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Teacher Perceptions in Non-Diverse School Populations
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Abstract

The research question that guided this study examined teacher perceptions surrounding the use of multicultural literature in non-diverse schools and the result of using multicultural literature within a non-diverse classroom setting. The claim made in this study sought out teacher's awareness pertaining to multicultural literature, the authentic use of multicultural use in the classroom, and student response to multicultural education. Data was collected through a teacher questionnaire, a text study, and a student discussion group. The findings in this study supported the use of multicultural literature to promote learning, but discovered that the teacher dedication within the non-diverse setting towards multicultural literature was infrequent. These findings implied the important recognition for acceptance, awareness, and authenticity in multicultural education.

Teacher Perceptions in Non-Diverse School Populations Surrounding Multicultural Literature

Public schools within the United States are increasingly becoming more diverse in their student enrollment (Kaufman & Wiese, 2011). An assumed result of higher and more diverse student populations is schools' continual search for ways to measure academic performance. With the amplified pressure on students to perform well within schools based on systematic testing, the success of students from diverse cultures has become more infrequent (McDermott & Varenne, 1995). Dressel (2005) found that students who benefit from 'systems' of power and privilege are more successful within schools because their dominant-perspective is seen within the school community. One common avenue that can help breach boundaries among cultures is literature. Literature, and more specifically, multicultural literature, is a powerful instructional tool that develops appreciation of individuals for cultures unlike their own and also encourages appreciation for one's own heritage (Dressel). Unfortunately, in the modern day classroom, books that feature situations and characters of color are rarely utilized, and literature pieces created by authors and illustrators of color are included even more infrequently (McNair, 2008). Students in today's schools are expected to be literate individuals and are encouraged to surround themselves with rich literature, but when this literature cannot connect with the student on a personal level these students see themselves and their cultures as an outcast in the educational system and society (McDermott & Varenne, 1995; Kaufman & Wiese, 2005).

The ideas behind this matter formed following the observation within a non-diverse school in Rochester, NY where multicultural education and topics were rarely touched upon. As mentioned previously, it is important for students of minority and students of color to be reflected within classroom literature so that these groups can feel validated in their learning. While within a non-diverse school, many question the importance of these topics when students

with these backgrounds are rarely enrolled. However, the utilization of multicultural literature is vital in all settings because this type of literature helps individuals feel validated, and in other instances it interrogates perceptions in communities where there is a lack of contact between racially diverse groups. Students in diverse and non-diverse schools alike, require education that focuses on cultural groups similar and in contrast to their own. In order to truly demonstrate the importance of multicultural literature and its usefulness within the school setting, it is necessary to research the current dilemma occurring with public awareness, use, and availability to the literature. Students and families will be able to feel validated in their way of life, or may find themselves more understanding of life. Teachers can practice their ability to change students' and their own perceptions by using quality literature that includes all groups of people. With this vehicle, teachers will help students to succeed.

When the issues behind this topic are ignored, many individuals are damaged by the repercussions. Multicultural literature is not a widely advertised collection, which leads to the lack of awareness in many communities. Students in both the majority and minority populations in schools will suffer from this deficient use of literature. Students from diverse backgrounds will become familiar with stories that do not project their culture or heritage, and they will see their own as misfit. Likewise, students in the majority and those reflected in the surrounding literature can form inaccurate perceptions of the society that they live within. It is an educational crime for any student when multicultural literature is neither used nor available. When students are not comfortable in their own school setting, they are less likely to succeed. Teachers, in turn, are then affected negatively because their students are not performing to their true potential. Moreover, the families which these students come from are also lacking a sense of pride for their

culture when they cannot walk into a book store or classroom and see their heritage recognized. Absence and ignorance continue this domino effect that continues to hurt individuals.

Those same groups that are harmed by the lack of multicultural literature can be helped by exploring this topic. It is important that the racial representation within literature is examined through this topic so that the issues surrounding this topic can be identified explicitly. Awareness of the topic at hand will improve the use of multicultural literature in schools. As stated prior, one of the biggest misconceptions surrounding multicultural literature use in the classroom is that classrooms that do not reflect a diverse population do not need to be exposed on a regular basis. This topic will identify the problems that exist with literature in society surrounding multicultural issues, and more specifically the importance that it plays in non-diverse school settings. It is vital that all individuals receive an equal exposure to knowledge of varied focuses.

This study initiated with the research question into the interrogation of teacher perceptions in non-diverse settings of multicultural literature use, and the benefits of using quality multicultural literature in education. McDermott and Varenne's (1995) culture as disability theory states that particular groups cannot participate within society and with the same opportunities as more dominant groups are able. Through a literature review, three themes emerged surrounding multicultural literature use. These include the importance of identifying one's own culture before the ability to accept other cultures more readily, the importance that teacher awareness plays with multicultural literature use, and the significance of using multicultural literature that is authentic. After reviewing literature on this topic, data was collected through a teacher questionnaire, a text study, and a student discussion group. These three data sources were collected within a non-diverse school setting and analyzed the perceptions surrounding multicultural literature and the benefits of its use. Within the data

collection and analysis, three themes of similar value emerged. Comparatively, these three themes focused on literature use for teaching diverse cultures, teacher awareness and comfort in using multicultural literature, and the allocation in the curriculum for multicultural literature. In this study, there was an overwhelming response of teacher use for multicultural literature on an infrequent basis and with narrow application into the curriculum. While teachers stated that they were willing to teach on topics of diverse cultures, many did not do so without intensive research to ensure they were well-informed on the topic. With the implementation of new state standards, more teachers are using multicultural literature out of requirement from these mandated lessons. The implications for this study were based around the themes: *acceptance*, *awareness*, and *authenticity*. *Acceptance* refers to the understanding that multicultural literature is important within the education system because the existence of a dominant population is a reality within society and schools, and certain groups are left marginalized because of this dominance. *Awareness* implicates that multicultural literature use is a necessary medium to be used within schools of both diverse and non-diverse population, because in all instances students require education on these topics. Finally, *authenticity* identifies the need for multicultural literature to be analyzed and criticized for the message it portrays about underrepresented groups and the authentic material that it presents.

Theoretical Framework

Literacy is a multifaceted, complex matter that continues to be an ever-changing staple in society. Overall, Gee (1989) recognizes literacy as the control of the secondary discourses. Each individual has a primary discourse, where they are first exposed to literacy. Secondary discourses include schools, workplaces, businesses, and other places outside of the home. With each of

these discourses, a set of traditions, values, and viewpoints exist concerning the way one must speak or act. Learning can be an unintentional outcome of routines and tasks that are done as an everyday fixture within one's primary discourse. Literacy is initially introduced to each child in a variety of ways through these everyday behaviors. According to Kucer (2009), children use a variety of cues to generate meaning through both oral and written language. Certain cues, such as the environment and situation that the language is occurring in, help for the child to map meaning into the language.

One such discourse that children are required to regulate in order to master literacy is found in school. Within schools there are particular groups of students who have cultural capital. Cultural capital allows for one faction of a community to benefit from their majority and their birth into a culturally rich group (Yosso, 2005). Students who are not included within this culturally rich group usually suffer due to misrepresentation or lack of representation within the school. The cultural capital of these majority groups is supported by the literature that is primarily showcased within schools and classrooms that depict white, middle-class families and authors. When multicultural literature is not available to the community, the school inadvertently encourages the idea that one group, the majority, is culturally rich in multiple ways. In order to explore this issue, the topic of racial representation in literature will be sought out, in addition to the availability of multicultural literature to the public. Those students who possess cultural capital hold control over the school discourse in which they are dominant. Those who are not born into the cultural capital are seen as deficient and therefore will not yield control over the school discourse, which will hinder their abilities to be considered literate individuals. In the American society, students of color are often viewed as the minority and culturally deficient population.

One theory that delves into the dominant culture and educational system inhibiting students of diverse backgrounds successful schooling is the culture as disability theory. This theory recognizes the power of culture to disable communities and individuals on dividing points such as race, gender, physical attributes, and intellectual abilities (McDermott & Varenne, 1995). Culture becomes a disabling unit when culture is viewed in a coherent and simplistic way. McDermott and Varenne recognize that in order to be coherent, a culture does not need to be viewed or known by the members as being the same. When a culture is celebrated as being the same, it then welcomes stereotypes for those who are not seen as being coherent within the culture (McDermott & Varenne, 1995). These misunderstandings for those that are different than the perceived norms are viewed as missing something and in actuality, are viewed as disabled. This same theory can be applied within the classroom. In circumstances where students do not naturally match the dominant culture, these students are often labeled as incoherent and disabled. McDermott and Varenne state that disabilities in the educational setting are often fabrications that are made in order to continue institution within education. With this knowledge, the lack of success for students of diverse cultures can be attributed to the lack of cultural integration within the curriculum and classroom.

A second theory that examines the relationship between multicultural education and literacy growth in the school setting is the sociocultural-historical learning theory. This theory recognizes the child as an active member in an ever-changing community of learners where knowledge is constructed by larger cultural systems (Larson & Marsh, 2010). This perspective acknowledges that literacy acquisition and learning is acquired through the interaction between people. Learning occurs by means of participation in a social and cultural world and literacy is actively constructed through the membership in a literate society. The sociocultural-historical

perspective can be utilized and interpreted to help students from various cultural backgrounds succeed in school settings. With recognition to learning occurring socially, this theory also supports that development and knowledge are the result of exposure to particular circumstances. In other words, learning occurs based on what situations and beliefs children are exposed to inside and outside of the school setting. In communities where there is scarce diversity, multicultural literature is required for students to be able to learn accurate information about other cultural groups. Unfortunately, without these experiences misconceptions can form.

Research Question

The culture as disability theory and the sociocultural-historical perspective both examine the constructs of society and how learning can occur within it. At times this learning can be diverted by issues related to racial misconceptions and ill-education. Given that literacy is a social practice and learning occurs during social interaction, this action research project asks, how do teachers in non-diverse schools perceive multicultural literature use within non-diverse schools, and how can the use of quality multicultural literature aid in the education about individuals and communities of diverse cultures?

Literature Review

Children's literature is a frequented source for learning and "also functions as a socializing agent by imparting cultural norms, values, and perspectives" (McNair, 2008, p.24). However, throughout the history of literature certain groups have been marginalized not only within the pages of books but also through exclusion or false recognition. Unfortunately, these groups are determined based upon those who yield the least amount of cultural and political capital in our society, and that lies within the communities of color. When a child's primary

Discourse aligns with that of the school, the child is often viewed as gifted and successful; whereas if the Discourse and socialization of the student differs from the teachers' views then the student is labeled as disadvantaged (Souto-Manning, 2009). The marginalization of groups through literature concerns all individuals; those that are excluded from the pages of literature and those who cannot learn about diverse groups due to the exclusion. When students have little or no multiracial experience they are susceptible to the risk of stereotypes and prejudices (Jay, 2005). The dominant white learning community that exists within schools can most often be responsible for perpetuating cultural misperceptions through lack of discussion and exploration (Dressel, 2005). In comparison, individuals who are members of underrepresented groups can significantly suffer from misperceptions. As stated by Kaufman (2012), "skin color is an early and powerful marker of racial and ethnic identity, which has a demonstrated impact on general identity development" (p. 279). This literature review will explore the different factors that can inhibit or promote multicultural literature use through the environment, teacher awareness, and authenticity of classrooms.

Environment for Multicultural Literature: The Road to Identity

Every year within the United States public school populations increase in cultural diversity. As recognized by Rose and Potts (2011), cultural diversity explains the customs in which human experience differs. Meier (2003) points out that 40% of public school population within the United States is now made up of students of color, and in urban areas this percentage can increase up to 80%. With this swell of diverse student enrollment, multicultural education has become a more prominent and needed installment. Unfortunately, multicultural curriculum is slow to take off. As found in Dressel (2005), students who were part of the dominant school

culture, which is predominantly white, were unaware of the privileges that they experienced because of their ethnic group. When students are born into a privileged community, they rarely view themselves as part of an advantaged group and view the circumstances as ‘normal’ conditions. In this sense, privileged refers to those communities who maintain cultural dominance within the school and society. Ketter and Lewis (2001) found that those in the white culture rarely see themselves as possessing a race. Instead, these individuals accept ‘whiteness’ as a norm within society and see those beyond this as ‘exceptional’. Furthermore, white individuals fail to recognize the privileges that they are born into (Dressel, 2005; Ketter & Lewis, 2001). ‘Whiteness’ views in society promote ideas that those who differ from white ideologies and culture are deprived. When privileges go unrecognized in society, biases and stereotypes can develop. Although there has been increased awareness of the race-related issues within schools and society, light-skinned biases have continued within the United States for the past 65 years (Kaufman & Wiese, 2012).

The racial divide that exists within schools only does so because culture further advocates for the dominant force. In fact, Rose and Potts (2011) found that racial categories are nothing more than “genetic fiction but social realities” (p. 2). In actuality, race is merely a term that is coined by society in order to signify the observable differences seen between groups of people. Society maintains racial categories in order to sustain a cultural ‘norm’ that people are expected to perform within. These racial categories establish the privileged and unprivileged groups. Jay (2005) recognizes the minimal difference group theory, which states that people form social groups based off of minute, physical differences. Although race is a term coined by society, individuals allow these differences to set one another apart. Epstein (2010) further supports this notion by recognizing that many schools within the country are segregated based on social

circles made up of students with similar racial backgrounds. These groups are then categorized into in-groups and out-groups who function in society as dominant or subordinate (Epstein, 2010; Jay, 2005). The groups and individuals that are considered to be dominant within the school setting will mirror those which are seen as dominant in society. Based on how these groups socialize in society, Jay asserts that individuals will form misperceptions about themselves and those groups which are different from their own. Although the school setting has the potential to break through racial divides within the larger society, education seems to perpetuate these barriers. In regards to representation in literature, the larger cultural system is a very White one or what Hughes-Hassel and Cox (2010) refer to as ‘normalized whiteness.’ They recognize that “children of color absorb many beliefs and values of the dominant white culture, including the belief that it is better to be white” (p. 214). The dominant white culture is represented as a privileged and normal entity through society, the school setting, and literature. When children of color are continuously learning through these mediums, they begin to view themselves through the lens of disadvantage. Little to no opportunity is provided for these groups to remove themselves from biases and stereotypes that are encouraged through multiple sources.

Beyond racial categorization in society, Evans (2010) maintained that the curriculums in schools need to use innovative strategies to create awareness over culturally diverse powers, languages, and meanings for students. Curriculums in schools need to encourage and develop strategies that allow for guidance with incorporation of multicultural education in the classroom setting. Although schools have been desegregated by law since *Brown v. Board of Education*, the school population is still separated by access and levels of achievement (Epstein, 2010; Souto-Manning, 2009). With the issue of segregation and normalized Whiteness occurring within and beyond the school walls, the classroom provides the perfect setting for change to initiate. One

vehicle to unify the separation is literature. Culturally relevant textual tools provide literacy events that create opportunities for students to interact (DeNicolo & Fanquiz, 2006). Literature provides a medium and perspective that all students can ‘try on.’ Allowing students to view multiple perspectives through literature provides a safe and unoffending environment for discussion. Rosenblatt (1995) has advocated that students learn best through meaningful activities with literature and that students can experience the lives of others through this medium (Dressel, 2005; Evans, 2010). Literature allows students the opportunity to experience situations which they may have previously been unable to. With these situations, student understanding of perspectives and worlds beyond their own become possible.

Sanders (2009) identifies multicultural literature as one that spans all bodies of genres but generally focuses on characters who are members of underrepresented groups within society. These underrepresented groups that are portrayed are frequently from the minority population and people of color. Multicultural literature finds its significance for education within these groups that it represents. Evans (2010) recognizes that with the continual increase in a diverse student population, “cultural diversity has become an integral part of our schools” (p. 92). School populations are increasingly diverse and with this swell, curriculums need to incorporate influence from the multiple backgrounds which make-up their populace. In order to facilitate instruction that reaches all students and backgrounds, multicultural education is vital. One such facilitator for instruction is literature. Evans supports this by recognizing that literature can be used as a powerful instructional tool to help students to value and appreciate cultural diversity. Multicultural literature facilitates students’ development as lifelong readers as well as promotes global understandings of diversity (Evans, 2010; Stallworth, Gibbons & Fauber, 2006). Quality literature is one which inspires readers and also promotes their thinking. While quality literature

still exists in the idea of a 'classic,' the realm of literature needs to evolve with the literacy that is seen in its society. Children's literature can not only educate about those groups which are seen within a school's immediate society, but can also aid in educating about those who go unrepresented in the population. More specifically, children's literature is a frequented source for learning and "may be one of the few places where children who are socially isolated and insulated from the larger world may meet people unlike themselves" (McNair, 2008, p. 24). In the absence of diversity, it is vital for the continued exploration of cultures. In fact, in the wake of the absence can present a higher need for the education. When students do not interact with diverse cultures on a daily basis through the school or public setting, the only opportunity that is presented to them to learn is through literature.

Despite the fact that the use of multicultural literature can help to remedy racial misconceptions, much resistance has been met. Jay (2005) acknowledges the resistance that students can feel toward multicultural education by citing that many individuals do not realize that even without personally possessing stereotypical and prejudiced thoughts, race still pertains to their life. For example, individuals who feel that they do not hold biases may lack the ability to recognize when biases or stereotypes are being illustrated. Literature can have subtle messages that support biases which exist in society. McNair (2008) found in a study of Scholastic Book Orders that the only texts and authors portrayed within the pages of the orders were those of the dominant culture, citing this finding as 'Whiteness' being the norm and books about people of color as the exception. With Scholastic being such an influential source for classroom and home texts, this sends the message that the only culture that is of value is the dominant culture. Jay (2005) identifies this notion as 'assumption of rightness,' wherein one deems that their own beliefs are universal and dominant rather than a product of the cultural and social atmosphere

from which they came. Learning occurs from the social atmosphere that one is born into, therefore the perspectives and views that an individual holds is molded by their environment.

White children and families are not the only purchasers and readers of Scholastic texts; therefore it is important to see images of culturally diverse books and authors (Jay, 2005; McNair, 2008).

In spite of resistance, multicultural literature is a reliable approach to improving these assumptions. Howrie and Whelan-Kim (2009) found that multicultural literature provides “an excellent medium for reflection and that the themes within children’s stories tend to be universal and provide a common ground for discussion” (p.125). Not only do children’s stories create an equal ground for discussion, the themes that are represented within these texts can reach multiple themes and backgrounds. In addition, Thein, Beach, and Parks (2007) encouraged that multicultural literature be used to change students’ cultural perspectives to help them better understand their own lives and those around them.

In order for multicultural education to benefit children and dispel biased or racially inaccurate perceptions, DeNicolo and Franquiz (2006) found that the “availability of culturally relevant texts and literacy events needed to provide interactional opportunities between classroom members” (p.158). The mere presence of multicultural literature does not remedy the ideas surrounding biased misconceptions. The opportunities that are provided for students to interact meaningfully with the literature construct the learning surrounding the literature’s content. Thein, Beach, and Parks (2007) discovered that when students are provided with the opportunity to interact with a diverse literature environment, they become more critically aware of their own cultural beliefs. In other words, prior to students accepting and investigating new cultures they first need to understand their own. Rose and Potts (2011) support this finding by proposing that students need to examine their own sociocultural history in order to promote

“cognizance of their own complex cultural identities and influence their perception of others” (p. 3). When students are offered the opportunity to explore the history and atmosphere that formed their own thinking, they will be more perceptive to influences on the lives of others. Evans (2010) found an increased understanding and acceptance of other culture’s similar and different to students’ own with deeper insight into their own culture. When individuals believe that they are void of culture, they do not realize the complexity in cultures beyond their own. Further, with increased competence of their own heritage, students gained respect for people beyond their culture as well as their own (Evans, 2010; Rose & Potts, 2011; Thein, Beach, & Parks, 2007).

High quality multicultural children’s literature assists students in exploring societal issues and diverse perspectives which increases their personal cultural knowledge and awareness of commonalities among cultures (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006; Howrie & Whelan-Kim, 2009). As students recognize their culture’s position in society, they will begin to realize the diverse cultural influences that permeate learning. Souto-Manning (2009) found that in order for students to build on each other’s strengths within the classroom, they had to “recognize the cultural nature of their own growth and development” (p. 59). When a student has a firm understanding of where their belief system originated from, they will better be able to make connections and apply their beliefs to those surrounding them. As student’s filled in the missing background knowledge for their own culture, they were better able to analyze and synthesize information which extended beyond into other cultures (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2007; Souto-Manning, 2009).

Sanders (2009) described that through multicultural literature reading, students “deepened their emotional, cognitive, and aesthetic connections to the characters and characters’ cultures from selected texts” (p. 200). Students are better able to connect to diverse cultures and ideas through the use of characters in literature. Similarly, through multicultural read aloud

discussions, Thein, Beach, and Parks (2007) discovered student transformation through the students' ability to imagine, read, discuss, and write about multicultural literature; further showing their willingness to 'try on' perspectives after they participated in discussions surrounding their own culture. Multicultural literature not only promotes students' familiarity with their own culture, but also provides the opportunity for them to experiment life through multiple perspectives beyond their own. By exercising the analysis and consideration of multiple perspectives and voices within literature, Souto-Manning's (2009) classroom environment began to reveal "a multiplicity of voices and backgrounds" (p. 64). Through repeated exposure with multicultural literature, discussions and learning in the classroom can focus on multiple cultures. As students become more aware of their own culture, they find themselves involved in the familiarization of different cultures (Sanders, 2009; Souto-Manning, 2009; Thein, Beach, & Parks, 2007).

As students' awareness of cultural diversity increases, it is essential that they come to accept cultural differences. Evans (2010) found that students' increased awareness about "the values, beliefs, and social practices of cultures other than their own heightened their acceptance and respect for people different from themselves" (p. 97). After individuals are made conscious of the presence of their own culture and to other cultures surrounding them, their acceptance for differences in diverse communities will increase. Flynn (2012) acknowledged that as this awareness is developed through literature, it is vital that students begin to appreciate the need for differences and relationships between cultures. Flynn also recognized the role that teachers perform in the facilitation of multicultural pedagogy to engage all students in discussions centered on diversity. As mentioned previously, these discussions are vital for students who participate within the dominant school culture so that they recognize their own cultures, which in

turn advocates acceptance of all cultures. However, it is important for students of minority cultures to participate in literature and instruction as well. Epstein (2009) discovered that “students of color can develop an enhanced self-concept after recognizing the uniqueness and perhaps even marginalized positioning of their culture within dominate society” (p.52).

Literature provides the opportunity for all cultures to become acquainted with one another. It is important for dominant populations to realize their existence of culture in order to promote the acceptance of other cultures, yet it is also essential for diverse and minority cultures to appreciate those differences which set them apart from the dominant culture. In both cases of dominant and minority culture, insufficient multicultural experience leaves students vulnerable to stereotypes (Jay, 2005). Overall, effective multicultural education aids both white students and students of color to understand their position within an ever-changing society, and further releases confusion that can cause resistance (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006; Epstein, 2009; Evans, 2010; Flynn, 2012; Howrie & Whelan-Kim, 2009; Jay, 2005; Sanders, 2009; Souto-Manning, 2009; Thein, Beach, & Parks, 2007).

Teachers and Multicultural Literature: The Road to Acceptance

Multicultural literature is an important feature that needs to maintain permanence within the classroom curriculum in order for schools in diverse and non-diverse settings to aid in student achievement and self-identity. While the importance of multicultural literature use by teachers has been highlighted multiple times, the actual incorporation of this information into the curriculum has been infrequent (Wake & Modla, 2008). In order for multicultural literature to be successful in the classroom, teachers play a vital role in facilitation and guidance. Stallworth, Gibbons, and Fauber (2006) instill that it is the responsibility of teachers to select texts for their

classrooms based off of the text's ability to "speak to their students' cultural heritage and broaden their respect and appreciation of the heritages of diverse groups" (p. 478). Multicultural literature should be selected with the intentions for it to connect with student's cultural backgrounds and to educate students on diverse backgrounds. Successful implementation and use of multicultural education falls directly on those who are instructing learning: the teacher.

Chu (2011) observed that the perception held by teachers and educators about a student can influence their academic performance and behavior in school. As an influential party in the students' lives, this stimulus can either aid or inhibit the students' success. Unfortunately, many teacher perceptions surrounding diverse students are that they do not require differentiated instruction from that of the dominant culture (Chu; Wake & Modla, 2008). Wake and Modla (2008) recognized that "many teachers' inabilities or unwillingness to consider their students' diversity may be due to their preexisting sociocultural based beliefs about teaching, learning, and cultural diversity" (p. 181). As is found with students, teachers hold perceptions and ideas pertaining to culture that shape their own belief system and influence their teaching style. These perceptions stem from their participation in education that was inhabited predominantly by the mainstream population. Rose and Potts (2011) recognized that by growing up within the dominant culture, many teachers fail to recognize the inequalities of circumstance that diverse communities can face.

When teachers fail to recognize the different experiences that diverse cultures can face and the significance of culture within education, they often believe that all students can be taught in the same manner and with identical material (Rose & Potts, 2011; Wake & Modla, 2008). This inability to recognize the effect of culture on student learning relates to an individual's failure to recognize their own culture. When culture is not viewed as an influential medium for learning,

many adopt the dominant perspective and fail to reach all students for learning. Teachers believe that this type of education is unbiased, or as Rose and Potts (2011) discovered, that this type of instruction creates an equitable classroom. When teachers hold these views that deny true multicultural education, they exhibit the same resistance that students of dominant culture can hold when exposed to multicultural literature. This resistance is referred to as ‘colorblindness’ (Chu, 2011; Rose & Potts, 2011; Wake & Modla, 2008). Colorblindness refers to educators beliefs that the only differences between students are presented through personality and individuality, rather than recognizing race as a significant cultural factor (Rose & Potts, 2011). Colorblind teaching fails to recognize the impact that race and culture can have on a student’s learning and education. With this type of teaching, teachers deny students the right to possess differing experiences and understandings about the world. Jay (2005) dubs the use of colorblind teaching as ‘folly’ in the sense that ignoring race is to ignore the distinctive role that it plays in social reality. Racial identity influences the biases and stereotypes within the society, and denying these demonstrates to students that these misperceptions do not hold importance within the classroom. Teacher’s who advocate colorblindness do not recognize the significant role that race has on the lives of their students (Jay, 2005; Rose & Potts, 2011). While this can be done unintentionally by teachers in the sense that they do not believe they are harming the likelihood of student success through ‘equal’ instruction, it is still a harmful way to view education and the world.

Ketter and Lewis (2001) further recognize colorblind teaching as the act where educators promote the use of neutral texts within classrooms. A neutral text represents literature that attempts to illustrate racial interactions in an unrealistic and ‘happily ever after’ portrayal. Teachers who are ill-informed of their own cultural identity and beliefs believe that they are

validating diverse cultures in their classroom through using neutral multicultural literature that exemplifies a diverse culture, but does not send any true messages (Jay, 2005; Ketter & Lewis, 2001; Stallworth, Gibbons, & Fauber, 2006). Quality multicultural literature represents racial diversity and culture in realistic terms. Dressel (2005) found that teachers' support for colorblind teaching comes from their own fear to examine racism within themselves. In order to avoid realizing one's own beliefs, teaching with literature that does not spark any true message or discussion surrounding racial divides in society is a sought-out avenue. Teachers, more specifically; white teachers, prefer to view society as a melting pot (Dressel, 2005). This view permits the portrayal of all members in society as having equal opportunity and representation, which unfortunately; is unrealistic and unfair to those who are affected by racial divides.

Ketter and Lewis (2001) found in a rural district that teachers avoided the use of true multicultural literature over concern that the material may be viewed as inappropriate or too political for a school setting. Although the discussions in true multicultural literature may appear controversial, the themes and portrayals within these texts deem them as quality literature because they exemplify a true picture of what is currently occurring in the world. Many teachers share this avoidance for the use of multicultural topics because they fear the challenge that it may pose to cultural normalcy (Ketter and Lewis, 2001; Rose & Potts, 2011; Wake and Modla, 2008). Rather than contest the dominant culture within the educational setting, many teachers choose to evade any true multicultural discussion. Evans (2010) argues in response to colorblind teaching that teaching literacy is never a neutral topic and that its focus should narrow on empowerment and action. Critical literacy exploration of texts allows teachers and students to evaluate literature and messages that are portrayed. Through joint exploration, teachers can coach students through biased and stereotyped material without allowing any true controversy to occur in the classroom.

Teachers cannot be culturally responsive teachers if they do not recognize the cultural differences among students (Evans, 2010; Rose & Potts, 2011). In doing so, teachers will allow students to identify with their own racial identity rather than the identity that is dominant in society. With the absence of literature that truly embodies cultural diversity and history, teachers can risk simplifying and universalizing the important experiences that are created through discrimination and oppression in society (Thein, Beach, & Parks, 2007).

It is necessary for teacher's to realize the important role that they have in familiarizing all students with multicultural education. Evans (2010) found that through the use of important and unique literature, teachers had the power to affirm students' various lives, cultures, voice, and languages. By familiarizing their classroom with multicultural literature, teachers can serve as co-learners. As DeNicolo and Franquiz (2006) stated, teachers' commitment to multicultural literature inclusion in the classroom is not dependent on their being a member of their students' ethnic or racial community. In order to embrace cultural diversity teachers need to first understand their own; as is true for student acceptance of the use of multicultural education. With this awareness, teachers develop positive perceptions toward interactions with culturally diverse students (Howrie & Whelan-Kim, 2009; Potts & Rose, 2011). When teachers are comfortable with their own cultural identity, they will in turn be secure in supporting students' diverse cultures and interactions among this diversity. Howrie and Whelan-Kim (2009) found that as teachers developed their own competence surrounding multicultural education, their commitment to children's understandings of history and injustice grew. Further, teachers became aware of the learning styles and potential difficulties that students of diverse backgrounds may face.

In order for all students within the classroom to be successful, it is vital for teacher's to recognize their own beliefs and any biases that they may hold in relation to student achievement. In Potts and Rose's (2011) study, they discovered that within schools where staff population contained more white teachers, the sum of minority enrollment in special education services increased and student achievement decreased. When misalignment between student achievement and classroom material appears, teachers can fail to recognize cultural influences on success and attribute it to a lack of student ability. During Souto-Manning's (2009) analysis of her own classroom, she discovered that the only students being pulled out for remediation services were from low socioeconomic status and culturally diverse families, whereas those who were pulled for gifted services were typically the wealthy, white children. This student allocation in services represents how the dominant, White culture is reflected in education. Chu (2011) found that the referral process for special education services is disproportionately represented among students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and that inappropriate diagnosis occurred often within this population. While it is not always teacher biases that place students of color and minority groups within the remedial programs, the fact that these students have trouble identifying with the curriculum can fall into the teacher's realm of control. Chu claimed that the misrepresentation that occurs in disability categories exists because of teachers' inability to decipher between disability and diversity. Without knowledge of students' culture and system for learning according to this culture, student's inability to learn in a way that conforms to the school's larger society can appear as deficiency in learning. When students from culturally diverse backgrounds do not align with the school standards they are considered deviant and incompatible, which thus results in their placement within extra services (Chu, 2011; Potts & Rose, 2011; Souto-Manning, 2009).

Even in instances in which students are members of a non-diverse school, Jay (2005) stated that teachers have an obligation to assist students in finding and achieving critical self-consciousness to make them better citizens and readers. Although students may not be in a population that contains diversity, the ability to critique their own and other's thinking is a vital tool. This ability will aid them in reading critically and viewing the world in a realistic way. Stallworth, Gibbons, and Fauber (2006) also found that by having students respected for their own unique differences encouraged their development of respect and appreciation for others who held cultural and ethnic backgrounds different from their own. Students in all school populations need to be provided with instruction that will prepare them for the reality that they will encounter beyond the school walls.

Chu (2011) found that in order to increase teacher perception in multicultural education, teacher efficacy needs to be taken into account and recognized for the influence it has on student learning. Teacher efficacy in this instance refers to one's belief and evaluation in their ability to execute specific goals to benefit and create positive student learning (Chu). In order to create positive learning experiences in students; teachers need to trust in their ability to do so. While a teacher's influence can hinder student success in the classroom, this influence can affect the student in an equally positive way. Souto-Manning (2009) exemplified teacher efficacy when she began to eliminate remedial and enrichment service pull-outs from her classroom. By doing this, students were not being segregated among ability and cultural differences as previously, and she created a positive learning environment where all student needs were met. Teachers who yield high efficacy are more comfortable in seeking alternative teaching models and strategies to utilize within the classroom, especially in regards to multicultural education (Chu, 2011; Souto-Manning, 2009). A teacher who believes in their ability to create successful learning

opportunities for students will feel more willing to work with material that may appear to be a challenge or controversial. When students do not succeed in school many teachers frequently set blame on school conditions, whereas with student success, teachers will take credit (Chu, 2011). While the school has an impact on student learning, teachers are the direct route between students and their learning. Teachers hold the ultimate power to create successful learning for their students. Rather than allowing the students in her class to continue to notice and examine the cultural divide in her classroom, Souto-Manning brought learning through multicultural literature into her room for all students to benefit from.

In relation to Souto-Manning's (2009) study, Rose and Potts (2011) found that teachers must see students as multiple cultural groups. As discussed in Rose and Potts, when teachers do not recognize students' cultural background and avoid racial discussion, they deny that race has an impact on the everyday lives of individuals. This colorblind and neutral teaching restrains all populations of students from learning effectively; both dominant and minority groups. Teacher's denial of students' cultural background as an influence in their learning denies culture as an early knowledge outlet. The organization of the classroom needs to be taken into account as well, including multiple languages, values, and knowledge from children's homes and community (Chu, 2011). The environment of the classroom can encourage multicultural views and learning through available literature, pictures displayed, and work presented. In order for multicultural literature to be effective for students, high efficacy teaching must be present with purposeful opportunities for students to think critically and extensively about literature and the world (Chu, 2011; Dressel, 2005; Evans, 2010; Jay, 2005; Potts & Rose, 2011; Souto-Manning; 2009; Stallworth, Gibbons & Fauber, 2006; Wake & Modla; 2008).

High Quality Multicultural Literature: The Road to Authenticity

Multicultural literature consists of books that describe diverse cultures other than those that are seen within the dominant culture, and also reflect the power differences seen between varying ethnic and racial groups (Evans, 2010). This literature does not hold a neutral view between racial representations and creates realistic situations for relationships, while also portraying diverse cultures in a positive way. Smith-D'Arezzo and Musgrove (2011) agree that it is important to introduce children to texts that they can identify with in positive ways. Children form cultural identities based off of the interactions that they have in their daily lives, and schools need to allow all children a source of likeness in the curriculum (Eristi, 2012; Smith-D'Arezzo and Musgrove, 2011). Cultural identities provide children with their first perspective on the way that the world interacts. In order to find their identity as a significant one, children need to see their culture reflected within the classroom setting. As stated by Howrie and Whelan-Kim (2009) multicultural literature provides for an excellent source of discussion and reflection for both teachers and children alike. Multicultural literature provides an environment for other perspectives to be considered in the safety of a character's actions, which can then be related to and reflective of actions beyond the text. Through this medium, common ground can be covered through respectful and exploratory activities which will increase cultural sensitivity and appreciation of various cultures (Howrie & Whelan-Kim, 2009). With increased awareness of culture, students will be more appreciative of their own and those of other students. Students and teachers alike can participate in responsive action for multicultural literature and education. Kaufman and Wiese (2012) conducted a study that indicated that skin-tone biases remain within our culture and schools. Many school populations continue to hold these biases because of the lack of cultural exposure (Dressel, 2005; Kaufman & Wiese, 2012; Meier, 2003). With the

benefits of using multicultural literature so valuable, it is quite ironic that the actual implementation of this literature is so few and far between.

Exposure to multicultural literature is vital starting at a young age for children, as McNair (2008) found by the age of six, children begin to construct racial and ethnic perceptions. Students at this age are very impressionable, and the literature that they are exposed to will educate their attitudes toward other individuals. Kaufman and Wiese (2012) found that after children listened and interacted with a story that portrayed a heroic character of color, both white and African American children had more positive views surrounding that racial representation. Despite a child's racial identity being similar or dissimilar to the storyline, positive interactions with multicultural literature and characters will influence children's perception of the cultural groups represented. Along with their perceptions surrounding other cultural groups, McNair (2008) observed that multicultural literature also helped young children develop a positive and healthy sense of identity. Those students who are represented within multicultural literature will develop a sense of self through their culture's reflection in learning. Through cultural group reflection in literature, students will be engaged and interact in their learning. Interactions with quality literature enabled students to raise cultural awareness for their own identities and those differences and similarities of other cultures (Eristi, 2012, Kaufman & Wiese, 2012; McNair, 2008).

Stallworth, Gibbons, and Fauber (2006) found that many teachers perception of what 'good' literature entails holds back their decision for implementing multicultural literature into the classroom. Teacher's view of quality literature is usually formed by frequency of use within the classroom. Unfortunately, the stories that represent dominant views are more often seen and advertised for classroom material. Smith-D'Arezzo and Musgrove's (2011) study found

additional concerns for the selective process that teachers make when choosing literature for classroom use. Traditional texts and classics are those that are often considered to be in the category of good literature, and those texts are often from a white, European perspective. McNair (2008) observed that the term ‘classic’ used with literature is associated with books that were written and labeled for the dominant culture. Allowing the term ‘classic’ to pertain to only these texts and population leaves a large margin for the underrepresentation of cultural groups. Teachers who worry that multicultural literature would not fit under the category for good literature, and thus believe it would not produce staying power within the curriculum (Smith-D’Arezzo & Musgrove, 2011; Stallworth, Gibbons & Fauber, 2006).

There are other cases where teachers are comfortable with the idea of teaching multicultural literature, but misperceive the characteristics that make a text quality multicultural literature. As mentioned previously, it is vital for both students and teachers to study their racial identities fully. One setback to this idea though is the notion that many white individuals disregard the cultural identity behind being white because it is part of the culturally dominant group. Ketter and Lewis (2001) examined when teacher’s failed to recognize their culture and privileges through whiteness and the effect it had on the literature they chose pertaining to ‘other’ groups. They found that when selecting literature to use in the classroom, texts were chosen for their portrayal of ‘other’ cultures in a neutral manner. Jay (2005) recognizes these misperceptions as the ‘whiteness studies,’ wherein white skin tones are seen as the dominant cultural force in American and global society and culture. Using these texts not only emphasize the dominant culture’s jurisdiction in society but also fail to signify the importance of other cultural groups’ history and participation. Sanders (2009) observed the danger that teachers can hold when imposing false or misinformed perceptions to children in that they can perpetuate

stereotypes and misrepresent cultures. Multicultural literature written from the white perspective and in the imagery of whiteness can feign the story of underrepresented groups (Jay, 2005; Sanders, 2009).

Quality multicultural literature offers an authentic view into the existence of various cultural groups and their significance in society. DeNicolo and Franquiz (2006) recognize authentic multicultural literature as highlighting characters that are a participant in multiple cultures, presents alternatives to stereotypical representations of culturally diverse communities, and tells historical accounts of cultural groups that may be absent from the school curriculum. With these characteristics, multicultural literature can give a true account of the struggles that racial and ethnic groups have encountered. Meier (2003) found the powerful effect that an authentic text can have on the way a child views themselves as well as the meaningful connection they can make to the material. When literature provides children with a mirror or window to cultural values and representations, they will create genuine links between cultures and other literature. The sooner children can forge a connection between authentic literatures; the more likely they are to be successful within school (Meier, 2003).

On the contrary, when children are exposed to literature that neglects to reflect culturally diverse groups, families, and communities, they begin to believe that books only illustrate the dominant culture (Meier, 2003; Sanders, 2009). When a single culture is represented in the classroom literature, students begin to view other cultures as deficient and unnatural. This lack of representation can have a negative effect on children in both the dominant and non-dominant culture. Hughes-Hassel and Cox, (2010) affirm that “when children cannot identify with a book or see their lives celebrated through stories, it may have a negative impact on their self-image” (p. 216). Literature can serve as an affirmation for children that their lives and cultures are

important. When literature fails to recognize minority groups and their representation in society, these groups view their identities as a non-factor. Thein, Beach, and Parks (2007) recognized that texts that represent diverse cultures and experiences to students provide these students with alternative perspectives and ways of thinking. In the instance that children who are unfamiliar with diverse cultures are reading this literature, it provides a medium for multicultural education. For some children, books are one of the few places that they can see outside of their isolated social group into the world of those who are unlike them (McNair, 2008; Meier, 2003). Without the knowledge of those who differ from themselves, children can perpetuate the whiteness and colorblind theories described previously.

Yoon, Simpson, and Haag (2010) identify that every piece of literature serves a purpose and presents a decided and ideological perspective to its readers. Each literature is created with a specific purpose and scheme to provide its readers with decisive information. As recognized further by Winograd (2011), like all other texts, children's literature can reflect biases pertaining to gender, race, class, and other social positions. Characters in poor quality multicultural literature are often described in terms illustrating their physical features rather than personal attributes, which gives a very superficial portrayal of these racial groups (Mullen, 2004). When descriptions focus on physical attributes rather than personal traits, these stories signify an emphasis on appearance rather than character. Teachers who value student interaction with authentic text need to make careful and informed selections when utilizing multicultural literature (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006). As teachers analyze literature used within the classroom for teaching a topic, considerations also need to be paid when selecting multicultural literature. Low quality and inauthentic multicultural literature fails to inform students on cultural matters in realistic terms. Ching (2005) found that multicultural literature selection encounters dilemmas

when texts appear to be culturally sensitive and promotes awareness, yet it yields to the dominant power. When multicultural literature presents a culturally diverse group that blends into the dominant group, the text portrays an assimilation framework; whereas when individuals in the text from an underrepresented group maintain their identities the text shows a pluralistic structure (Ching, 2005; Yoon, Simpson, & Haag, 2010). Authentic multicultural literature represents appreciation for both cultures displayed in a text, rather than one group yielding to another.

While texts that represent assimilation within its pages can describe multicultural features and function as a learning tool for an underrepresented group, the problem arises when the idea of equity is obtained by the ‘different’ individual conforming and accepting to the dominant culture (Yoon, Simpson, & Haag, 2010). Using this type of text with students would set the example that minority and diverse groups can function successfully within society, but only when they adopt the dominant culture. Winograd (2011) found in his study of African American sports biographies portrayals that the stories depicted athletes in a ‘whited-out’ concept. The term ‘whited-out’ describes how the racial background of these athletes was washed out of the texts and the failure to mention the issues with racial inequality that they faced throughout life. Winograd cites these issues in the texts to the white authors who wrote them. While Smith-D’Argezzo and Musgrove (2011) do not believe that culturally authentic texts need to be from authors of underrepresented groups, they do recognize that being from this group will strengthen the possibility of a genuine story.

The second perspective that a multicultural text can represent is cultural pluralism. This view is described by challenging dominant ideologies in order to ensure educational equity for all students (Yoon, Simpson, & Haag, 2010). Contrary to texts where assimilation is prevalent,

pluralism supports the changing of education and society to support diverse groups. Ching (2005) recognizes this theme in texts as ‘multiracial democracy,’ or where diverse groups contribute fully within society. In these texts, diverse groups are recognized as a vital function in society; rather than the dominant group being seen as the only way for functionality. Books that embody cultural pluralism pay tribute to diverse practices and experiences while also revealing and affirming the true culture (Ching; Yoon, Simpson, & Haag, 2010). Cultures are represented in terms that support positive and actual situations, rather than a neutral or biased setting. Ching found that books that pay tribute to diverse cultures help to “teach children to work collaboratively, to cultivate interethnic friendships, and to see each other through eyes of care rather than hate” (p.135). With the representation and sharing of cultures through literature, children will interact with one another in a respectful manner, maintain friendships across diverse groups, and show genuine care for all individuals.

Authentic, multicultural literature can help individuals to develop awareness of cultural similarities as well as a deeper understanding of the effect that cultural differences have on society (Howrie & Whelan-Kim, 2009). Literature can serve as an agent for connection among diverse individuals, as well as highlight the cultural differences that are influential in society. DeNicolò and Franquiz (2006) found that when students are able to see their lives in a text they are better able to take those experiences and apply them into reading beyond the classroom. This literature serves as a medium for any thinking and learning that students may encounter with the world. As students read these books they develop empathy for characters that struggle and live under unfair circumstances, which initiates the learning to larger social ideas outside of the classroom (Souto-Manning, 2009). Students and teachers can critically apply the situations that characters experience to the actions that are seen in society. Flynn (2012) discovered that when

students were asked how frequently they discussed race with friends and family, white students reported doing so rarely whereas students of color talked regularly. These discussions need to occur comfortable and confidently for all students so that they are well-educated on issues surrounding race and bias. Literature serves as a socializing agent for children and inspires action when individuals can see themselves reflected within the pages of a story and thus allow themselves to be moved (Epstein, 2009; Evans, 2010).

Conclusion

In society, the allocation of advantage and disadvantage based on cultural background and racial identity is known as 'colourism' (Kaufman & Wiese, 2012). Due to this allocation, it is vital that literacy instruction includes culturally relevant materials. Colourism extends beyond societal views and is reflected in the educational curriculum and population in today's schools. Literacy instruction can deflect the allotment of opportunity and educate for change. Jay (2005) recognizes that effective multicultural education can help both white students and students of color to understand their position of identity and aids them to fit into an ever-changing society. Thein, Beach and Parks (2007) found that multicultural education needs to be about changing cultural perspectives and helping students to understand their lives and those around them better. When students are confused over their identity or the values that they hold, resistance to change and diversity can occur.

Jay's (2005) findings discussed previously focused on white student resistance to multicultural education which stemmed from the belief that they were not personally racist nor found race as disadvantageous to anyone because they have not personally experienced it. Resistance to multicultural education is supported by the belief that all individuals are viewed equally, and neither racial nor cultural background will individualize any one person. Without

recognizing the cultural differences among individuals, students and teachers alike cannot be culturally responsive (Rose & Potts, 2011). Being culturally responsive requires the acceptance that every individual possesses a cultural background that affects their learning and beliefs. Teachers need to realize the importance of using critical multicultural pedagogy to engage students into learning about cultural privileges and disadvantages (Evans, 2010; Flynn, 2012). Using critical literacy strategies to teach multicultural topics to students will enhance their learning and understanding of biases that exist in literature and society. DeNicolo and Franquiz (2006) found that teachers need to present opportunities to children to see themselves within authentic literature in the curriculum. Through this, the characters within the text will be an extension of the students' lives and opens up common ground to discuss any unfair treatment or stereotypes that were seen within the text.

Flynn (2012) recognizes that teachers working in less diverse schools need to work harder than those in diverse settings to create cross-cultural connections between students. Multicultural education needs to be more rigorous within non-diverse schools because of the previously discussed 'whiteness' and 'colorblindness' that can occur. Individuals who are part of the dominant culture often fail to recognize that they are living with privileges because of being accustomed to this type of treatment (Epstein, 2010; Hughes-Hassel & Cox, 2010; Jay, 2005). When this behavior is viewed as 'normal,' the inability for other cultural groups to succeed in education and society is seen as irregular and deficient. Overall, stereotypes and biases are perpetuated through the white community that resists and avoids critical discussions pertaining to multicultural education (Dressel, 2005). To help to remedy these racial and cultural perceptions, schools of all populations need to be introduced to multicultural education. More specifically

though, to enact change in the resistance of ‘whiteness,’ non-diverse school communities need to be introduced to multicultural literature through authentic and thought-provoking instruction.

Method

Context

Research for this study took place within a small school district in Western New York. The elementary school used for this study is located in a town that is dominantly inhabited by a Caucasian, middle class population. As found by the Public School Review, this town is comprised of approximately 5,875 people. During the 2010-2011 school year, the student population was made up of 90% Caucasian, 3% Hispanic or Latino, 3% African American, 3% Asian, 1% Multiracial and 0% American Indian or Alaska Native. Of this student population, 12% were eligible for free or reduced lunch. Due to the small population of this district, the research for this study took place in the only elementary school building. Within the elementary school, there are five sections of kindergarten and four sections of grades one through five. The average class size within the building is eighteen students.

The research for this study used teachers from the elementary level and a first grade classroom. Within the elementary school there were 42 teachers for the 2010-2011 school year. Out of these 42 teachers, 10% have obtained a Master's degree, and 7% have less than three years teaching experience. The teachers used for this study range from working in Kindergarten to fifth grade classrooms, and also account for special area teachers. The classroom used for this study is a first grade classroom comprised of 20 students, 11 female and nine male, and one classroom teacher. Within the classroom, 15 students are Caucasian, two students are Hispanic, and two students are Multiracial.

Participants

Students

The participants for this study are five students from the above described classroom. Of these students two are male and three are female. Four out of the five students are White and one is Hispanic. The students are all in a Level C guided reading group together that meet for twenty five minutes on a daily basis. This level was determined using the Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessment. All of the participating students do not have an IEP or 504 plan, and are considered to be on grade-level academically.

Nicole (a pseudonym) is a bright six year old, Hispanic female. She enjoys spending time with her family, especially her twin sister who is also in first grade. Nicole also has an older brother in third grade, and two younger siblings in Kindergarten. Nicole lives at home with her mother, father, and her four siblings. She is in a guided reading group with four other children and excels in this group. Nicole has a strong ability to identify words within and outside of context, and she is a very fluent reader. Strong reading skills and active involvement help Nicole succeed in subjects beyond reading. In order to grow further, Nicole needs to not rush through reading and work to help improve her skill and strategy use.

Grant (a pseudonym) is an active six year old, Caucasian male. He is an only child and lives with his mother. Grant's father works in central New York, which inhibits his ability to spend extended time with his father. Although this time is limited, one of Grant's favorite things to do is spend time with his father. Grant has a very active body and therefore needs reminders to focus on the task at hand, but he is a successful first grader. Some of his strengths include using decoding strategies while reading to decipher unfamiliar words, and he reads for meaning.

Grant's use of strategies and skills help him in subjects beyond reading. Due to the fact that he needs consistent reminders to stay on task, Grant can improve his ability to work independently.

Alison (a pseudonym) is an intuitive six year old, Caucasian female. Alison's parents are separated, so she lives with her father part-time and her mother part-time. Alison's twin sister is also in first grade. She loves to read stories and to participate during guided reading time with her ideas and questions. During reading, Alison shows high skills with sounding out unknown words. Alison makes great connections during reading and always has a thought to share that is meaningful.

Jackson (a pseudonym) is a social six year old, Caucasian male. He lives at home with his mother, his father, and his younger sister. On the weekends and in his free time, Jackson enjoys riding his BMX bike on dirt trails and courses. Jackson is very interested in his learning and delves deeper into all subjects. During reading, Jackson constantly makes connections to his personal life and knowledge. He loves to create writing and illustration pieces, and pays attention to the details in this type of work.

Tanya (a pseudonym) is a quiet six year old, Caucasian female. Tanya lives at home with her mother, her father, and her older and younger sisters. Outside of school, Tanya enjoys spending time with her family by going on long walks and going to her grandmother's house. In reading, Tanya excels because of her enjoyment and motivation for the task. Tanya can work on her vowel sounds to improve her reading and also using decoding strategies independently to interpret unknown words. Tanya is a very quiet and shy student in the classroom, which can get in the way of her learning.

Teachers

The teachers used for this study range between Kindergarten to fifth grade classrooms, and also included special area teachers. Each of the selected teachers received a questionnaire that sought out their perceptions on multicultural literature use.

Lola (a pseudonym) is a Caucasian female who teaches a co-taught third grade classroom within the school district used in this study. She is 32 years old and has been teaching for eight years. Previous to teaching within her current school district, Lola taught K-12 special education in the three other districts. Each of these districts' school populations were from middle to lower socioeconomic status.

Jackie (a pseudonym) is a Caucasian female who is a first and second grade special education teacher. Within the school, Jackie services 12 students between the two grade levels. Jackie is 24 years old and has been teaching for one year within the district used in this study, however last year she worked in third grade. Aside from full-time teaching, Jackie has substitute taught in two other districts whose population are very similar to the one used within this study.

Linda (a pseudonym) is a Caucasian female who currently teaches at the Kindergarten level. At 40 years of age, Linda has been teaching for 13 years. Beyond the Kindergarten classroom, Linda has taught at a K/1 multi-age level, 2/3 multi-age level, AIS reading support for grades 2-3 and a preschool classroom. The two districts that Linda taught in prior to the district within this study were very contradictory in the sense that one is similar to her current district and the other was an upper-class, private school.

Ava (a pseudonym) is a Caucasian female who currently teaches in first grade. Ava is 32 years old and has been teaching for 11 years. Prior to teaching first grade, Ava has also taught second grade and pre-Kindergarten. Ava has taught within school districts that represent much

more diverse populations than those which are seen within the current studied school district. Despite being exposed to teaching in these populations, Ava has spent the bulk of her teaching career in the current district.

Mary (a pseudonym) is a Caucasian female who teaches in a co-taught second grade classroom. Mary is 47 years old and has been teaching for 15 years. Although Mary has also taught at the Kindergarten level, she has only taught within the current school district. Mary has a daughter and a son who have attended the school used in this study, and she currently lives within the district. Within Mary's current classroom, there are two ELL students and multiple students with IEP's.

Eileen (a pseudonym) is a Caucasian female who currently teaches in third grade. At 40 years old, Eileen has been teaching for 15 years. Beyond the third grade level, Eileen has also taught at first and second grade. Eileen has taught within one other district beyond the current one, and the previous district accommodated a much more diverse population.

Brent (a pseudonym) is a Caucasian male who currently teaches at the fifth grade level. Brent is 42 years old and has been teaching for 17 years. The district used within this study is the only district which Brent has taught in during his career. Although he has spent the majority of his career in fifth grade, Brent taught first grade for four months and third grade for three years.

Nina (a pseudonym) is a Caucasian female that teaches as a third grade general education teacher. At 36 years old, Nina has been teaching for 10 years. Although Nina has never taught in a district beyond the one used in this study, she did teach in fifth grade previously. This school year marks Nina's first year teaching in third grade.

Jennifer (a pseudonym) is a Caucasian female who currently teaches at the Kindergarten level. Prior to working in this district, Jennifer has worked in two other districts; one whose

district is similar to the one used in this study and one whose population is very diverse. Beyond Kindergarten, Jennifer has also taught in Preschool, sixth grade, first grade, and second grade. At 32 years old, Jennifer has been teaching for 11 years.

Kelly (a pseudonym) is a Caucasian female who currently teaches at the first grade level. Kelly has worked within the same school district for her whole teaching career, however, she has taught beyond the first grade level in Kindergarten, fourth, and fifth grade. Kelly is 48 years old and has been teaching for 25 years.

Researcher Stance

As a researcher, I am currently a graduate student at St. John Fisher College working towards a Master's degree in Literacy Education for birth through sixth grade. I presently have a two degrees and New York State teacher certifications in Early Childhood Education and Childhood Education. During this study, I participated as an active participant observer and a passive observer. In the role of an active participant observer, Mills (2011) states that the teacher actively engages in teaching while simultaneously using the learning outcome for observation. As an active participant observer, I monitored my teaching with the group of students and used these observations to also examine the learning outcomes (Mills). In contrast, I also fulfilled the role of a passive observer, or focused solely on data collection (Mills). With the role of a passive observer, I removed myself from the teaching responsibility and was "present only to collect data" (Mills, p.75). I participated in both of these roles in order to concurrently obtain observations and data for my research.

Method

During this study, I collected both qualitative and quantitative data to examine the perceptions that teachers have of multicultural literature use in a non-diverse school, and also how the use of multicultural literature within the classroom setting can educate students on diverse cultures beyond their own. Qualitative research is that which examines narrative and interactions among participants, such as through interviews, observations or recordings, whereas quantitative data is the collection and interrogation of numerical data to examine outcomes (Mills, 2011). By using both of the data collection approaches, I created what Mills refers to as a mixed-methods research design. This type of research builds strength for the topic of study because the findings and outcomes can be understood more fully.

This study took place over a four week period and during one week period the students were met with on three different occasions. In order to create baseline data, the teachers answered a questionnaire (Appendix A) that focuses on their perceptions and use of multicultural literature within the classroom, and the students participating in the study were asked their perceptions on cultures or traditions that differ from their own. The questionnaire examined the teachers' backgrounds along with their perceptions on multicultural use. Through examining the backgrounds and perceptions together, some inferences for teacher opinions will be made based on the data.

After the teacher questionnaires have been examined, from this group a select few were asked to examine two children's picture books. These books were selected specifically for their interpretation of diverse cultures and living within the dominant society. One text displays a non-diverse child celebrated through their culture and also the acceptance of their culture by others, whereas the other text displays a child's assimilation into society only successful when they fully

absorb the dominant culture and fail to hold onto their own. The teachers were asked to examine both books, discuss any positive and negative features they found with the text, and which they would be more comfortable using within their classroom.

Through the questionnaire and the text study, the teachers' perceptions of quality multicultural literature as well as the use of it in a non-diverse classroom will be examined. Other factors such as the teacher's age, years teaching, and places that they have taught will also be considered in the observation and data collection. After examining the questionnaires and teacher text selections, a follow-up interview may be considered for particular teachers based on their responses.

While the quantitative data was collected through the teacher questionnaires, quantitative research took place with the student group. This student group was asked questions to examine their perceptions of cultures and traditions that differ from their own and from the school's dominant population. Responses to these questions were recorded to maintain accuracy. After the students' original perceptions were examined, particular multicultural literature was selected in the hopes to diffuse any stereotypes or misperceptions that the students had.

With each meeting, the students were introduced to a new multicultural text and responded to discussion questions prior to reading and after. By questioning the students beforehand, an analysis of their views were reviewed. When questioning afterward, student perceptions were assessed along with the effective or ineffective nature of the multicultural literature to educate and influence the students. The conversations and student perceptions were analyzed by listening through the recordings and also allowing the students to write about their ideas.

There were four different texts that were used during this study. The first text, *My Name is Yoon* by Helen Recorvits and Gabi Swiatkowsk, is a children's book about an immigrant student's interaction in the mainstream American classroom (Recorvits, H. & Swiatkowska, G. (2003). *My Name is Yoon*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux). In this story, Yoon is expected to leave behind her heritage which she loves and is proud of in order to be successful within the classroom. Although these details are subtle, Yoon is not seen as successful nor appreciated by her teacher until she embraces English as her language of use. This text was used during the text study with the teacher participants.

The second text, *No English* by Jacqueline Jules and Amy Huntington, tells a similar story of Blanca, an immigrant from Argentina (Jules, J. & Huntington, A. (2007). *No English*. Ann Arbor, MI: Mitten Press). In this story the only phrase that Blanca can use with her classmates is 'no English.' Although students in her classroom are initially unsure of what to do, they begin to communicate with Blanca by sharing her language, researching her country and culture, and drawing pictures to exchange. The details in this story support both the classroom and Blanca's culture. This story was used with both the text study and student participant group.

The third text used during this study was *Mirandy and Brother Wind* by Patricia McKissack and Jerry Pinkney (McKissack, P.C. & Pinkney, J. (1988). *Mirandy and Brother Wind*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.). In this story, the main character Mirandy attempts to capture Brother Wind to dance with for that night's Cakewalk Dance. The text centers on African American culture and the Cakewalk Dance that was a celebratory night during slavery. Patricia McKissack introduces the inspiration behind the story and the event in her Author's note. The story's dialogue focuses on African American dialect and the close relations that were

seen in the communities. This text was used solely for the student participant group and discussion.

The final text used in this study was *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson and E.B. Lewis (Woodson, J. & Lewis, E.B. (2001). *The Other Side*. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons). This story centers on a fence that runs through a town and separates the Caucasian and African American communities. The main character, Clover, always sees a young, Caucasian girl hanging out around the fence. After some initial hesitation, Clover finally approaches the fence and interacts with the young girl. Rather than use the fence as a dividing point, the two young girls use the fence as a place to meet and enjoy each other's company. This story makes a great stand for racial and community dividers. *The Other Side* was used in the student participant group.

Quality and Credibility of Research

When completing an action research study, it is vital that the quality and credibility of the project is ensured. In using quantitative and qualitative data, Mills (2011) recognizes the importance of validity and trustworthiness. Validity refers to using data that accurately exemplifies the topic that the researcher is trying to measure (Mills). In reference to creating trustworthiness in research, Mills draws on Guba's (1981) characteristics of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. By maintaining all of these factors, the validity of an action research study will be upheld.

Mills (2011) defines credibility as "the researcher's ability to take into account the complexities that present themselves in a study and to deal with patterns that are not easily explained" (p. 104). One method to maintain credibility is through triangulation. Mills defines

triangulation as using different methods of data collection to check the credibility of each. I used triangulation within my study by collecting data from three different sources, experiential, enquiry, and examination. Experiential data was collected during student observations and discussions with both students and teachers. Enquiry data was collected through the teacher questionnaires and the initial student discussions to examine perceptions. By examining student work and multicultural literature within the school, examination data was collected. Using each of these data sources ensured that the action research study is a credible source for information.

The second characteristic, transferability, is defined as recognizing that qualitative data is bound within a certain context and statements cannot be generalized to other situations (Mills, 2011). In order to ensure transferability, detailed descriptions of the context of the study was included in data collection. By including these descriptions, those who are examining the outcomes will be able to apply the information appropriately. In this way, Mills states that judgments can be made about the “fittingness with other contexts” (p. 104).

Mills (2011) defines the third characteristic, dependability, as the “stability of the data” (p. 104). By using the previously mentioned triangulation process, the dependability of the research is made certain along with the credibility. The use of triangulation in my study caused data to overlap and ensured the stability of the data that was collected. This triangulation occurred through the teacher questionnaire, student interviews and discussions, and multicultural literature studies.

The final characteristic of a credible action research study is confirmability. Mills (2011) defines confirmability as data that is neutral and objective. One component of creating confirmability is through practicing reflexivity, which is intentionally examining biases and assumptions (Mills). To ensure confirmability in my action research, I kept notes from

observations, recordings, and discussions that were collected. These notes allowed reflection on any biases that are held during the data collection process, and were also a source for finding connections between data sources. The triangulation process, once again, is another source that can be used to maintain confirmability throughout the study. Doing these revealed any biases or assumptions that may cause me to “present findings in a particular way” (Mills, p.105). Through the four characteristics that Mills presents, I was able to create a valid and trustworthy study that offers insight into multicultural literature use in non-diverse schools.

Informed Consent and Protecting the Right of the Participants

In order to protect the rights of the participants used in this study I collected an informed consent. For each teacher that was given a questionnaire, they also were asked to read and sign an informed consent form that tells them the purpose of the study and their rights as a participant. The students that participated within the study are too young to sign their own assent form; therefore, their parents needed to sign a permission form for them. In addition, I received verbal assent from the students that they are willing to participate within the study. All parents, students, and teachers were made aware that all names and information within the study would be used under the presence of a pseudonym. The use of pseudonyms helps to protect the rights and personal information of any participants within the study. Any work that is used in addition to the data collected was removed of any identifying marks or information of the participants.

Data Collection

In order to fulfill the triangulation process for my action research, I collected data from three different sources. The first source that was utilized was enquiry data through a teacher

questionnaire. This questionnaire first asked teachers to identify how many years they have been teaching, their age, and their teaching history in order to build background knowledge on the participants. Collecting this information also held insight to any particular perceptions or biases that teachers may have. After this section is completed, teachers were then asked to answer 12 questions that ranged in topic from their personal views on quality children's literature, to their own use of multicultural literature in the classroom. This questionnaire was meant to examine the teacher's personal views on multicultural literature and if their views are accurate.

Considering the fact that the school and staff population are very non-diverse, it was examined if teachers believe the use of multicultural literature is vital in this school setting.

After the teachers completed the questionnaire, a few teachers were then be selected to examine two multicultural children's picture books. The teachers were be selected based on their responses, selecting teachers based on their different perceptions toward multicultural literature. The texts used were selected in order to portray a culture being celebrated in addition to the dominant culture, and also a text where the character is only accepted into the dominant culture when they fully assimilate. Using the first text was the ideal selection for classroom use because it allows for culture to be maintained while also becoming a part of a community. The second text is meant to show what a typical story may portray, but the underlying message is that non-diverse students need to lose their own culture in order to be successful in society. Teacher responses and preferences for the books was recorded to examine which they would more likely use in their classroom.

The second source was through experiential data. This was collected through discussion and observation during the guided reading group with the five students. These students were observed on their original assumptions and perceptions of cultures different from their own.

Based on student responses to these questions, they were presented with multicultural picture books that accurately portray different cultures. Students were presented with these books on a daily basis. After students were introduced to these texts, discussions were held again to observe if any perceptions have changed or been altered. The purpose of this section was to examine if multicultural literature can help diffuse student biases of cultures that they have not been previously exposed to.

The final source for data collection was through examination. This type of data can range from examining student work in response to multicultural literature to observing how many times multicultural literature is checked out of the library. For the purpose of this study, the examination data was through children's picture books. Different texts were analyzed based on their authentic representation of multicultural material. In addition to these texts, student responses to the texts in the study were recorded. Student responses were compared as the study progressed. By comparing the responses, it was examined if student perceptions changed, failed to change, or were altered in any way.

Data Analysis

There were three types of data collected for this study. The first data source was a teacher questionnaire, which provided qualitative data and insight into the teaching background and practices of the teacher participants within the study. These responses were then analyzed and calculated based on elements such as teacher background, experience, teaching within other districts, quality literature recognized, and teaching practices utilizing multicultural literature. These codes were then grouped together to create quantitative data and themes surrounding the questionnaire.

The second data that was collected was a text study. During the text study, I first analyzed multicultural literature based on questions that were retrieved from the study used in Smith-D'Agrezzo and Musgrove (2011). These questions analyzed literature based on whose story was being told, who was telling the story, what perspectives were missing from the literature, and how the characters interacted through cultural relations. After analyzing several texts, two were selected to use in a text study with two teacher participants. The teacher participants were selected based on their teaching views, previous work experience, and response to their comfort of multicultural literature use.

The final type of data that was collected was the student participant group discussion. The dialogue and discussion between the students was recorded through the use of a voice recorder on three different meetings; October 29, 2012, November 1, 2012, and November 2, 2012. These three recordings were then transcribed into scripts in order to be coded and analyzed. The student participant discussions were coded based on their connections among texts, their empathy and understanding toward multicultural characters within the text, and their ability to utilize examples from the literature to support multicultural students in real-life situations and discussions.

Findings & Discussions

After analyzing the research collected during this study, three distinctive themes emerged. These three themes were prevalent in both the quantitative and qualitative research that was collected. Those themes that were most prevalent throughout the data included using literature to teach diverse cultures, teacher awareness and confidence to teach multicultural themes, and the use of multicultural literature in the classroom. Through these themes, the findings will be discussed and interpreted.

Using Literature to Teach Diverse Cultures

The first theme that emerged through data collection was the overwhelming acceptance among teachers of literature use to introduce and encourage discussions surrounding diverse cultures. Within the researched school's population, there is little diversity for students to interact with and learn from. It is vital for students to participate with all cultures despite the absence of diversity within the immediate population, and multicultural literature use provides a medium for this participation.

During this study, both the qualitative and quantitative data supported this theme. Both teacher and student participants in this study displayed the benefits of using multicultural literature. The teacher questionnaire evaluated teachers' perceptions of multicultural literature use towards acceptance through questions such as: when they have implemented multicultural literature into the classroom, what they believe the best method to introduce diverse cultures into the classroom is, and what benefits they believe came from multicultural literature use. In fact, 90% of the teacher participants used within this study stated that when faced with teaching multicultural topics, they turned to literature to promote discussions and student insight (Teacher Questionnaire, October 2012). Evans (2010) recognized in their study that literature is frequently used as a socializing agent and instructional tool to aid students in celebrating and valuing diversity.

When Linda (a pseudonym), a Kindergarten teacher, was questioned on how she best introduces diverse cultures into her classroom, she stated that "for Kindergarten students, the best way is through literature" (Teacher Questionnaire, October 2012). I believe that this statement shows that with children at a young age, literature is a frequented medium to help students understand different perspectives. Considering the district in which this study was

performed, the dominant population lacks cultures that vary from that of the White, Middle-class. Ava (a pseudonym) responds to the same question by stating that it is best to introduce diverse cultures to students “start[ing] young when the students are accepting of all” (Teacher Questionnaire, October 2012). I interpret this statement that if teachers neglect the opportunity to educate children to be accepting and understanding of all cultures, as the children move through their education career they will become increasingly narrow-minded and less likely to accept those who are different from themselves. Dressel (2005) supports this early intervention with multicultural literature use by stating that by the early middle elementary grades, students are able to decipher many of the stereotypes that are present within society and literature.

Lola (a pseudonym) also uses literature in her classroom to promote diverse perspectives. She states:

I have read *Molly’s Pilgrim* by Barbara Cohen before... This is a great lesson for students to learn about a different culture and have an understanding of why Molly creates a pilgrim with Russian clothing, and they are Jewish. (Teacher Questionnaire, Oct. 2012).

By using this literature in her classroom, it can be assumed that Lola finds multicultural literature to be a medium that promotes discussion and interpretation for her students. Multicultural literature was also used to promote discussion within the student participant group. After reading *The Other Side*, a story about an African American girl’s hesitation to befriend a Caucasian girl because of warnings from her friends and family, the students were asked to share their ideas about friendships and schools being separated by the color of someone’s skin or the language they spoke. Alison (a pseudonym) stated:

If they don’t know your language they could learn how to know your language and they could like you still and learn just like you. And I have a friend called Lorelei and Lina

and their skin is a little bit darker than my skin, but that's okay and I'm still friends with them. (Student Discussion Group, Nov. 2, 2012).

This comment alludes to a story that was read prior with the group. The story that was read first, *No English*, is about a foreign exchange student named Blanca who moved to an English speaking school. The author in this story tells not only what Blanca did within the school to feel comfortable, but also what her classmates did to help her. Some of these things included learning about her country, language, and culture. Following the reading of the story, Alison still views that it is a child who speaks a foreign language's responsibility to learn Alison's language rather than accepting both. In addition, Alison is validating that she is accepting because she has friends whom have darker skin than her own. I interpret that Alison may feel that her friendship with girls who have darker-skinned can set an example for the characters in the story *The Other Side*, who were kept apart because of their skin color, to become friends. In either instance, I interpret that Alison still needs repeated exposure to multicultural literature to truly become an understanding student of multicultural literature.

Mary (a pseudonym) has an ELL student whose primary language is Spanish within her classroom this year, and she has found multicultural literature to be an authentic form for education. When asked the best way to introduce a diverse culture into the classroom, Mary responded to "have a student from another culture in your class, and if not, to bring students from other cultures into the class to share about themselves" (Teacher Questionnaire, October 2012). Mary also continued that "previous to this year, multicultural ideas were really only presented through Social Studies topics" in her classroom (Teacher Questionnaire, October 2012). Within the studied district, it is rare that a student enters the classroom that cannot speak any English. There are many ELL students within the building who come from a home-setting

that speaks a different language, but these students are often bi-lingual and can speak the school's dominant language as well as their home language. However, this year, Mary received a student who did not speak any English prior to entering her room. With these circumstances, I believe that Mary truly found the power of using multicultural literature as common base for both her English speaking and non-English speaking students. Mary also points out that the best learning circumstances for diverse cultures is to bring in an individual from that heritage. In relation to her present feelings toward using multicultural literature, I believe that if this opportunity with an ELL student had not emerged in Mary's classroom, she may not have been as likely or found the importance for using multicultural literature. Thein, Beach, and Parks (2007) found that texts that represent diverse cultures and experiences that are unfamiliar to students help to provide students with alternative perspectives. I believe that with Mary's classroom and diverse student population this year, which is not consistently seen within the district, her ideas surrounding multicultural literature implementation may be changed.

Brent (a pseudonym) supports the use of multicultural literature in his classroom, but believes that there are also other influential methods when introducing a diverse culture. Brent states that:

The best way to engage the students is to have a person of a specific culture come to the classroom with examples of food, music, clothing, etc. so the students can connect to an actual human being before being asked to understand another culture. (Teacher Questionnaire, October 2012).

Brent further concedes that:

I have enjoyed reading many different texts with my students. I am not sure I can claim that it has more benefit than any other books that I have read since I have not seen my students interact with these different cultures. (Teacher Questionnaire, October 2012).

I interpret this statement to mean that Brent may find it hard for students in the school's population to relate to cultures that they do not interact with on a daily basis, therefore, in Brent's opinion, a more effective way to engage students while also educating them is through a speaker. Brent attitudes toward authentic multicultural education through real-life interactions is valid, however, I find that his lack of multicultural literature use because of the absence of interactions will not benefit his students. I believe that Brent's disinclination to teach these topics show that many teachers do not see the true power behind multicultural literature. Flynn (2012) found that teachers who worked within less diverse schools needed to work harder in order to create cross-cultural connections between students. I believe that Brent's view of his students' lack of contact with members from diverse cultures may be inhibiting his use of multicultural literature. Utilizing a speaker is an authentic approach to immersing students within a culture; however, the use of quality literature can have the same effect on student perceptions.

Literature can be interpreted within many ways in the classroom setting. It can involve texts, audio clips, videos, and different resources that revolve around a topic. While involving a first-grade student participant group in multicultural literature readings and discussions, these participants demonstrated the various understandings students can have surrounding diverse cultures. When asked about different languages, Alison, a student participant, stated "I know you can learn a different way ... on TV when I watch Dora I know that she speaks a different language and you can learn from her" (Student Reading Group, Oct. 29, 2012). I interpret this statement to show Alison's recognition that although Dora may speak a language different from

her own, she can still learn from her. DeNicolo and Franquiz (2006) recognize that using multicultural literature provides students with the opportunity to gain a broader sense of the abilities and knowledge that those from diverse cultures have. Many teachers may not consider students' understanding of diverse cultures and topics when they forget to consider literature through sources such as television.

With the student participants, the findings suggested that reading multicultural literature helped them to empathize with students of underrepresented groups while also connecting their own experiences to the characters and story events. After reading the story, *No English*, which depicted an exchange student's acceptance into the dominant culture's setting of her school and classroom, Tanya (a pseudonym) stated that to communicate with children who do not speak our language, "you can try to use hand motions and you can jump rope with them" (Student Reading Group, Nov. 1, 2012). I interpret Tanya's statement to show her knowledge that communicating with someone can go beyond sharing spoken words. These ideas were provided to Tanya from the story *No English*, which shows how this text encouraged Tanya to consider ideas for communication with an individual who may not speak her language. Epstein (2010) would recognize that Tanya is building new knowledge and understanding by learning about those who are different from herself through the use of multicultural literature.

When asked this same question about communicating with children who do not speak our language, Jackson (a pseudonym) stated that "we can look up things about them on the computer and ask about their language" (Student Reading Group, Nov. 1, 2012). In this same discussion, Jackson shared that his neighbor was from Mexico and that he did not speak English. When Jackson was questioned on whether he thought it was okay that his neighbor lived by him although he couldn't speak English, Jackson stated "yeah I think it's okay because I like when he

teaches me different words” (Student Reading Group, Nov. 1, 2012). Jackson’s comments regarding looking information up on the computer and inquiring about the students’ language are also ideas derived from the reading of *No English*. Jackson’s second comment can be interpreted to mean that he is comfortable living next to someone whom cannot speak English because he feels that he can learn from him. I decipher Jackson’s statements to mean that he is interested and willing to learn about a language and culture that is different from his own in order to communicate with others.

Previous to reading *No English*, the student participant group had come to the conclusion that teaching the student from the story, Blanca, English would help her to feel more comfortable. Whereas after reading and discussing *No English*, Tanya recognized that English is not the only way to communicate to another individual and Jackson acknowledged that those from diverse cultures and different languages can be avenues for learning. McNair (2008) supports these findings in their study stating that books are one of the few places where children who are socially isolated from the larger world can meet people unlike themselves. These altered perceptions could be due to the examples used within the text, and the students’ connection to the literature in their own lives.

This theme interpreted and explored teacher views on using literature within the classroom to introduce diverse cultures to students, and also the effect of using multicultural literature within a student discussion group. The findings within this section support the notion that literature provides a medium for teachers to create discussions and activities based on different cultural groups. Although some participants believed that literature creates an opportunity for learning surrounding multicultural themes, some expressed their belief that having actual individuals within the classroom that students can interact with provide important

value to multicultural learning. In a setting such as the school within the study where students have little interaction with those from other cultures, it is important to set up these opportunities and learning for students in other ways. The student discussion group demonstrated this belief by showing the learning that resulted from multicultural literature; to accept and communicate with those who are different from themselves.

Teacher Awareness and Confidence

The second theme that emerged during this study was the particular areas that teacher's found multicultural literature important for and also their comfort in teaching about diverse topics. When there is sparse diversity present within a school population, many teachers do not feel obligated to use multicultural literature on a daily basis nor in a thematic unit. The different uses for multicultural use are usually centered on holiday or specific monthly celebrations, i.e. black history month.

During this study, teacher responses were evaluated through the teacher questionnaire. These responses were interpreted from questions such as: their understanding of the term multicultural education, if they felt comfortable teaching a culture that is different than their own, if they found multicultural literature use important in a non-diverse setting, what multicultural literature was implemented specifically in the classroom and specific instances where they found this type of literature useful. Through evaluating the teacher participant responses, the majority expressed that they considered multicultural literature to be about cultures from communities and parts of the world. In this study, 80% of the teachers identified multicultural literature as that which studies the world, 10% recognized it to include a student's own culture, and 10% recognized that the culture represented in the literature could be within the own district's community (Teacher Questionnaire, Oct. 2012). I interpret these findings to

indicate that teachers do not recognize the ability for multicultural education to be focused on the surrounding community nor their recognition of the few students within the school with these underrepresented cultural backgrounds. By failing to acknowledge this, the student body is failing to learn about important multicultural topics. Ketter and Lewis (2001) found that many teachers believe that the teaching surrounding multicultural literature needs to remain a neutral topic and should contain universal themes.

In this study, teacher's comfort and awareness of multicultural literature use were evaluated. When asked if they were comfortable teaching a culture different from their own, 90% of the teacher participants stated that they felt comfortable teaching another culture if they had proper resources and information surrounding the culture (Teacher Questionnaire, Oct. 2012). I believe that the percentage means that teachers are comfortable teaching a topic when they have done the proper research into that topic; however, I believe that this extra research may deter teachers from actually following through with the teaching. It is vital that teachers are not only comfortable teaching when they are familiar with a topic, but also that they commit to the time and effort to teach these unfamiliar topics. Evans (2010) recognizes that teachers have the ability to affirm students' lives, language, and cultural context as a unique and important contribution to the classroom through the selection of literature that is read.

Jackie (a pseudonym), a first year teacher, stated "I am comfortable teaching those of other cultures because children are children no matter their background" (Teacher Questionnaire, Oct. 2012). I believe that Jackie feels comfortable teaching other cultures to children because they are young and presumably more accepting of many different things than those whom are older. Although Jackie is self-assured with teaching these topics to children, she does not feel that she has purposefully created these multicultural opportunities. When asked to cite a specific

multicultural literature use scenario, Jackie stated “[there are] none that I can pin point at this time because this is my first year teaching” (Teacher Questionnaire, Oct. 2012). Although Jackie responded that she is comfortable teaching these topics, she has not done so yet in her career. I believe that Jackie’s lack of multicultural instruction may be due to her inexperience with being in the classroom, which can deter teachers from attempting new learning outlets.

In comparison, Linda, Brent, and Eileen (a pseudonym) all concur that they are comfortable teaching diverse cultures and topics to students, so long as they have the proper resources and information to teach with. Linda stated “I feel comfortable teaching children about cultures other than my own, I view it as a learning experience for myself as well” (Teacher Questionnaire, Oct. 2012). I believe that Linda situates herself as a co-learner with her students and is open to learning about new cultures because of this. Brent’s comfort with teaching diverse cultures comes with preparation. He stated “I feel comfortable teaching any culture as long as I am given the time to gather resources so I can competently speak about the subject” (Teacher Questionnaire, Oct. 2012). I interpret that Brent is not opposed to teaching about different cultures, but he is unwilling to teach a subject unless he feels that he has the proper knowledge. This is a bit of a comparison to Linda, whom felt that the new learning could be an opportunity for both herself and her students. Eileen stated that “I believe even if I don’t practice that culture I could teach about it if I understand it” (Teacher Questionnaire, Oct. 2012). I believe that Eileen shows a balance between both Brent and Linda’s responses in that she understands that diverse cultures are important to learn about, but she feels she needs to understand the culture prior to teaching it. In any of the above responses, I believe that these participants feel more comfortable teaching these diverse topics as a result of multiple years of teaching and having experienced different student backgrounds. Chu’s (2011) research on high-efficacy teaching

supports this belief stating that educators were viewed as open to experimentation and felt more open to finding alternate strategies to teaching.

Kelly (a pseudonym) stated that she finds “teaching new information [multicultural literature] to a student is exciting” and likes to learn in collaboration with the students (Teacher Questionnaire, Oct. 2012). I believe that this statement means that Kelly situates herself as a learner alongside her students, which will help her teaching to be relevant and authentic. Mary agrees with Kelly’s statement in that “it’s always easier to teach something you are familiar with...teaching something new would be learning along with the students – which is exciting” (Teacher Questionnaire, Oct. 2012). Mary also responds by saying that “having a student from another culture in your class” helps with introducing diverse topics into the classroom (Teacher Questionnaire, Oct. 2012). I interpret Mary’s response to demonstrate her recognition that teaching familiar material is easier, but that teaching new material can be an exciting experience when the teacher situates themselves alongside the students. I believe that Mary feels this way toward multicultural and new learning because of the ELL student that has been present within her classroom. Flynn (2012) supports this teaching position and recognizes that teachers need to align themselves with students as fellow learners in multicultural education.

Lola is the lone teacher in the study who recognized that multicultural education can also educate a student on their own culture and background. Lola stated that when working previously in a district that had higher diversity than the researched district, “the students had more knowledge of other cultures” (Teacher Questionnaire, Oct. 2012). I interpret Lola’s statement to show that during her time teaching within a school with higher diversity, she found students to be more understanding of other cultures. This understanding could be due to the teachers’ within this school responding to the student population that they were teaching. The

fact that the district within this study has both sparse diversity and modest multicultural education can be interpreted as a result of the teachers' presumption it is unnecessary without the population to represent this education. I believe that having taught in a diverse student population prior to teaching within the current school district has aided Lola in understanding multicultural literature's effectiveness in reaching students and their learning. Rose and Potts (2011) further support this by stating that teachers cannot be culturally responsive teachers when they fail to acknowledge the cultural differences that occur among students.

Teacher comfort and beliefs behind using multicultural literature was noted through this study, and in addition, teacher awareness of quality multicultural literature was also considered. In order to measure the participants' ability to decipher between quality multicultural literature and one that demonstrates the dominant culture's ideals, two teacher participants were asked to read and evaluate two multicultural texts. The first text that was selected was *No English*, the story which depicted, Blanca, an Argentinean immigrant, interacting within her new American school. In this story the classmates researched Blanca's culture and language, and all characters were encouraged to learn about one another. The second text that was selected was *My Name is Yoon*. This story is also about a student who is an immigrant, but Yoon is from Korea. Yoon has many apprehensions to conform to the American culture and her classroom, and in fact has a large amount of pride in her own culture. However, at the end Yoon is finally awarded by her parents and teacher as being a good student when she accepts the American culture. Between these two stories, *No English* depicts the favorable multicultural setting where both cultures are respected and learned through.

After comparing Lola and Jackie's responses to the questionnaire, I asked both participants to read the texts *No English* and *My Name is Yoon*. Lola was selected for this text

study because of her participation within a district that accommodated a much more diverse population than the one that is present within the current district's population. After evaluating the two stories, Lola selected *No English* because of the text's "message to incorporate Blanca into the classroom and school using her culture" (Text Study, Oct. 2012). I interpret Lola's decision of *No English* to be based on her ability to recognize that Blanca's culture was accepted into the classroom rather than the expectation for her to conform to the schools. I believe that Lola's time teaching within a diversified district has aided her in being more sensitive to culturally aware books.

Jackie was selected for this text study because of her disclosure in the questionnaire that she did not intentionally use multicultural literature in her teaching, and also because she is new to teaching. After evaluating both stories, Jackie also selected *No English*, but she chose this text because "it promoted acceptance and was from an American point of view" (Text Study, Oct. 2012). I interpret Jackie's response to mean that she recognized the acceptance that was displayed in the story, but she selected the story because it was from an American point of view rather than *My Name is Yoon*, which is told from the Korean immigrant character's perspective. I believe that Lola's response to the text displays her understanding of the rich context behind diverse cultures, whereas Jackie's interpretation views the story at face-value. I find these differing responses a result of Lola's experience in working with a diverse school population and Jackie's lack of contact with various student backgrounds. Yoon, Simpson and Haag (2010) recognize the importance of the ability to analyze texts' underlying message and subtle hints because every story is constructed deliberately for a cultural, economic or political purpose.

This theme explored teacher comfort in educating students on cultures that are different from their own and also on teacher ability to analyze multicultural literature for quality and

authentic material. After analyzing teacher responses it was found that many of the participants are comfortable teaching diverse cultures when provided with the proper resources and information to educate themselves on the material. Along with teaching new material, a few teacher participants were even secure enough to state that they are willing to put themselves in the learning position alongside the students. In teaching multicultural literature, this willingness is important for teachers to practice and embody. It was also found that the only teacher to recognize the importance of multicultural literature in educating students on their own background was the single teacher that has taught within a diverse setting. This same teacher was also able to analyze and evaluate two multicultural stories and to select the one which gave a true and accepting cultural picture. The knowledge and awareness for this authentic multicultural literature and teaching was interpreted to be due to teaching within a diverse population.

Topics for Use of Multicultural Literature

The third theme that emerged through the data collection was surrounded around the topics that multicultural literature use was centered around. Using multicultural literature should be a primary focus within all classrooms, whether the population occupies a diverse or non-diverse setting. In schools whose populations are less diverse, multicultural literature is often utilized in thematic units surrounding holidays, traditions, or specific monthly celebrations.

The teacher responses for particular questions from the questionnaire formed this theme for the study. Some of the questions that shaped this theme were: what and who the teachers considered to be quality children's literature, their own implementation of multicultural literature in the classroom, and specific situations in their career that multicultural literature was used and beneficial. As previously mentioned, 80% of the teacher participants recognized multicultural literature as teaching about countries around the world, 10% recognized that it could educate

about students' own culture, and 10% discussed its relevance to the surrounding community (Teacher Questionnaire, Oct. 2012). I believe that these findings represent teacher participants misunderstanding that multicultural literature can be relevant to the school and students that they are teaching in. The overwhelming majority of teachers believing that multicultural literature use is for teaching worldly cultures may represent their inability to acknowledge that teaching about diverse cultures can be through minority groups' experiences in everyday society and can also reflect those that are present within their surrounding community. Sanders (2009) recognizes multicultural literature as one that spans all genres yet focuses on the characters depicting those who are from underrepresented groups.

In response to asking about implementation of multicultural literature in the classroom, Nina (a pseudonym) stated that "during the holiday season the third grade team studies holidays around the world" (Teacher Questionnaire, Oct. 2012). I interpret Nina's response to mean that she finds multicultural literature as a novelty within the curriculum rather than a regular teaching point. In fact, 80% of the teacher participants within the study reflected that they used multicultural literature for holiday units (Teacher Questionnaire, Oct. 2012). This overwhelming majority can be interpreted to show that although teachers in this district see the use for multicultural literature, the only consistent implementation for it is seen during holiday and popular units. Using multicultural literature in this sense does not explore multicultural issues and instead uses this literature to only explore diverse traditions and customs. Souto-Manning (2009) would disagree in this literature allocation, stating that multicultural literature should be presented beyond units of study and happy endings in order to maintain authentic representations.

Lola's sensitivity towards multicultural literature use in the classroom was seen through her questionnaire, and this is interpreted to be a result of her time spent teaching in a diverse setting. Although Lola has this familiarity with various teaching populations, she still stated "I feel I have to be very careful when religion comes up in my room" (Teacher Questionnaire, Oct. 2012). This type of cautious teaching can be interpreted as Lola feeling uncomfortable teaching religion that she is unfamiliar with, which shows a greater need for the use of multicultural literature. This literature provides the teaching and setting for teachers to explore various and 'uncomfortable' topics. Howrie and Whelan-Kim (2008) would encourage Lola to use multicultural literature to explore these topics because this literature provides a medium for reflection by both teachers and children and a common ground for discussing topics in a respectful and meaningful way.

When describing quality children's literature used in her classroom, Jennifer (a pseudonym) states that she "prefer[s] the classics and author's that [she] personally enjoyed as a child" (Teacher Questionnaire, Oct. 2012). This allocation for literature use in the classroom leaves a very narrow window for learning. By using literature that she is familiar with, I believe Jennifer is denying the use of new and relevant literature to her students. Wake and Modla (2008) found that a teacher's beliefs surrounding the type of teaching that occurs in the classroom is centered on the schooling experience that they had. In fact, in response to the question about teachers' considerations for whom and what creates quality literature, 60% of the teacher participants answered with specific authors' names. Of these teachers who answered with specific authors' names, I evaluated the race, nationality, and gender of these authors to determine any trend or generalization that was seen from the authors listed. The following table indicates the findings from these responses.

Table 1

Identified Authors from Teacher Participants

Characteristic	Percentage
Identified Race	
White	100%
Non-White	0%
Nationality	
American	92%
Non-American	8%
Gender	
Male	69%
Female	31%

These findings can be interpreted to mean that the teachers within the school district consider many pieces of quality literature as those that are written by White, American authors. I believe that these findings emphasize the recycling of dominant culture literature and authors through teachers in non-diverse settings. In terms of multicultural education, McNair (2008) would state that this behavior is typical of dominant culture within schools because many pieces of work written by African American and authors of color are not considered high-quality or classic. Although the authors presented by the teacher participants are not to be considered creators of low-quality literature, the findings do indicate that the teachers implement literature into their classroom that reflects a White, dominant perspective. These findings can be interpreted to mean that the literature that is most frequently seen within this district's classroom setting fail to reflect multicultural elements.

One incident that has increased the teachers' use of multicultural literature in the classroom is the recent New York State Common Core Modules. Lola, and 80% of the teacher participants, state that with the new modules this year they "have started using literature from multiple perspectives and cultures" (Teacher Questionnaire, Oct. 2012). I interpret this finding to

show that teachers are now utilizing multicultural literature on a more frequent basis because they are required by the state to do so. When the teachers had freedom for using this literature, the implementation was much less frequent and centralized on holidays. I believe that these requirements are ensuring all students receive a diversified curriculum compared to previously, but the truth is that it is occurring because teachers are now being held accountable for it. In these new modules, the teachers are provided with text selections, discussion questions, activities, and information surrounding the literature. I believe that these modules could either remedy the lack of multicultural use within this district, or it could catalyze the issue that already exists. If these modules exemplify authentic multicultural literature, it could provide the education that has been deficient in this school. However, if these modules are requiring teachers to utilize literature that is stereotypical and biased towards particular groups, teachers are now required to use inadequate literature. I believe that using this type of literature can be more damaging than failing to use any multicultural literature.

During the student participant group, the students began to make connections among the multicultural literature used within the study and also those used within the new modules. After reading the story *Mirandy and Brother Wind*, which told the story of the Cakewalk Dance, a significant dance within the African American slave culture, Alison, a student participant, pointed out that the characters in the text “talked a little different too, like Salma” (Student Reading Group, Nov. 1, 2012). I interpret this statement to reflect Alison’s connection between Salma, a character from an African interpretation of *Little Red Riding Hood*, and the story about the African American slavery dance tradition. Alison recognized that the characters in both stories spoke in similar ways, which can be interpreted as African American Dialect. Also, Alison’s use of ‘different’ can demonstrate her belief that her language and dialect differs from

that of the characters in both stories. Not only did these stories provide Alison with the opportunity to explore other cultures, but it also encouraged her to make connections among the literature.

Jackson went on to also point out that the characters from these two stories “looked the same too” (Student Reading Group, Nov. 1, 2012). I believe that Jackson’s response to these characters’ similarities shows his focus on their similarity being between their skin color looking the same. When reading literature from the dominant perspective, students rarely comment on the characters similarities or differences based on the color of their skin. When students are provided with literature that includes characters of minority groups, students begin to draw connections and conclusions based on characteristics that they are unfamiliar with, such as dialect and skin color. These observations from the student participants can show that they are making connections among the different multicultural literature that is being used in their education. If the literature presented information to students in a biased or stereotypical way, I believe that students would begin to associate these biases to the characters’ skin colors. Through the use of authentic literature, accurate and in-depth connections can be made possible. Sanders (2009) found that multicultural literature needs to be considered for its authenticity when being selected for classroom use.

This final theme explored the findings that the teacher participants in this study utilized multicultural literature for specific purposes pertaining to holiday units, their understanding of quality literature for classroom use is very biased, and the new implementation for multicultural literature through the New York State modules. Teachers in this study showed an overwhelming response for utilizing multicultural literature most frequently when it was incorporated into a unit for traditions, customs, and holidays. This type of multicultural teaching is a very constricted

approach and only recognizes a slice of the education that could be covered. Data also demonstrated that teachers recognized quality literature and authors to be those who are dominantly Caucasian, American, and Male. These findings do not support the use of authentic multicultural literature use within the classroom. The application of multicultural literature within the classroom as a common occurrence is now being implemented because of the New York State's modules. Although these modules can provide the multicultural education that was previously missing within this district's curriculum, it is vital that this literature represents authentic situations for the students to learn from.

Implications and Conclusions

Based upon these findings through the literature and data research, there are three words that can guide multicultural education for other teachers and myself: *Acceptance*, *Awareness* and *Authenticity*. *Acceptance* of multicultural literature as a teacher means to me that this type of literature provides a medium for learning in all settings. Literature provides the opportunity for students to 'try on' perspectives that they are unfamiliar with, while also providing support for those underrepresented groups who are illustrated through the characters and story. Evans (2010) finds that using multicultural literature promotes acceptance by allowing children the opportunity to experience the lives of others through tolerance and understanding. For other teachers, acceptance refers to using multicultural literature in all settings, including non-diverse populations, even in those instances where the students may or may not interact with individuals from these cultures. Thein, Beach and Parks (2007) recognize that selecting text that represent diverse cultures that are unfamiliar to students provide students with alternative perspectives and experiences. The literature provides opportunities for interaction, more so than many teachers

realize, and while immersion within a culture is a preferred approach for learning, literature should not be neglected if actual interaction is not a possibility.

Awareness represents to me as an educator that I cannot allow my own reservations and lack of information deter my multicultural teaching. Wake and Modla (2008) found teacher beliefs as a prevalent factor in their ability to build a culturally responsive classroom. While it is of utmost importance to reserve the time and resources to study any type of culture that I will be teaching, I need to devote my time to the research and teaching rather than avoiding the topic because I am uncomfortable. Multicultural education should neither be equal nor neutral, and it is vital that I realize the effective use of literature and also those who are being marginalized by the larger society. McDermott and Varenne (1995) support this in recognizing that schools provide a primary location for inequalities to be highlighted through learning differences and resource allocation. With this in mind, it is necessary for teachers to be aware of the inequalities that the school setting can promote. In regards to other teachers, awareness refers to allowing oneself to be a consistent learner within the classroom setting alongside the students. When in the co-learning position, teachers will allow new information and discussions to take place and can allow children to be experts where it is possible. As a teacher, it is important to be aware of who is being left out of the curriculum and to acknowledge the importance of multicultural education despite a culture's presence within the immediate environment.

Authenticity symbolizes for me as a teacher to recognize that like all literature, there is multicultural literature that perpetuates stereotypes and biases within the larger community and there is a need to be sensitive when selecting reading material. Yoon, Simpson and Haag (2010) found that certain multicultural literature delivers messages of underrepresented groups as assimilating into a dominant, main-stream society rather than maintaining the integrity of their

own culture. Multicultural literature should realistically portray underrepresented groups within society, and as a teacher it is necessary to critically examine all literature before presenting it into the classroom setting. In terms of all teachers, authenticity signifies the need to use multicultural literature in all topics and themes. Smith-D'Arezzo and Musgrove's (2011) study recognized that multicultural literature use should introduce all children to texts that include characters they can identify with in a positive way. Although teaching multicultural education through holidays and traditions is significant, there are many further studies of groups within society that need to be recognized as well.

The initial query for this action research study began with the examination between teacher perceptions in non-diverse settings of multicultural literature use, and the benefits of using quality multicultural literature in education. McDermott and Varenne's (1995) theory for culture as disability embodies the understanding that the larger community can disable specific groups within society based on terms of race, gender, physical attributes, and intellectual abilities. This framework established the incentive from which the research was created. During the literature review, three themes developed surrounding the research studies that were analyzed. These three themes included the importance of identifying one's own culture before the ability to accept other cultures more readily, the importance that teacher awareness plays with multicultural literature use, and the significance of using multicultural literature that is authentic. Within the data collection and analysis, three themes of similar value emerged. Comparatively, these three themes focused on literature use for acceptance of diverse cultures, teacher awareness and comfort in using multicultural literature, and the allocation in the curriculum for multicultural literature.

If I were to recreate this research project, there are a certain aspects that I would consider differently because of specific limitations that arose. One research tactic that I would revise is the exclusion of the new Common Core Modules. These modules are recently mandated by New York State, and the focus of the modules is on different perspectives and using text variety from different parts of the world. In order to analyze the quality of this literature I would include the lessons and response into the research project. A second change that I would make would be to incorporate a diverse school setting within the research. This change became apparent to me as I was evaluating limitations that were evident within the study. By including this school setting, it would give a comparative data group to that which was found in the non-diverse school setting. A third change and limitation that was discovered during the research was the amount of time used to implement multicultural literature to the student participant group. If more time was allotted for the readings and discussions more data would have been collected, which would have made the findings more conclusive. A final modification that would have been made would be to present the data to the teacher participant group. Individually, these teachers may not have realized the impact that their lack of multicultural education had on their students' learning. When the research was all compiled together, particular trends and deficiencies were discovered. In order to challenge these teaching styles and encourage change, a final presentation of the findings would have been an interesting inclusion.

In the wake of this research project, I am left with some questions in regards to multicultural education. The first question is in regards to the new mandated modules, will the Common Core encourage teacher use of multicultural literature? If teachers are utilizing the modules correctly and see positive results, it will be interesting to see if their focus on multicultural literature use will change from their current literature incorporation. A second

question is if the findings in a diverse setting would be a stark contrast to those found in the non-diverse district? My initial assumption would be that there would be a large divergence between the two settings, but it would be interesting to note the parallels that may exist. The final question that I am left with is what would be the most effective way to introduce multicultural education to teachers in order to promote consistent use of multicultural literature use? The teacher participants within this study used multicultural literature partially and had an initial understanding to its importance in the classroom, it would be beneficial to find out the most productive way to take the research a step further and encourage actual implementation.

With the conclusion of this project, there are various aspects to highlight. When implementing multicultural education, it is vital to assure that the material is authentic and promotes a realistic illustration of culture. Despite advances to support multicultural education, in the current education program there are groups that are dominant and non-dominant. It is vital as an educator to recognize those which are marginalized by the education systems and what methods can remedy these perceptions. As an educator it is of utmost importance is to realize the influential part that one plays in the lives of their students, along with the recognition that this influence can ensure the success of students from all cultural backgrounds and groups. To begin, an educator can explore within the pages of a children's storybook.

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7. Have you ever implemented multicultural education within a classroom? If so, how?

8. What do you believe the best method to introduce diverse cultures into the classroom is?

9. Do you believe multicultural literature use is important with a classroom that does not represent diverse cultures?

10. What multicultural literature do you implement within your classroom? Does this occur during a specific topic or time in the curriculum?

11. What benefits result from multicultural literature use?

12. Can you cite a specific situation where you found multicultural literature beneficial to your instruction and classroom?