware and ready for the world.

Both of these reflections demonstrate that these teachers feel compelled to bring their students up to a standard so that they can function in the larger world in workplaces or other social arenas. Similarly, “I would say my challenge is with students-- trying to open their minds to other cultures, trying to get them out of their box and think of other cultures.”

One participant, however, did have a different viewpoint regarding the goals of multicultural education, a viewpoint that hints at power relations: “I think they [the goals of multicultural education] are false. I think the roles that schools take, the way our county is set up, they [the goals of multicultural education] are just to look good. There is no true change, but we are doing it so we can tell the public we have it [multicultural education] so we look great. It is a requirement, another training.” This teacher believed that multicultural education was for appearance’s sake only so that school districts could proclaim equity to the public, but that “the roles that schools take” perpetuate the status quo, and that little societal change was taking place outside schools in “the way our county is set up.” Incidentally, this participant has a degree in political science and scored the highest in the group on the QDI assessment of multiculturalism.

In keeping with the analysis provided by Grant et al. (2004) mentioned in the Literature Review, practicing teachers are using multicultural education, but were more concerned with how to work with groups in classrooms, and with the one

exception above, did not make mention of issues relating to social construction of group categories or hierarchical power relationships. Not one specific reference was made about reforming schools or changing society, as in Banks' (2004a) "empowering school culture" or in the Sleeter & Grant (1987) Social Reconstructivist Model. Such theories propose that multicultural education be used as a tool for critical analysis and transformation, not necessarily only with individuals, but of larger societal structures.

Another comment, a topic only addressed by one participant, but worth mentioning here: "Right now, I think a lot of the multicultural teaching in the classes, the literature surrounding multicultural anything is, how can I put it? Right now they are preaching to the choir. I think all the theorists and writers and everybody, they're all preaching to the people that are already teaching it. The problem is the whole idea that teachers who really need multicultural education, they are not getting it." This participant believes that most education trainings or programs dealing with multicultural topics end up filled with teachers who already believe in and practice multicultural education, but that many teachers who really need diversity training are not participating.

Teachers in the study utilized multicultural education in their classrooms, but most commonly discussed the multiple perspectives or "getting along" ideas inherent in the Human Relations (Sleeter and Grant, 1987) or prejudice reduction (Banks, 2004a) models of multicultural education. Most theorists believe that higher-level models, such as Social Reconstructionist or equity pedagogy, are more appropriate. Grant et al. (2004) also found that teachers in classrooms do not incorporate levels of multicultural education that examine power relations or other more sophisticated content. The

commentary made by teachers in this study demonstrate that teachers are more concerned about the student learning and culture in their classroom than they are about political critique or large-scale social change.

#### *Theme 4 Resistance*

All participants mentioned resistance to multicultural education of some kind, although teachers experienced resistance evenly divided by various parties: students, parents, other teachers, and administrators. According to Jordan-Irvine (2003), the “culture wars” help to perpetuate negative perceptions of multicultural education: that it lacks intellectual integrity, that it is only for people of color, that it is a self-esteem booster, a recruitment device and a way to “bash whites” (p. 20). These understandings do affect, and sometimes impede, teachers’ ability to infuse multicultural practices into classrooms. Several teachers mentioned resistance by students, although different groups of students in different contexts: “I’ve had students who resented the fact that when I taught American History or World History I somehow incorporated Black history into it.” Likewise, “The biggest issue I think is resistance because the students don’t know,” and “Resistance from kids. They don’t understand the different cultures or they have had bad experiences in the past, or because the kids themselves can see the difference in how they have been treated.” This teacher believed students resisted, but only in the same way they tried to test limits to anything in school:

Some resistance. Some resistance from students, some students, mostly to push the envelope. It is not real resistance, it is to see what they can get away with. Students will always, you know, try to cross the line to see if they can.

The following teacher believed that some students not only actively resisted multiple perspectives, but looked for negative examples of people from cultures other than her own, in this case, African Americans:

I had students look at different African Americans, someone different because we all know about Malcolm, so on and so forth, and one student wanted to buck the system [the attempt to infuse multiple perspectives] and look at the first African American serial killer [a very negative example of a well-known African American].

In this case, a student passive-aggressively resisted attempts to infuse multicultural content because she resented having to acknowledge marginalized groups' experiences.

Other sources of resistance were parents, although the discussion was not prominent. Teachers seemed a little annoyed, but were not as upset with parents as they were with administrators, understanding that parents sometimes lacked broad perspectives of education. "You can run into trouble because parents will complain that you are being too one-sided, too liberal, you're favoring one group over another." This doubt in the value of multiculturalism comes from a political perspective. On the other hand, some resistance came from a religious viewpoint:

Parents, and parent resistance. I had a parent when I taught World Religions and Economics in the same class, I had Hindu gods on the walls in my classroom, I

had Jewish paraphernalia all around. This parent, her son was in my Economics class, was concerned because they were Christian and all this stuff was all around. Her son did not want to go to school, especially did not want to go to my class. So we had to have a meeting and I had to explain that I also teach World Religions.

The comments made about parents were not extensive and teachers seemed to take them in stride. However, peer teachers of participants who did not believe in multicultural education, also exhibited signs of resistance, and participants seemed a little more rattled regarding resistance by teachers.

They are very conservative. My whole department, social studies, is very conservative, very patriotic, apple-pie, flag waving...Veteran's Day is a big event. Frankly, I don't think they want me to teach American History at my school. I teach World History instead. How wrong can you go talking about the Greeks? I've noticed that the American History teachers at my school are older, very nationalistic and very patriotic. The type of subjects they talk about are very one-sided. For example, the atomic bomb. I personally feel that it was wrong to use an atomic device on a civilian population, even though I understand why they did it. I think students should hear both sides. The other teachers talk about how we saved a million soldiers and how we had to use it. I can think of a million other examples like this.

In the first example, teacher assignment of classes governed the content that students learned, and in the next one, peer teachers constantly questioned participants' choice of lessons and activities.

The only issues I've had were with other teachers. The whole idea that a lot of other teachers were not comfortable of bringing in other people's stories. They would ask me, well, why are you doing this, or why are you doing that? Some teachers were very ignorant about other people. I think that has to do with being very ethnocentric.

Religious intolerance appears again, now with regard to teachers' resistance to multicultural practices:

For the most part, the social studies department strongly supports them [multicultural practices]. However, I do know that in other departments, there is a lot less support, which is kind of upsetting because I teach at an international magnet, which is supposed to be why you are there, to teach from an international perspective. Typically, it comes from religious attitudes, religious superiority, an unwillingness to recognize the value in other religions, not so much in other cultures, but that their religion is the only way, and other religions really have no place at the table.

The current political climate post-9/11 may further contribute to religious intolerance and the idea that there is an "American" religion with monocultural beliefs. Gary Howard (1999) agrees with the idea that religion plays a role in dominance paradigms. Despite the social justice aspects of many Christian religions, he suggests that "we look at the shadow-side of Christian politics, including the predilection for single-dimensional truth and the proclivity for imposing spiritual hegemony over people of many different cultures" (p. 57). Resistance shown through religious intolerance may also impede multicultural practices.

Some teachers also felt resistance from administrators or other supervisors. In the previous section regarding bureaucracy, administrators were discussed in terms of perpetuating standardization and preventing professional autonomy for teachers, but here administrators are also seen as specifically resisting and impeding multicultural practices: “It is up to the administrator to be a buffer and to give the teachers some authority. However, some administrators are so fearful of parents, so they don’t allow a lot of freedom in the classroom.” Administrators can also contribute to silencing teachers who make controversial statements, especially in public meetings:

You’re in a meeting with your peers. You pour your heart out...then they ask you to support some of your statements [regarding the reasons for the achievement gap]. You get called down to the principal’s office the next day because teachers have been e-mailing other teachers in the school, are perceiving you as a racist, saying that you don’t like white students, that you don’t like white people, and that you just need to be on your best behavior from now on. So, at what point are teachers allowed to tell the truth about the gap? When you say it, you get in trouble and who wants to risk that?

This same teacher had specific issues with a department head and a guidance counselor:

Well, in the time that I have been teaching, in the previous school I was teaching, I was told by my department head that I was making students uncomfortable [with discussions of multiculturalism, specifically, contributions of African Americans]. It was a higher-level class in a high school that the class was predominantly white. I was told that I was making students uncomfortable. I was called down to

guidance. I had a guidance counselor call me in and tell me I was making students uncomfortable. I haven't had a lot of support because I have been advised I make students uncomfortable, so I have not been supported.

Administrators impede infusion of multicultural practices when they do not support teachers' analyses of school issues or curricular decisions, often silencing teachers in the process. Authority figures in a school such as administrators or department heads affect curricular decisions and classroom practices in the same way that Villegas and Lucas (2002) describe when they claim that "The hierarchical nature of the educational system place those who are outside the classroom in roles of authority, providing few formal means for teachers to become involved in decision making" (p. 56). Fine (1991) also described urban school environments' "lack of information and input, and about systemic distrust" (p. 146) of teachers that also is demonstrated in the schools of the teachers in this study.

Resistance from parents, students, other teachers, and administrators contributed to impeding teachers' ability to infuse multicultural education into their classroom practices. While teachers expected some resistance from students and parents, they were perplexed by other teachers' and administrators' resistance to attempts to use sound multicultural practices that support students and can help to bridge the achievement gap.

#### *Theme 5 Testing and Accountability*

Teachers all had something to say about testing, although comments were both positive and negative. All but one teacher believed that testing and No Child Left

Behind had greatly affected schools. The lone dissenter, a teacher who taught solely on the magnet side of his school, had this to say:

I think it is political talk. It is something that is out there, it is legislated, but it is not a factor. And if it is a factor, there is always a way around it. It is just a talking point for politicians. Even in Florida, we have the class size amendment. Big deal. That is what the law says, but big deal. I still have too many kids in my class. Regardless of FCAT, I would do the same things anyway. I do a lot of reading in my class, and that is an FCAT skill. I incorporate math in the social studies classroom. I would do those things anyway if they weren't taking FCAT.

However, this teacher in particular did not teach lower-tracked students who most probably had lower test scores, but taught, as mentioned, on the magnet side of his high school in a program that served mostly high-achieving students.

Contrary to popular perceptions, and also a surprise to the researcher, was that every teacher in this study believed that testing was an adequate way to assess which groups were lagging behind, which groups needed help, and that test scores were bringing attention to the nagging persistence of the achievement gap. In short, "I think it is good to be accountable." The following teacher believes that testing can be good, but should not always be used for high stakes decisions like graduation, "You can target students a little better. You can see who needs help in reading, in writing, but I don't think it should be required to graduate." This participant agrees: "I am not completely against the accountability movement. I believe that students should be tested every year in grades 3-8, and I do think honestly that they should not be able to graduate if they don't pass." Additionally the accountability movement and NCLB are

showing the general public that there is an achievement gap that needs to be addressed,

I think it makes teachers aware that there is a problem. I think that maybe there were possibly some people who were not aware that there is some type of problem. I think that that's been great and now we are discussing it.

Similarly,

NCLB has forced people to realize there are major issues. The whole disaggregation of data shows us that there are some problems and maybe will force us to look at those issues, issues we are not really looking at, not looking at properly, not looking at effectively.

Teachers clearly are not opposed to testing and not opposed to accountability. The interview data show that these teachers believe that testing and accountability are helpful, not only in bringing awareness to inequity, but also that they raise the level of professional that remains in education: "It helps with some teachers who are not doing their job. It actually helps some teachers who were not specifically doing their job, who may have been into teaching for the wrong reasons, some kind of accountability and you weed out those who don't want to be there." With accountability measures not only can schools find which teachers do not want to be there, they can actually push the teachers out of the profession: "Now teachers are accountable, so you can no longer go in your class and teach without worrying about gains. So, it is good to be accountable because they can push mediocre teachers out of the profession."

Because some incompetent teachers do remain in the profession, especially in urban schools with high turnover, the teachers in the study felt that some

accountability was a positive measure to remove those teachers. However, other accountability measures produced negative results. These references regarding the impact of testing and the accountability movement upon schools and classrooms show the narrowing of curriculum and the focus on testing as the only measure of achievement. Simply put, “We’re all constrained by the obsessive, almost fanatic issue of standardized testing. We all have to teach to the test.” The next observations are very similar, “The cliché is true that teachers are teaching toward the test. It is no longer about what you know, it is about how you process it,” and “We focus so much on standardized testing continuously, and not letting the teachers teach their subject area.” This interpretation also explains how curriculum is being narrowed due to testing mandates, “Classrooms now are specifically focused on FCAT. There is not much teaching, there is not much content, there is not much cultural diversity. It is focused on FCAT. Everything is focused solely on FCAT. Everything is focused on skill-building.”

Although the above references to testing seem somewhat negative, they actually just point out the prevalence of testing agendas in school and how the focus of schools and curriculum have shifted to address testing outcomes. As Maddeus and Clarke (1999), in Orfield, explain, “the more any quantitative social indicator is used for decision making, the more likely it will be to distort and corrupt the social process it is intended to monitor” (p. 93). It appears that increased attention to testing is doing just that. So, although teachers have no objection to accountability, and no objection to some aspects of testing, they also have some criticism of the stakes attached to test

scores. Here, teachers relay what they believe are the effects of the high stakes accountability movement, specifically testing, on classrooms and schools:

I think it [testing] has deteriorated our educational system. The kids that graduated ten years ago-- are we better or are we worse? Were we learning more than students now? We didn't have the FCAT, we didn't have the stress, the teachers were able to teach.

The comment above addresses perceived impediments to teaching and learning, but the following commentary complains that collecting test data was being used in ways that were not fair or equitable:

To collect the data is one thing, but they are using the data to justify pay raises, to justify the resources that the school has, and I don't think there should be a connection. I think the benefit is that now we understand where the gaps are, but we are not fixing them properly.

Well, the negatives are clear. You're going to take money way from schools that are struggling? They need more resources, not less. Also you're going to hold schools and teachers accountable for something that a lot of the research says is out of their control. That is difficult. Then we're going to praise teachers and schools who teach students that come from homes that have already built a foundation for their kids- the importance of education.

Not only did testing affect teaching, learning, and resources, it also changed classroom practices so that the only important goal now was getting the school test scores up so that the grade according to the state measurement system improved.

I think classroom practices now are, they are a nightmare. People are just going through the motions. I don't think people are teaching from the heart anymore. I think people are just trying to get through the curriculum. I think we are just trying to get our grade up. I think it is a dog and pony show.

The task of reforming schools was reduced to raising test scores to get the grade up, and the task of raising test scores was delegated solely to teachers. "Overemphasis on standardized testing, lack of trust in teachers...it scapegoats the district and the state from their real responsibility for reform, and places all the responsibility onto teachers."

The accountability measures specifically in Florida gives cash rewards to schools that make progress on standardized tests, effectively penalizing schools serving certain neighborhoods. George Wood, in Meier and Wood (2005), argues that, "Since NCLB judges schools solely on test scores, schools that have students who do poorly on these tests will face the greatest pressure to focus on the tests. This means the schools who serve students who are poor, have limited English skills, require special education services, or who are recent immigrants to this country, for example, will have the most incentive to carry out the practices identified earlier--pushing out students, narrowing teaching and the curriculum, limiting the school experience" (p. 47). Michele Fine also stresses that political rhetoric will often seem to support teachers, but that the ideological frame of policy that spotlights teachers and teaching "deflects responsibility" for the solution of social problems (Fine, 1991, p. 159). Teachers in this study reinforce these sentiments.

I understand the purpose of No Child Left Behind, but I don't think there was enough common sense thought in regards to teaching that was put into it. It is not that teachers don't care about their kids... there is an assumption that kids are starting at a certain place, and they're not. They don't have a foundation. They are not ready. I think that anyone with experience knows this.

I think that there is got to be a better way to hold people accountable than just testing them. At some point, you have to say, 'We trust you.' If you can't trust your teachers and administrators...you know....

While to a certain degree, teachers believed that some accountability measures are beneficial, the mandates forced upon classrooms by NCLB were somewhat uninformed and created negative work environments. Teachers not only felt disconnected from the decision-making process in their schools, they perceived that policy makers used teachers and schools as a scapegoat for larger problems in society.

Again, accountability was not viewed as a negative change for schools, but the increased attention to test scores as the only measure of success was problematic, and an impediment for multicultural education. Teachers saw that emphasis on testing caused course content to diminish and equity for students to decrease, while distrust for and scapegoating of teachers increased.

### *Theme 6 Time Constraints*

Time, or more specifically, lack of time, was also mentioned often as a source of frustration. The amount of available time to aid students or complete additional requirements impaired teachers' abilities to perform vital job functions, especially as

they relate to some of the goals of multicultural education. Time constraints fell into two categories: lack of time for covering curriculum, and excess time spent in meetings and on administrative tasks. The extensive mandatory standardized curriculum caused teachers to have less occasion to expand upon a topic, “A lot of the students had questions about different areas of Asia, but there is not time,” “NCLB has forced teachers to take subjects that should take about a month to learn and only give you a week,” “There may not be a multicultural aspect or component within the curriculum, and sometimes there is a need for it, but there is not time,” and “I teach World History and the curriculum is so incredibly jam packed that it is hard to incorporate anything relevant in the curriculum that would incorporate multicultural education” all express frustration with limited time that impedes infusing multicultural education.

Additionally, participants frequently mentioned excessive and time consuming paperwork tasks and meetings that ate up their time to plan, time to grade papers, and time to generally do what teachers need to do outside of class. “Now some teachers have so much paperwork to catch up with that teachers will show a movie a week just so they can do paperwork.” “Too many meetings,” and “I think the resourceful use of time is something we lack. Schools that are Title I, inner city, spend too much time in meetings. That is not an efficient use of time.”

Villegas and Lucas (2002) claim, “Teachers have little time in their work day for anything other than teaching and carrying out their bureaucratic duties” (p. 56), and Weiner explains that “partly because urban schools receive federal and state money earmarked for education of poor children, partly because one unit of the bureaucracy

doesn't know what the other offices are doing, urban teachers must complete an unbelievable amount of highly detailed clerical work" (1999). In another work, Weiner (1993) also warns that, in urban schools, "an inordinate amount of class time is spent on procedures designed to maintain school organization" (p. 109). Teachers in this study do not feel that there is enough time allotted to fulfill the most basic functions of their jobs, and that the additional demands caused by the nature of their schools create even more stress.

### *Additional Themes*

Although not mentioned extensively and throughout all the interviews, several responses addressed communities and resources. Discussions of community were discussed in terms of community involvement, or in assessing the state of the community and attributing some of the school issues to the community that the school serves. These teachers had strong ideas of linking community to the school: "I think the idea of community has to come back in to what school is and what school should be. I think that once that starts to happen, maybe things could actually change," and "We need to look at the schools as part of the community. We should partner up. We should utilize all the people. I've talked to some organizations and they try to mentor or volunteer, they can't even get the Principal to call them back," and "Schools play a role, but I think parental and community involvement is essential. I think families and community members should come into our school during pre-planning and throughout the school year and weekends" show this theory of school-community partnership. A variation on this theme was to address differences in students through customizing

schools to the neighborhoods they serve, “To personalize the school to the students that you cater to. Again, it goes back to the idea that students should feel comfortable and welcomed at any school. Having a beautiful campus is one thing, but if it doesn’t feel like it is theirs, than they will never get anything out of it,” and “Schools need to become more community based. If students could walk to their school and feel some ownership in their school, have their voices heard in a school. Especially in an inner city school, student voices are rarely heard. Students are talked to.”

The above comments demonstrate that teachers believe all community members should have a say and a stake in the outcomes of schools, that students should feel some sense of belonging and ownership of their schools, while the following comment, still discussing community, shows a slightly different perspective, primarily that school populations are a reflection of communities, and that school issues will not be resolved until communities improve. “Schools can be improved by improving the community that they are located in.”

Let’s look at the big picture. Let’s look at the community first, and work from the top. I know there is a big thing with bottom-up, teacher centered reform, but let’s look at the communities: if communities are filled with people out of work, if prostitutes are walking the streets, if single mothers are predominantly in every household, how much can teachers do?

The problem is that schools, like my school, have not caught up with the demographic changes that are taking place in recent years. Residential segregation is huge at our school. I mean because desegregation was supposed to be

successful, but we know it is not because residential segregation is on the increase today, and it certainly is in my neighborhood. By far it is becoming Hispanic.

These sentiments reflect those detailed by Anyon (2005), “We have been attempting educational reform in U.S. cities for over three decades—and there is little significant districtwide improvement that we can point to. As a nation, we have been counting on education to solve the problems of unemployment, joblessness, and poverty for many years. But education did not cause these problems, and education cannot solve them” (Anyon, 2005, p. 3). Anyon suggests that changes in large scale macroeconomic policy, including providing economic opportunity in communities, is the only way to even begin to address problems in urban schools serving large numbers of students of color. If Anyon is correct, multicultural education theories that continue to suggest teachers transform schools and then communities would not be a pragmatic or realistic approach.

One participant mentioned economic inequity, although the comment was made in terms of school resources. “The problems are like there is a lack of money, and Title I schools, look at schools in predominantly inner city neighborhoods, lack lots of money, lack lots of resources.” Other studies have discussed in detail economic and resource disparities between urban schools and suburban schools (Orfield & Eaton, 1996; Weiner, 1993), and while there is endless debate regarding whether expenditures increase achievement, it seems apparent that suburban schools create entirely different school climates and contexts for their students and teachers.

The themes of tracking and segregation, bureaucracy and bureaucratic mandates, multiple perspectives, resistance, testing and accountability, and time and time

constraints consistently emerged throughout the discussions regarding the impediments to infusing multicultural education into classrooms in urban secondary schools serving large populations of students of color. These themes helped to answer the research questions, and to develop further discussion and ideas for future research.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

#### *Method and Data Summary*

The research results for this study were based on the experiences of secondary social studies teachers who use multicultural education in high-poverty schools serving mostly students of color. The study used responses from a structured interview designed to answer the following questions:

1. What reasons do urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education offer to explain the achievement gap?
2. What do practicing urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education currently understand about multicultural theories and practices?
3. What institutional barriers do urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education confront when attempting to infuse multicultural practices in their classrooms?
4. What are the perceptions of urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education on the impact of the accountability movement on their teaching?
5. What role do urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education see themselves playing in educational and societal reform?

Once participants were located using a primary nomination process, participants suggested additional individuals who could be appropriate (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Several individuals who had been nominated did not qualify for the study because of the length of their teaching service. The participants were qualified with a checklist (Appendix A), and then further assessed for attitudes toward multiculturalism with the Ponterotto Quick Discrimination Index (QDI) (Appendix B). The participants were interviewed over a two-month period during the summer of 2006, and the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed.

The analysis of the data was exploratory and used constant comparison procedures (Strauss, 2003). When the interviews were transcribed, analytic notes were entered onto the text of the transcription. As prominent themes emerged, a color-coding scheme helped to identify those recurring themes that emerged from the data. Eventually 6 major themes became apparent, as well as 2 more minor themes. The themes derived from the analysis of data will be used to inform the discussion regarding the research questions of the study.

*Research question #1.* What reasons do urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education offer to explain the achievement gap?

In the first interview questions, designed to elicit perspectives regarding the achievement gap, every teacher, without exception, mentioned the incidence of tracking and segregation within their school. This segregation and tracking was discussed extensively in Chapter 4. Not one participant attributed lack of student achievement to any type of genetic or ability paradigm, although motivational levels

were mentioned twice. While some participants mentioned that their students came from homes and neighborhoods that were lower income, the cultural or financial situation of students was not used as an explanation for low achievement. Instead, these teachers seemed to understand that low income is a contributing risk factor to school success, and that there is a historical correlation between low achievement and poverty. For the most part, they strongly believe that schools can play a huge role in creating and maintaining the achievement gap.

All teachers mentioned tracking practices as contributing to the achievement gap, when answering this first research question. Tracking and segregation was the theme that was discussed most consistently, and most often, during the course of the interviews, and it is apparent that there are variances in schooling experiences. These observations addressed the incidence of segregation, “Predominantly, Hispanic and Black students are usually enrolled in lower track classes or vocational track classes,” “The traditional students that are pretty much there because they are neighborhood kids. Their classes are pre-selected, and the goal is pretty much just to get them to graduate,” and “You see a clear distinction in the races of kids between the regular and the honors and the AP.”

As Mickelson (2001) articulates, the practice of second-generation segregation, or segregation of academic programs within desegregated schools, separates students along ethnic and racial lines even when social class and achievement levels are controlled. Every teacher, without exception, explained that there were assigned levels of classes at their schools: Advanced Placement (AP), Honors, Regular, and Special Ed or ESE classes, and all but one discussed the separate status of magnet students

within their schools. Teachers accept as true that higher-level classes are beneficial for students, not only for the purpose of raising achievement, but also for improving social capital and increasing students' knowledge of the world outside their neighborhood. All participants openly spoke about the segregation that occurred in their schools, and discussion was consistent throughout that students of color were primarily tracked into lower level classes, and that white students were primarily tracked into higher level classes, effectively segregating students within schools, creating second-generation segregation that Mickelson (2001) discusses. Mickelson's (2001) research also demonstrates that students are affected academically by second-generation segregation, that students are placed in classes non-meritocratically, and that desegregated students fare more positively along several achievement measures.

Finding ways to increase enrollment for students of color in higher-level classes was mentioned often as one way to help alleviate the achievement gap. Informing parents of the options, educating students that they were able to take higher level classes, and helping guidance counselors and other teachers to overcome their biases in allowing lower level students to try higher level classes all are ways mentioned to help address this goal. Another teacher recommended programs that are based on positive incentives, "Creating better programs to facilitate for all students, not necessarily only those related to race or gender. I don't think that is being done. For example, pep rallies to increase school morale, having awards for good behavior, good attendance, or honor roll...those things are very limited. Basically, just making them want to achieve more." Additionally, one teacher recommended that schools should

supply services and materials that students don't have at home so that students can succeed,

They [schools] can play a very involved role if they choose to by providing tutoring, by providing materials and resources that they don't have at their house.

You want to supply students with computers and resources to use computers. If students don't have this at home, schools have to provide for this less affluent population.

Teachers interviewed in these high-poverty schools believe that schools make a large difference in the lives of their students, and that schools have a major role in closing the achievement gap. However, they also understand the challenges:

Students are in school for about 25% of their lifetime, I guess. They are with their communities and parents the rest of the time. Schools play a role, but I think parental and community involvement is essential....I don't think that the schools can do it alone because we have a lot of goals.

I don't think a real conversation, or a value driven conversation has really looked at what the problem actually is. So, right now I don't think the schools play a large role in closing it. Even though schools have the resources to close the achievement gap, I don't think they are doing it, I don't think they are now a vehicle for doing it as of yet.

So, while schools could play a much larger role in closing the achievement gap, teachers believe practices such as segregation and tracking, including less participation in higher-level courses by students of color, are the main factors affecting disparities in achievement.

*Research question #2.* What do practicing urban secondary teachers who embrace multicultural education currently understand about multicultural theories and practices?

All teachers were recommended because it was believed they embraced multicultural education in the classroom. All participants were qualified via both the checklist for selection (Appendix A), and the Ponterotto Quick Discrimination Index (1992) (Appendix B), an instrument that measures attitudes toward multiculturalism. While teachers did indeed claim they used multicultural education, their goals for infusing multicultural practices were in keeping with the Human Relations approach identified in the literature. These ideas mirror the findings by Grant et al. (2004) who claim that multicultural education in schools is primarily concerned with how to work with specific groups during the course of instruction, and also represents the Human Relations model of multiculturalism as defined by Sleeter and Grant (1987).

According to Sleeter and Grant (1987), the Human Relations model is concerned with relationship building and students being able to learn to respect one another no matter what race, class, religion, or other group they come from. Teachers in this study discussed tapping students' prior knowledge, using the multiple perspectives of history, understanding different cultures, making all students feel included and comfortable, and improving tolerance as their major goals for using multicultural education: "You want to be able to use the type of knowledge children have, and bring it out, so that everyone in the class can make use of it," and "Most teachers that I work with do incorporate multicultural education. You kind of have to at our school because the school is so diverse. In order to touch each student, you have to incorporate it."

“Because kids tune you out, and you don’t get the kind of behaviors you want them to exhibit if you are just preaching the old Anglo Saxon way.” The above statements show that teachers use multicultural methods primarily to engage students in learning. All seven teachers in the study felt strongly that these types of methods and activities were important to be successful with their students.

These explanations of pedagogy demonstrate that, contrary to some of the literature, there are extensive multicultural practices occurring in classrooms. Teachers are infusing multicultural education into their classroom practice, but not at levels high enough or transformational enough to satisfy theorists. Most theorists recommend more sophisticated levels of multicultural practice, such as Sleeter and Grant’s (1987) social reconstruction multicultural education or Banks’ (2004a) equity or transformational pedagogy. Multicultural theorists believe that the Human Relations model is inadequate because there is no critique of society, no social justice, no study of power relations, and so teachers need more training or more study to understand, in order to affect, inequitable conditions (Banks, 2004a; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Sleeter, 1996).

The teachers in this study clearly notice and understand inequitable conditions like tracking and segregation in their places of employment, but rather than reforming schools or society, these teachers intended to use multiculturalism to help students get along, to understand the world around them, to comprehend and appreciate alternative perspectives in the classroom. This finding is not necessarily negative, as the goals they articulate are important. Rather, it may demonstrate only that, especially given

the extensive impediments detailed in the previous sections, teachers are more concerned with student learning than with large-scale social change.

In addition, when asked how schools can eliminate the achievement gap, all teachers used the descriptor “they,” rather than “we” which may indicate that the teachers do not feel empowered or part of the decision making process in their schools. For example, “They [schools] can get more involved with parents,” “they [schools] can play a very involved role,” “they [schools] can have a stronger initiative to provide students with just the knowledge to take more advanced classes.” Teachers in this study equate change in their schools with “they,” and not “we.” These comments demonstrate teachers do not feel they have input into changing schools. Inferring from these comments, teachers feel they can affect certain, but not all, decisions and processes that happen in their classrooms, but cannot affect the larger arena of “school,” at least not in urban secondary schools serving poor students of color.

Participants in this study understood the lofty goals of multicultural education, understood the agendas of equity pedagogy and social reconstructionism, but believed that it may not be realistic to implement those types of programs in public secondary schools. One teacher inferred that the primary goal in classrooms was teaching, and explained, “Almost all the training teachers get for that [multicultural education] is centered around being culturally sensitive, and then they forget the important things like how do we teach these kids.” Two other participants believed that the theoretical goals of multiculturalism are out of the realm of everyday instructional practice, “I think the goals are too far reaching to actually make a substantive change,” and that

social systems outside of school do not support the goals of multiculturalism: “I think the roles that schools take, the way our county is set up, they [the goals of multicultural education] are just to look good, there is no true change.” In other words, the goals of multicultural education encompass far more than mere teachers or classroom practice can affect, and that schools actually have a role in perpetuating societal inequity. There is extensive research that details the same theories (Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

The perspectives of the participants in this study suggest that teachers adopt the human relations approach not because they are oblivious or unaware of larger issues of equity, but because they recognize limitations of teachers in triggering social change. Rather than criticizing teachers for not adopting equity or reconstructionist agendas, multicultural theorists should further explore the institutional context that shapes teachers’ perspectives, at least in urban secondary schools serving large populations of students of color. Fine (1991) agrees, and claims that urban educators are most systematically denied a voice. This idea contradicts the views of multicultural theorists who believe teachers should act as change agents within schools, and may be a possible avenue for further study.

Teachers in this study were firmly committed to using multicultural practices in their classrooms to increase student learning. However, they did not use the higher level models recommended by theorists and instead choose to concentrate on their classrooms rather than the broader society. While most of the literature proposes that teachers need more training in order to utilize more sophisticated models of multicultural education, instead teachers argue that societal and school-wide

impediments prevent equity pedagogies and social reconstructivism in their classrooms, and that the goals of multiculturalism may not be realistic, especially when teachers have little power in either school decision-making or district policy.

*Research question #3.* What institutional barriers do urban secondary teachers who embrace multiculturalism confront when attempting to infuse multicultural practices in their classrooms?

Primarily, the major institutional barriers encountered by teachers in high poverty schools are tracking and segregation, bureaucracy, including bureaucratic mandates, resistance, and time constraints. These topics were mentioned so frequently that many became the major themes in the research. One participant relayed that all of those factors impeded her inclusion of multicultural practices, but that teachers were silenced when discussing them: “I think that because of repercussions on people for saying so, but definitely those [institutional] factors [affected multicultural practices].”

Tracking and segregation were discussed in the previous section regarding the achievement gap. To reiterate, teachers strongly believe that students do not have equal opportunity in schools, and that segregation of students exists primarily through patterns of course taking with students of color consistently tracked into lower level courses. These patterns may not occur in all secondary schools, they were merely pointed out in terms of these particular schools in this district. For the most part, guidance counselors make decisions regarding in which classes students are enrolled. These decisions are often made using grades and test scores, although in some schools, teachers have more say in student placement. The comments made by participants in

the study also echo the research completed by both Mickelson (2001) and Oakes (1985) that demonstrates, whether purposeful or not, race and ethnicity affect student placement in classes. More than 20 years after Oakes' (1985) research, this practice still separates students in schools, giving unequal educational opportunities to different groups of students, and causing students to finish high school with vastly divergent experiences.

Because all teachers did bring up the issue of tracking and segregation, additional research, much like the research Mickelson (2001) conducted in Charlotte, including detailed quantitative data, and the roles and relationships of administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers may prove to be very useful in assessing how to further assess and address this issue. In all fairness, the district has developed and endorsed programs, including an AP initiative and the AVID program mentioned in the Literature Review, to help bring more students of color into advanced level classes, so there is an effort being made, but, the comments in this research emphasize that not enough action is being taken to desegregate and remedy inequity in secondary schools serving large populations of students of color.

The teachers in this study were severely impacted by bureaucracy and bureaucratic mandates that were enforced in their schools. The bureaucratic mandates come from not only national policy, but from state and district policies that are enforced at the school level. Teachers felt that they had little influence on the curricular choices they made daily because of these increased district bureaucratic requirements and mandates. Several comments were made about the daily required reading strategies including highlighting, "KWL's," "chunking" (reading strategies), and the

administrative “walk-throughs” that were performed to ensure compliance with the instructional mandates handed down from the district office. Increased standardization of instruction and “walk-throughs” affected curricular decision-making and attitudes of teachers. As mentioned earlier, this phenomenon validates the research that shows urban schools are more prone to instructional mandates and procedures that are bureaucratic, standardized and inflexible (Anyon, 1980; Fine, 1991; Tyack, 1974; Weiner, 1993). While teachers strongly believed in instructional methods that utilized multiple perspectives and varied assessments, policies did not always allow teachers the time or flexibility to create classroom activities that were cooperative in nature, or could not be directly and traditionally assessed.

Although not a major theme, one participant, when asked about institutional barriers, described the effect inadequate administrations had upon schools, “Adequate and effective administrations. Going to the whole holistic thing, if the head is not working properly, then nothing else will. If you can’t trust your leader, you can’t lead your own class. It makes it a lot easier when people in the main office are doing their job. These things seem to happen more at inner city or Title I schools.” There was not extensive commentary made regarding particular administrators, and the lack of commentary could possibly mean several things: that teachers did not want to directly criticize administrators for fear of recognition and reprisal, that teachers do not recognize that administrators may have a large impact on school climate, or that teachers recognized that administrators also were constrained and impeded by the top-down bureaucratic mandates of the accountability movement. This could be a topic for further study.

One participant described bureaucratic constraints from the viewpoint of students, “We have dropped the ball because we are not assessing what our students’ needs are. There are students out there who are crying for help, but don’t know how to say they need help because they don’t know how to work the system. It has become a system, a big, bureaucratic system, and it is sad because how do you expect a kid to figure out the system?” Another participant was adamant about class sizes:

Class size. That is an issue. When you have 35-40 students with 30 desks, students are sitting on the floor, or students are standing up. How can students be comfortable and learn in an environment like that? You’re talking about well more than a teacher can do. You’re going to have behavior problems, or you’re going to have something come up where the teacher is distracted, and that reduces teaching time.

Resistance was discussed in depth in Chapter 4, and is obviously an impediment to using multicultural education in classrooms. However, there is a large variance among participants regarding which group they feel resistance from. Some teachers felt resistance from students, some from parents, some from administrators or supervisors, and some from other teachers. Most of the resistance, whether from students, parents, or teachers, came from members of the dominant group who did not accept alternate viewpoints or perspectives of historically marginalized groups in this country, although there was resistance from some students who just had not been exposed to cultures other than their own. Teachers somewhat expected resistance, and attributed it to ethnocentricity or religious intolerance, but were upset when administration did not support teachers’ well-informed and pedagogically sound curricular decisions.

As discussed in much of the literature (Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Weiner, 1993), teachers felt that there was never enough time to accomplish all that was asked of them, and also that an ever expanding curriculum impeded infusion or addition of content that was multicultural. They wanted to expand upon a topic, add activities or more content when students expressed an interest, but were prevented from doing so due to inadequate time. There were too many meetings, there was too much paperwork, there were instructional mandates that not only stole curricular freedom, but also stole valuable time.

Teachers, when addressing the impediments to their use of multicultural education in schools, explained that classes were segregated and inequitably tracked, that bureaucratic mandates dictated many curricular choices, that resistance from students, parents, other teachers and administrators affected their teaching, and that lack of time was an ever-present problems in their daily life. These impediments, rather than lack of training or knowledge, may be larger contributing factors to teachers' preferences for human relations models of multicultural education.

*Research question #4.* What are the perceptions of urban secondary educators who embrace multicultural education on the impact of the accountability movement on their teaching?

Teachers saw both positive and negative impact of the accountability movement. All participants believed that accountability was a good thing in that new attention was now being addressed to the achievement gap. These teachers felt that, in effect, with recognition comes attention, and so the disaggregation of data mandated by No Child

Left Behind can reveal to the unaware that some students are not doing well in schools. They agreed that testing students could help point out areas that needed improvement. The hope of participants was that the achievement of these students would now be more solidly addressed. These teachers also were pleased that incompetent teachers would now be more likely to be pushed out of the profession if learning gains had to be demonstrated.

However, teachers also see that achievement measured only by standardized tests narrows curriculum and standardizes instruction to a point that is confining, and so the long term effect of NCLB may be an increase in the achievement gap through increased labeling, tracking, and segregation of students. Descriptors such as “a nightmare,” “deteriorated education,” “stress,” “ruined,” “no common sense” were used to describe the effect NCLB has had on classroom practices. While teachers had no complaints about some aspects of NCLB, they were adamant about some of the negative consequences the rigidity had on their classroom practices in cases such as, “I really resent having to put my thoughts in a box and I resent having to make them look alike in regards to what they can do. All my kids are different and they should be able to show me in different ways what they have learned.”

Teachers were also opposed to some of the sanctions imposed by the state accountability standards that grade schools: “But assigning grades to school is inherently unfair because what you are doing is rewarding schools who have a higher percentage of higher SES kids, and hurting the schools that have a larger portion of lower SES kids.” Further, the levels used to measure the standards in the state test, FCAT, placed students into categories that may not change even though gains had

been made, “Now, students are not feeling like they have improved. They have made a few point gain, but sometimes it doesn’t show.” There is also a tendency to label students according to their FCAT scores as in these statements, “They put kids into the AP and Honors classes who have ones and twos on the FCAT. Those kids are not succeeding,” and “Even with the students, they’ll walk in on the first day and tell you, ‘I am Level One.’ What happened with you first telling me your name?” Students are now discussed in terms of the levels of their FCAT scores. In general, teachers were somewhat discouraged that, since they were employed in schools that do not have success with raising test scores, they were being used as scapegoats, and made to feel as if low student test scores meant that they were not teaching. “Good teachers feel the wrath when the school is not doing well, and that is not always fair.”

No Child Left Behind is bringing increased accountability to all schools, but particularly to urban schools serving large populations of students of color. These schools historically have not done well with standardized tests, and so the increased attention to testing is affecting these schools immensely. While teachers in the study felt that accountability could be a good thing when achievement is addressed and incompetent teachers are pushed out of the profession, they also believed that the achievement gap could also grow due to increased labeling, tracking, and segregation. Teachers here also perceived that financial incentives were being used in ways that were not acceptable, and that teachers were being scapegoated for larger societal problems.

*Research question #5.* What role do urban secondary teachers who embrace multiculturalism see themselves playing in educational and societal reform?

All participants felt that teachers had an impact on students, and all but one participant felt teachers were very important, and that teachers can change the lives of students. When asked the question regarding teachers' impact on educational outcomes, the one dissenter answered, "I think teachers have some impact on outcomes, but they are teachers, they are not parents." Other participants disagreed, claiming emphatically, "A great impact. Teachers make up where parents or society failed," and "Huge. Huge. Teachers, they take away kids dreams, they give dreams. Teachers are huge." Three other teachers made similar statements such as: "A ton. An immense amount. Teachers make or break student enjoyment of being in class, the excitement built around the curriculum, the time they spend in building lessons, the comraderie, the friendliness between students, whether students want to come to school," and,

I think a great teacher can change a child's life. I can't say anything more than that... a teacher who is intuitively led, who has soul and spirit when they are teaching, it beats out everything else... Yeah, I think teachers rock.

Clearly, these comments show that participants believe strongly that their roles are important and influential. Another participant shared these sentiments, but was perhaps more tentative:

I think quite a bit actually. What you say and what you do to students, what kind of teacher you are reflects in how much those students respect you and how much those students can achieve. You have the ability to put ideas into a child's head.

Analyses such as “make up where parents or society failed,” “they take away kids dreams, they give dreams,” “can change a child’s life,” or “put ideas into a child’s head” show that teachers believe their importance lies in their relationships with and impact on students. The comments in these conversations also reiterate that teachers are mainly concerned with student relationships and student learning in classrooms, rather than institutional or social change, and may also provide context for the preference for models of multicultural education that are based on the Human Relations model.

Ideas given for improving or reforming schools were as diverse as getting rid of standardized testing, to using more research based methods for improvement instead of “jumping on the bandwagon of every new trend,” having more qualified administration “The Principal-- it comes from the top,” and several suggestions regarding community involvement. One suggestion was to make schools more focused on purpose:

I think every teacher in America has been prepared enough. So, I don’t want to go through any more workshops. I think that schools would be improved if the function of a school is really defined. That may sound odd, but if everybody who works at a school knows what they are supposed to do every single day, that changes the pace of the school. Schools will become more purposeful. If schools became more purposeful, they could be improved. If students felt that when they graduate with this so-called degree, they could do something with it. Students feel like we are babysitting. Schools now are glorified babysitters. Schools should be able to show they are doing something, and I don’t mean test scores. I hate to use a

business term, but we need a product that they can do something with. If students felt like the four years meant something, schools would improve.

Here the participant expressed her frustration with the excessive trainings and workshops that teachers are required to participate in with the comment “I think every teacher in America has been prepared enough.” She also questions whether schools are really providing students with a purpose for becoming engaged in their educations other than for custodial purposes. Similarly,

I think it [school] is just an organized holding pool for labor. Kids take the same classes over and over and over again. It doesn't make any sense. So, it is a holding pool for labor. Kids come out...say they came out after ten years, which they could and still function at the rate they are now...they could get these same customer service jobs they get now when they graduate...I know this is unpopular, makes American uncomfortable, but I believe it is just a holding pool for labor.

This participant viewed the competency levels of students after 10 years of school, and then after they might graduate at 12 years, and does not see a large gain in functioning level. Because most students in the school she was employed did not go on to college, she felt that the extended years of education were a way to maintain custody of students to delay their entrance into the labor market.

As much as teachers had ideas for reform, ideas for improving schools, believed teachers make a difference, they did not feel empowered to make these changes themselves, and understood the limits of what one person could do. For example, “You can only help so many kids. As a new teacher, you feel like you can save the

world, but as you get older, more experienced, you realize you can only save those who want to be helped. You are only one person. You can change many lives, but you can't save everyone." Participants in this study were pragmatic in analyzing teachers' roles in school reform, understanding that teachers' ability to make change was also limited by the need for teachers to keep a paying job. Impacting society is more difficult if one is unemployed and without funds: "It is easier said than done because we all live off a paycheck." One participant was quite vocal in voicing the frustration felt by many teachers who work in difficult situations:

We can't do anything but take orders if we want to keep our job and be happy. If we want to step outside the box and made to feel like a pariah, you can make some noise, you can start doing some things to effect change, but if you really want to pay your bills and not have to use the EAP employee assistance stress line [mental health counseling hotline], then you don't go that route.

Other comments show that teachers were aware of the larger impediments placed on them, but that both schools and teachers were limited in their ability to change society. "You have to fix the base. Fixing schools, fixing schools, fixing schools. I am tired of this. You have to fix the communities the schools are in." This teacher repeated the theme of a previous comment that teachers and schools were scapegoated when the problems to address were beyond the scope of what education is capable of solving. Teachers also cannot affect larger societal attitudes:

I am going to have to go with the "isms." I'm going to have to go with the whole racism thing, the sexism thing. I am going to have to go with the whole classism thing. Those are systemic issues we are facing in American that no one wants to

talk about. No one wants to talk about the poor kid who has a one in three chance to make it, no one wants to talk about the fact that the Black kid that has a one in three chance to make it, no one wants to talk about the girl who doesn't want to take that high level math class. These issues [racism, sexism, and classism] cannot be addressed solely by teachers.

While teachers, for the most part, felt their roles were very influential, and that they had the ability to make a large impact upon their students, they did not go so far as to believe that they had a powerful role in school or societal reform. Not only were they lacking influence, they were even silenced partially by the need to keep a job that could pay their bills. "Fixing" communities or solving the "isms" of racism, classism, and sexism, of society were definitely beyond their control.

### *Implications and Future Research Directions*

The teachers in this study have observations that mirror those who study schooling problems, yet this study offers an insider's perspective absent in the literature. Moreover, it shows that NCLB has constrained further the professional autonomy of teachers, subsequently making it even more difficult to retain top teachers in classrooms. This study can help further direct study related to teacher training for teachers working in schools that serve large populations of poor students of color, teacher retention in high poverty urban high schools, and, most importantly high poverty urban high school practices. It is hoped that this further research would include more ecological perspectives for analyzing teaching, schools, and school improvement.

The following explores some of the implications of these insights for future research and practice.

*Teacher training.* This study is in no way meant to discredit multicultural education, as many of the goals and ideals of multicultural education are sound. All teachers in this study felt that certain aims of multicultural education, such as learning about multiple perspectives, were very important. However, some of the far-reaching goals of multicultural education are beyond what teachers working in highly bureaucratic schools, especially secondary schools, are capable of accomplishing in their current work environments. Although multicultural education theory has been successfully infused into many elementary and middle schools, as well as into more suburban high school settings, multicultural education theory seems to neglect the constraints of the socio-political-economic setting of urban neighborhoods as well as the historically bureaucratic nature of urban high schools. The critique offered here is that a more contextual and ecological view of schools and the communities they serve may better address teacher training models, as well as paradigms for academic achievement and economic opportunity for students in those schools. Socio-political-economic and institutional context should be more carefully considered when assessing the reason for the gaps between multicultural theory and practice.

Multicultural education literature concentrates on academic achievement as a social panacea, and suggests that the remedy for improving academic achievement for students of color may lie in increased diversity training for teachers, yet the descriptions of school contexts offered by the research and teachers in this study show

that organizational factors far beyond instructional models affect the ability of teachers to be successful working in these schools. The multicultural education literature assumes that the majority of teachers are not infusing multicultural practices and need more training in order to work with diverse populations, yet this study reveals that teachers who work in urban secondary schools are using multicultural practices, have a solid and detailed understanding of the inequality in opportunity that occurs around them daily, but do not feel empowered to affect change. These perceptions are corroborated extensively through previous research (Cuban, 1993; Fine, 1991; Weiner, 1993).

Many multicultural prescriptions assume teachers have more decision making power in schools than they actually do have. Teachers in secondary schools often cannot affect the placement and segregation of students in their schools, are not able to make all curricular decisions in their classrooms, are beholden to the mandates of the testing and accountability movement, may feel almost paralyzed by bureaucratic constraints of administrative “walk-throughs,” and never have enough time to perform their work duties. The bureaucratic settings of urban secondary schools remove professional autonomy and authority from teachers that is necessary to make them “change agents.” Judging from the existing research (Meier & Wood, 2005; Sundeman et al, 2005), as well as the comments made by teachers in this study, schools are becoming even more bureaucratic post-NCLB.

Teachers have not, and will not, be able to transform schools. It seems clear that teachers in secondary high schools that serve poor students of color are not empowered to effect policy change in their schools or school districts, although they

may greatly affect individual students in their classrooms. The ideals of multicultural education, especially those regarding whole school reform and the transformation of society, may need to be altered to accommodate this reality. This is not to say that schools should not be restructured; obviously there are issues of inequity to be addressed that this study points out. However, teachers, at least teachers in urban secondary schools serving large populations of students of color, do not have the power or authority to implement these changes, and so to continually insist that teachers change schools is, as they say, barking up the wrong tree. As Larry Cuban (1993) points out, thoughtful policy change must precede teacher practice, and so attention also should be placed instead to the top-down bureaucratic nature of schools, and to programs training administrators and in educating, or electing different, policymakers. Those who are more involved with creating policy may be the individuals who need more exposure and training to more fully comprehend the true nature of the issues in these schools.

In addition, teachers in this study, teachers who are considered successful by their supervisor in using multicultural practices, point out that their life experiences have affected their perceptions of multicultural education far more than any training could. All participants discussed an eye-opening event or experience that led to their awareness of issues related to ethnicity and equity. Not one teacher mentioned that training programs impacted their practice, although some saw the value in such training for people who “needed it.” One participant mentioned that training programs were “preaching to the choir,” or that those who needed the training did not get it. This is not to say that multicultural education or cultural competence training is without

merit, or should be eliminated, rather, the point is that such training programs continue to be limited in their success, and should not be seen as a primary solution to eliminating the achievement gap. Increasing training opportunities for teachers, at least in secondary schools serving large populations of students of color, will not solely improve equity in schools.

Instead, attention to “diversity” must transcend individualized attitudinal change regarding prejudice and racism, including “cultural competence,” and instead focus on larger ecological models that analyze whole systems. Aspects of multicultural education are a good beginning to analyze inequity in education, but the investigation must go much further. Because teachers cannot and will not change schools single-handedly, colleges of education and other alternative training programs that prepare teachers to work in urban schools must include components that analyze the top-down schooling system, complete with political analysis of the larger factors that have historically affected school outcome, so that prospective teachers understand the context of their work.

Teacher training models, instead of proposing that new teachers be change agents, could be expanded to incorporate additional historical and political study of the socio-economic realities of urban areas, the bureaucratic nature of urban schools, how schools are structured, how schools that serve different populations vary, how policy changes are made, so that teachers may navigate their professional systems with the “emotional intelligence” that ability to read environments provides. These types of study are offered in many philosophical, historical, and sociological foundations of education courses, but are generally concentrated in advanced graduate programs of

study and are not required for all teachers entering the profession. Both of the teachers who remained in their jobs in this study have participated in such advanced graduate courses. Technocratic models of teacher education focus on subject area content and instructional method alone, and tend to neglect broad liberal arts based foundational study that is probably integral to understanding the institutional context of schooling. Foundational courses of study should be broadened and studied in more depth, especially in areas where public schools are marked by the segregation and bureaucratic qualities described in this study.

It also may be productive, instead of “training” prospective teachers to work with diverse populations, that active teacher recruitment efforts include more programs to attract individuals who are already relatively evolved in understanding diversity issues, and have already lived or worked cross-culturally, giving them the ability to work with a variety of groups. Aggressive recruitment and incentives may bring new qualified people into the teaching profession who do not need diversity training prior to working with the diverse student populations in urban schools. Models like the Haberman (1988) interview, mentioned earlier, for working in urban schools, may be beneficial to proactively screen those inclined to be successful with diverse urban populations. Haberman (1995), in his STAR teacher approach, believes that, generally, older individuals (over 30) with high energy, persistence, organizational ability, natural affinity for youth, and ability to put theory into practice are more apt to not only be successful in urban schools, but they are more likely to remain in their jobs. Additionally, Haberman (1988) claims that, because of the highly bureaucratic and chaotic nature of many urban schools, Alternative Certification (ACP) programs may

be better suited than traditional colleges of education for training urban teachers, but, if traditional colleges of education are to train pre-service teachers for urban schools, that they should incorporate a variety of checkpoints along with carefully supervised paid internships.

*Teacher retention.* Despite being considered successful by their supervisor, 5 of the 7 participants in this study did not continue their classroom work in the Title I schools. This occurrence matches national trends discussed in the literature regarding teacher turnover in schools in high poverty urban areas (Orfield & Eaton, 1996; Weiner, 1993, 2000). The two participants who did continue in the classroom were the White males. Both of these individuals were pursuing advanced graduate work, had careers prior to teaching, and were just shy of 40 years old, the oldest two in the study. Two African American female teachers transferred to suburban schools with far fewer students living in poverty. One African American female was promoted to an assistant principalship, another to an administrative position within the school. The Asian-Irish female transferred to an accelerated program that used distance learning only.

The NCES (2005) statistical data show that, while there is not a large difference in turnover in high vs. low poverty schools, the nature of the turnover in those schools differed markedly in one respect: “teachers in high-poverty public schools were about twice as likely to move to another school as their counterparts in low-poverty public schools (10 vs. 5 percent)” (NCES, 2005). This data does not disaggregate statistics for elementary, middle, and secondary schools, nor does it differentiate between rural, suburban, and urban high poverty schools. While 10% is not an extremely high rate,

this is the turnover rate for only for one year, on average. Given that, overall, about 50% of all new teachers leave their jobs within five years (Burns & Noell, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2004), “slightly higher” rates, when they are actually twice as high, could be devastating to the long-term stability of an organizational culture (Ingersoll, 2001).

Ingersoll (2001) also assessed data and concluded that, although high poverty schools have only slightly higher rates of turnover than low-poverty schools per year, one-half of all turnover is migration between schools. Turnover is especially high in special education, science, and math, as well as for both younger (under 30) and older teachers (over 50) (Ingersoll, 2001). He points out that school staffing problems are not due to shortages, but rather to the large numbers of teachers who leave their jobs, and that the solution lies in solving demand problems, not in increasing supply of new teachers (Ingersoll, 2001). Moreover, there are wide disparities between schools and school districts even within the same state; some schools experience a surplus of qualified teachers, and others have persistent staffing shortages and large turnover (Ingersoll, 2001). While further empirical research is needed, according to Ingersoll’s study (2001), overall job turnover is affected by teacher job dissatisfaction, inadequate administrative support, and “to a lesser degree, low salaries” (p. 501).

Some researchers claim that employee turnover rates in schools with a large percentage of poor and minority students have always been extremely high, and it is common to find a large percentage of teachers in these schools with either low levels of experience, credentialing, or both (Artiles et al., 2004; Orfield & Eaton, 1996; Weiner, 1993). Orfield and Eaton (1996) point out that “Teachers with choices often

avoid high poverty schools, not because they do not want to help, but because they are endlessly assailed with problems they cannot solve, particularly as social policy and job markets change” (p. 83). For example, in the high poverty secondary school where the researcher is employed, the social studies department consisted of 11 teachers (personal observation August, 2006). The Department Head had 32 years of experience, followed by one teacher with 6 years of experience, and one teacher with 4 years of experience. The other 7 teachers were in their first or second year of teaching. Not one teacher in this school qualified for the study, except for the researcher, with 6 years of experience. Only 2 participants remained in their teaching positions in Title I schools. This alone is cause for concern. Because an organization culture is much improved with a stable, qualified teaching force (Ingersoll, 2001), aggressive efforts should also be made to retain qualified, experienced teachers at these schools.

Teaching staffs in urban schools serving poor students often are often composed of unqualified and uncertified individuals (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). As one teacher in the study noted, “Unfortunately, hiring the teacher who couldn’t get hired anywhere else is not a good teacher to hire at a school that needs help.” Extensive discussion in the multicultural literature focuses on working with populations in these schools, but other research shows that it is the poor working conditions in urban schools that cause qualified teachers to flee, leaving these schools with employees that remain in their positions only because they cannot be hired elsewhere (Ingersoll, 2001; Orfield & Eaton, 1996; Weiner, 1993). Teachers in this study did not feel empowered to make change in their schools, and, in many cases, even felt silenced in order to keep their

jobs. These issues relate to work environments. It may be inferred that the poor working conditions corroborated in the literature (Fine, 1991; Ingersoll, 2001; Orfield & Eaton, 1996; Weiner, 1993) also affected these particular teachers' decisions to leave their positions. As Ingersoll (2001) points out, turnover is lower at school with more administrative support and fewer discipline issues, and further research is needed to ascertain why teachers transfer to other schools.

Since the teachers in this study left their schools, and sometimes teaching positions, after the study, attention and discussion in the interviews did not include issues of teacher retention, or reasons for leaving the classroom. It is very important to note that teachers in this study did not mention problems or issues with students or families in these schools. Instead they discussed segregation, bureaucracy and bureaucratic mandates, resistance, testing, and lack of time as impeding their teaching. Additionally, could their "cultural competence" and perceived success in classrooms contribute to awareness of inequity and eventual flight from schools that discourage democratic ideals, professional considerations, or pedagogically sound, individualized curricular practice? Is there anything administrations, either at the school level or above, can do to improve conditions so that well-trained and successful teachers will not leave their schools? This may be a question for further study.

A stable and qualified teaching force is an important component to student success, and constant turnover in staff further isolates students from attentive and caring adults who can provide mentorship and model successful behaviors. There is a growth of programs that encourage qualified teachers to teach in schools serving poor students through increased pay, student loan forgiveness, or other incentives, although,

according to the district website (2006), all of these programs in this district concentrate on elementary schools. These programs should be encouraged and expanded to all grade levels. Teachers working in urban schools serving poor students of color should be somehow recognized and rewarded. Adequate working conditions are usually a good starting point, but, as Ingersoll (2001) points out, pay does affect retention. The purpose of this research was not to study teacher retention in depth, but it is clear that this issue needs more attention, especially from the perspective of organizational culture and working conditions, rather than from just the traditional perspective of teacher attributes.

*Urban school practice.* Teachers in this study pointed out that the segregation and tracking issues discussed in the literature (Anyon, 1980; Oakes, 1985; Wheelock, 1992) are much in evidence at the schools where they are employed. If we, as a nation, are truly serious about improving education for all students, we first must separate the rhetoric from the reality, and critically examine the true nature of our schooling system. Who benefits? Who loses? The long-accepted function of schooling must be redirected from that of classifying, sorting, and weeding out if we are sincere in our rhetoric to educate all students, to “leave no child behind.” While teachers and instructional practice are important, we must look beyond teachers and classrooms, and instead, analyze critically the others factors involved in “schooling.” This study, as well as others (Ingersoll, 2001; Metz, 2003; Mickelson, 2001; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2004), demonstrates that variables

beyond teaching and teachers have a large effect on school organizational culture and educational outcome.

Teachers in this study see second-generation segregation of students as one of the main factors in the maintenance of the achievement gap. While the district in this study has special initiatives at low-income schools to increase exposure to college preparation and to boost enrollment in higher level advanced placement (AP) courses, these programs highlight students with potential for college. However, the availability of such programs do not seem to be affecting the perceptions and observations of teachers in this study working in the high poverty high schools in the district.

Oakes (1985) points out that resistance to de-tracking classes is strong, especially by parents whose children are currently well-served by schools. While this study did not specifically address reasons for the segregation of students in their schools, additional and more current research may be needed to explore whether first, teachers' perceptions are correct and that students are in fact segregated by race. Second, if such segregation does occur, what impediments hinder equitable placement of students in classes? More importantly, is there truly an attempt for equality of educational opportunity? Is inequity in education an honest mistake, blatant neglect, or is ability grouping in schools, as Bonilla-Silva (2004) believes, a "meritocratic way of defending white privilege?" (p. 32).

Teacher retention is discussed earlier in more detail, but teacher retention is not an isolated issue, and is also related directly to urban school practice. The stability of the organization is dependent upon a reasonable amount of teacher turnover: enough to eliminate low performers, but not so much as to create disruption and to prevent

optimal effectiveness (Ingersoll, 2001). Ingersoll (2001) has shown that teacher turnover and migration is affected by “strife” within an organization, administrative support, and “degree of employee input” (p. 507). The teachers in this study were also affected by the factors cited by Ingersoll (2001). In order to create better organizational cultures within urban schools, the above-mentioned factors should be considered.

Another important point is that ethnically diverse school populations and school populations composed primarily of segregated students living in communities that encounter generational poverty are not synonymous concepts, and should not have identical prescriptions for practice. It is important to differentiate between the contexts of “diverse” students and historically disenfranchised urban students of color. These urban populations and schools are affected by more complex factors than just the ethnicity of the students and the quality of classroom teaching. Paradigms that attribute teacher deficit for poor outcome in these populations are overly simplistic.

As Orfield and Eaton (1996) point out in *Dismantling Desegregation*, “most ‘all children can learn’ ‘Effective Schools’ are composed of mostly middle class students,” (p. 82). He strengthens that argument with the statement, “One of the most persistent urban myths is that someone has a program that makes segregated schools equal. Hundreds of programs have been announced in urban school districts during the last three decades, but none have broken the fundamental relationship between poor families, impoverished communities, and low academic achievement” (Orfield & Eaton, 1996, p. 81). He adds, “Each district can point to one or a handful of schools that defy the odds, usually elementary schools with remarkable Principals, involved

staffs, and engaged communities. No one knows how to find large supplies of great leaders, or, in many cases, even to maintain that record when the Principal moves on or one of the recurring budget crises devastates the program” (p. 81).

This idea echoes that of theorists like Wilson (1980) and Anyon (2005) who believe that race or ethnicity are not as important as economic, political, and social factors, especially those impacted by policy. Wilson (1980) specifically discusses the deteriorating conditions of the Black underclass and claims that, “it should be stressed that increasingly, even full-time ‘lower-class’ workers in a modern industrial society face structural barriers restricting them to menial, dead-end jobs” (p. 157). Orfield and Eaton (1996) similarly discuss the plight of isolated Hispanic populations living in urban areas characterized by “concentrated poverty” (p. 217). One of Wilson’s major arguments is that the African American community has diverged into two distinct groups based on social class: “the Black class structure is also reflected in income distribution and levels of education” (p. 157, Wilson, 1980). In other words, social class and income may matter more than ethnicity or race, although both are factors in outcomes. One participant, concerned about the poverty and general welfare level of the students in her school, noted,

We have to look at kids as kids, not Black kids or White kids or Spanish kids. We can’t just worry about race. We need to worry about the whole child. That’s the problem in my opinion. We’re looking at the achievement gap in regards to race, but we’re not looking at whether they’re eating, if they’re fed, all we care about if this child does alright on this test on the time that they have to take the test, and that’s it.

Anyon, with similar arguments, claims that “Macroeconomic policies that set the minimum wage below poverty levels, that train inner-city hopefuls for jobs that do not exist, that do not extract from the wealthy a fair share of social expenses, and that rarely enforce laws that decrease substantially the economic discrimination of people of color, all support persistent poverty and near poverty among minority urban populations. This economic and social distress can prevent children from developing to their full potential” (p. 61, Anyon, 2005). She also details diminishing opportunity for Black males, particularly when pointing out that between 1989 and 1997, employment opportunities for Black males declined while average educational levels increased, effectively critiquing the general consensus that education cures poverty (Anyon, 2005).

Anyon (2005) also claims that, “income supports educational achievement” (p. 67), or, simply, people with adequate financial support are more able to obtain better opportunities for educational achievement. Real wages in America have declined since the 1970’s (Anyon, 2005), and most jobs of the future will be low wage, low skill jobs (Anyon, 2005; Rifkin, 1995). These decreased economic opportunities will affect urban areas more than educational practices. Such analyses suggest that popular prescriptions based upon monolithic views of ethnic groups or “race,” and that include educational opportunity, with emphasis on “academic achievement,” for upward income level and social class mobility are limited, and that opportunity in communities must be assessed and addressed.

Another peripheral, but related, issue to further investigate may be the proliferation of privatized agendas that are appearing to colonize public schools, such

as the College Board AP initiatives mentioned above. While high-level and rigorous classes should always be lauded, current policy and some high-school rating programs only recognize officially sanctioned AP courses as high-level college preparatory. These courses are also somewhat standardized, require costly College Board teacher training, and are assessed using a nationwide test, also costly, and often paid for with federal grants for low-income students. In the case of AP courses, the companies who create and administer the required tests benefit greatly from those incentive programs for low-income and students of color, as do the companies that create and score the state level assessment tests.

Similar concerns exist for other academic programs that are developed and marketed by private corporations. These companies profit greatly when school districts adopt their programs. Further research could address whether these courses or programs are of higher quality than those developed by educators, allow the alternative perspectives of multiculturalism, and are really developed in the best interest of students and schools. Additionally, why are public funds, here funds collected from tax dollars and intended for educating students in poor neighborhoods, more and more often finding their way into corporate profit margins?

### *Conclusion*

The three factors mentioned here: teacher training, teacher retention, and urban school practice, all intertwine in the way that they produce organizational cultures in schools. Teacher training and hiring must better reflect the conditions in urban schools. Too often, teachers begin work at schools that serve large populations of poor

students of color, qualified, trained well, and eager to begin work and make an impact on students, but they soon become shell-shocked and disillusioned with the conditions they find. They find schools that are segregated and tracked, bureaucracy and bureaucratic mandates that limit their professional autonomy, resistance to sound pedagogy from students, parents, teachers, and administrators, stifling accountability practices, and very little time to get their work completed. These conditions affect organizational cultures and, as a result, teacher retention in schools (Ingersoll, 2001). The majority of teachers in this study, although they were considered effective, like many teachers nation-wide, also left working in classrooms in the high-poverty schools they were originally employed in. Urban school practices must be more critically examined in order to provide better climates for teachers to work in, as well as to better serve students and communities.

While teachers should be well selected for these schools, if teachers had extensive information and education about the sociological and historical background of schools and communities they were employed in, they may be more effectively prepared to work under difficult circumstances. Teachers should not be convinced that they are responsible for changing schools, and also should not be made to feel like failures when they cannot accomplish what generations before also could not accomplish. With such shifts in training models, new teachers will not be only “culturally competent,” but also will be institutionally competent, and possibly more able to successfully navigate the conditions they encounter daily.

More importantly, it is policy and conditions in urban schools and neighborhoods that need addressing, not just teachers, and so educational reform must look beyond

teachers and instructional delivery as the main solutions to social problems. A broader agenda, a deeper analysis of politics and economic policy must co-exist with educational prescriptions. Although such discussions, in depth, are far beyond the scope of this study, they must be considered when analyzing educational and economic outcomes. Current educational improvement paradigms scapegoat schools and educators, but do not analyze and critique the role changing social policy has had in expediting the current increasing concentration of income and wider distribution of poverty in this country. These larger factors more greatly affect opportunity than instruction alone, and must be incorporated into educational prescriptions.

## Autobiographical Reflection

I began my teaching career initially with some of the same orientations as the teachers in this study. I had lived in New Jersey, Massachusetts and both the east and west coasts of Florida, and I had experienced numerous friendships with people from various cultures and ethnicities. Like many people of my generation, I believed that the civil rights movement was real, and that the country would eventually change for the better. I had worked in a corporate job in my twenties and then owned my own business in my thirties. At this time, I was dismayed to find both peers and business superiors who did not share my views of equal opportunity, and I noticed the inevitable backlash that follows most social movements. As a manager, I was instructed by a supervisor not to hire African Americans because they might steal, and was told by another supervisor, in another setting, that I should not “hang out” with people outside my race, including Hispanics, because it would give me a “bad reputation.” There were many similar incidents and comments that gave me the same kind of awakening that the participants in this study had. I was determined not to give up my orientations to please others, and so I began searching for something that was more meaningful, a job where I could make a difference, and a career that was not subject to corporate orientations of racism or numeric designations, like “productivity” determining human worthiness. I was attracted to the seeming equal opportunity I remembered in public education. I also engaged in a renewed interest in learning and

in politics, earned a Masters of Arts in Social Science Education, and began teaching in public high schools, committed to the goals of multiculturalism.

I worked first in a suburban school, then in a vocational-technical school, and then in an urban magnet Title I school. At the same time, I began my Ph.D. studies. Although I had the healthy dose of cynicism that maturity brings, I was still astounded by what I saw: the differences in facilities, the differences in organization, the differences in treatment of teachers and students, and, most importantly, the silencing, covering up, and dismissal of seriously disturbing events around me as “business as usual.” It also seemed like the really good, smart teachers were leaving the district or leaving teaching, and that some of the really bad ones were going back to graduate school for credentialing to become administrators. My middle-class hopes for finding equity working in public education were soon dashed.

While studying various aspects of schooling, what I saw around me began to make more sense. I felt that I had excellent teacher training, and that I was well-prepared, although I was still gaining necessary experience. The school where I was most recently employed was “diverse,” but so was the last one. The kids looked the same, but the climates and experiences in the schools were very different. What worked well in one school did not work in the other one. On many occasions, my colleagues and myself would have extended and intense conversations trying to analyze the issues, generally in a context of what we could do to improve things. In some of these conversations, we discussed the theory and practice gap. I began to analyze where some of the some of the theory seemed to break down. In three years, I watched these colleagues leave, one by one. These were the teachers who really cared, and were

really qualified. One went to the Honduras with his wife. One moved to New York. One, who the school continually tried to fire because she voiced her opinion, moved to South Florida and is the department head at a brand new suburban school, where she is doing great. Others transferred within the district. In three years I became third in seniority in a department of eleven. It was within this context that ideas for my research developed.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A

### TRAITS OF TEACHERS WHO BELIEVE IN MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AND ARE CONSIDERED CULTURALLY COMPETENT

#### CHECKLIST FOR SELECTION IN STUDY

- \_\_\_ **ACKNOWLEDGES CULTURE WITHOUT DEFICIT PERSPECTIVE**  
(does not place ethnicity in a hierarchal framework; does not attribute lack of achievement to home, family, or peers; incorporates classroom lessons that utilize perspective other than the dominant one)
  
- \_\_\_ **USES INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES THAT ARE ACTIVE, COOPERATIVE, CONSTRUCTIVIST**  
(does not rely on “teacher as instructor” lecture model; uses heterogenous groups in cooperative activities; expects students’ prior experiences to affect their perceptions of new content)
  
- \_\_\_ **DEMANDS EXCELLENCE FROM THEIR STUDENTS**  
(believes all students are capable of learning and capable of academic success; does not accept mediocre efforts; encourages all students to strive for higher levels of success)
  
- \_\_\_ **GETS TO KNOW STUDENTS ON A PERSONAL LEVEL**  
(learns about students’ home and neighborhood situations; understands students’ interests and talents outside of school)
  
- \_\_\_ **KNOWS CONTENT/ USES CONTENT THAT IS RELEVANT**  
(has excellent knowledge of the content to be taught in the course; uses instruction examples that students can personally relate to; infuses discussion of cultural understandings that are not from the dominant culture)
  
- \_\_\_ **BELIEVES IN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY**  
(believes all students deserve the same opportunities for educational access and success, such as taking advanced level classes, partaking of field trips, getting highly qualified teachers)
  
- \_\_\_ **TEACH “AGAINST THE GRAIN,” OR ARE POSSIBLY SUBVERSIVE**  
(does not always subscribe the mandated district or policy prescriptions; alters the curriculum when it seems in the best interest of the students; discusses controversial topics in class)

Appendix B

SOCIAL ATTITUDE SURVEY

- 1- STRONGLY DISAGREE
- 2- DISAGREE
- 3- NOT SURE
- 4- AGREE
- 5- STRONGLY AGREE

1. I DO THINK IT IS MORE APPROPRIATE FOR THE MOTHER OF A NEWBORN, RATHER THAN THE FATHER, TO STAY HOME WITH THE BABY DURING THE FIRST YEAR.

1      2      3      4      5

2. I THINK IT IS AS EASY FOR A WOMAN TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS AS IT IS FOR A MAN.

1      2      3      4      5

3. I REALLY THINK AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMS ON CAMPUSES CONSTITUTE REVERSE DICRIMINATION.

1      2      3      4      5

4. I FEEL I COULD DEVELOP AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH SOMEONE FROM ANOTHER RACE.

1      2      3      4      5

5. ALL AMERICANS SHOULD LEARN TO SPEAK TWO LANGUAGES.

1      2      3      4      5

6. IT UPSETS ME THAT A WOMAN HAS NEVER BEEN PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

1      2      3      4      5

7. GENERALLY SPEAKING, WOMEN WORK HARDER THAN MEN.

1      2      3      4      5

8. MY FRIENDSHIP NETWORK IS VERY RACIALLY MIXED.

1      2      3      4      5

9. I AM AGAINST AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMS IN BUSINESS.

1      2      3      4      5

Appendix B. (Continued)

10. GENERALLY, MEN SEEM LESS CONCERNED ABOUT BUILDING  
RELATIONSHIP NETWORKS THAN WOMEN.

1      2      3      4      5

11. I WOULD FEEL OK ABOUT MY SON OR DAUGHTER DATING  
SOMEONE FROM ANOTHER RACE.

1      2      3      4      5

12. IT UPSETS ME THAT A MINORITY PERSON HAS NEVER BEEN  
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

1      2      3      4      5

13. IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, THERE HAS BEEN TOO MUCH  
ATTENTION DIRECTED TOWARDS MULTICULTURAL OR MINORITY  
ISSUES IN EDUCATION.

1      2      3      4      5

14. I THINK FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES SHOULD BE AN INTEGRAL PART  
OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM.

1      2      3      4      5

15. MOST OF MY CLOSE FRIENDS ARE FROM MY OWN RACIAL GROUP.

1      2      3      4      5

16. I FEEL SOMEWHAT MORE SECURE THAT A MAN AND NOT A  
WOMAN IS PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

1      2      3      4      5

17. I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT FOR MY CHILDREN TO ATTEND  
SCHOOLS THAT ARE RACIALLY MIXED.

1      2      3      4      5

18. IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, THERE HAS BEEN TOO MUCH  
ATTENTION DIRECTED TOWARD MINORITY ISSUES IN BUSINESS.

1      2      3      4      5

19. OVERALL, I THINK RACIAL MINORITIES COMPLAIN TOO MUCH  
ABOUT RACIAL DISCRIMINATION.

1      2      3      4      5

20. I FEEL (OR WOULD FEEL) VERY COMFORTABLE HAVING A  
WOMAN AS MY PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN.

1      2      3      4      5

Appendix B. (Continued)

21. I THINK THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES SHOULD MAKE A CONCERTED EFFORT TO APPOINT MORE WOMEN AND RACIAL MINORITIES TO THE COUNTRY'S SUPREME COURT.

1 2 3 4 5

22. I THINK WHITE PEOPLE'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS RACIAL MINORITY GROUPS STILL CONSTITUTES A MAJOR PROBLEM IN AMERICA.

1 2 3 4 5

23. I THINK THE SCHOOL SYSTEM, FROM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL THROUGH COLLEGE, SHOULD ENCOURAGE MINORITY AND IMMIGRANT CHILDREN TO LEARN AND FULLY ADOPT TRADITIONAL AMERICAN VALUES.

1 2 3 4 5

24. IF I WERE TO ADOPT A CHILD, I WOULD BE HAPPY TO ADOPT A CHILD OF ANY RACE.

1 2 3 4 5

25. I THINK THERE IS AS MUCH FEMALE VIOLENCE TOWARD MEN AS THERE IS MALE VIOLENCE TOWARD WOMEN.

1 2 3 4 5

26. I THINK THE SCHOOL SYSTEM, FROM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL THROUGH COLLEGE, SHOULD PROMOTE VALUES REPRESENTATIVE DIVERSE CULTURES.

1 2 3 4 5

27. I BELIEVE THAT READING THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MALCOLM X WOULD BE OF VALUE.

1 2 3 4 5

28. I WOULD ENJOY LIVING IN A NEIGHBORHOOD CONSISTING OF A RACIALLY DIVERSE POPULATION (I.E. AFRICAN AMERICAN, ASIAN AMERICAN, HISPANIC, WHITE).

1 2 3 4 5

29. I THINK IT IS BETTER IF PEOPLE MARRY WITHIN THEIR OWN RACE.

1 2 3 4 5

30. WOMEN MAKE TOO BIG A DEAL OUT OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT ISSUES IN THE WORKPLACE.

1 2 3 4 5

## Appendix C

### Interview Instrument

Research Question #1: Stem: Is there an achievement gap between white and non-white students at your school?

*Prompt: If so, can you describe the difference? What do you think accounts for the gap?*

*Prompt: If not, why do you think that your conclusions are different from county and national data?*

*What roles do schools play in closing the gap?*

Research Question #2: Stem: Can you give some examples of what you believe are multicultural practices?

*Prompt: Do you believe differences in culture should be addressed? Why or why not? How can a teacher address differences?*

Stem: Have you had any training in multicultural education?

*Prompt: What is your perception regarding the goals of multicultural education?*

*Prompt: What educational or life experiences have influenced your viewpoints?*

Research Question #3: Stem: Do you use multicultural practices? Why or why not?

Stem: What issues do teachers confront when attempting to infuse multicultural practices in their classrooms?

*Prompt: What have your experiences been when trying to infuse multicultural education or culturally competent practices into your work as a teacher?*

*Prompt: How do other teachers at your school view such practices? Administrators? Students?*

Stem: Do you see any school-wide or school system factors that hinder your ability to infuse multicultural education practices into your teaching?

*Prompt: Researchers have claimed that institutional factors such as bureaucracy, standardized testing, tracking, discipline practices, control of teacher assignments, excessive rules and procedures, custodial or impersonal treatment of students, and*

*residential segregation affects educational outcomes. Can you comment on whether the above factors affect your classroom practice or that of your peers?*

Research Question #4: Stem: Can you describe the effects No Child Left Behind has had on classroom practice in your school?

*Prompt: Can you describe how NCLB has changed your classroom practice? Has the increased attention to testing, FCAT in your case, affected classroom practice?*

*What do you believe are the positives and the negatives of the accountability movement?*

Research Question #5: Stem: What impact do you believe that teachers have on educational outcomes?

*Prompt: What can teachers do to reform or improve schools?*

*Prompt: How could schools be improved?*

*Prompt: What do you believe is the purpose of the educational system?*

*Prompt: What type of reform is beyond the scope of teacher or classroom practice?*

## About the Author

Jennifer Morley, attended the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from the University of South Florida. She received a dual Master of Arts degree in Social Sciences and Secondary Education also from the University of South Florida before enrolling in the College of Education Interdisciplinary Curriculum and Instruction Ph.D. program.

Ms. Morley currently teaches government and economics in an urban high school, and has also been employed in two other high schools in the same west Florida district. She was Social Studies Teacher of the Year for that district in the 2005-06 school year. Additionally, she has conducted teacher training at the local, national, and international level as a district trainer, C-SPAN Education Fellow, and American Federation of Teachers (AFT) International representative. While enrolled in the Ph.D. program at USF, she taught foundations of education at the university. She is an active member of American Educational Research Association (AERA), National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), Florida Council for the Social Studies (FCSS), and the local divisions of the National Education Association (NEA), and American Federation of Teachers (AFT).