Defining The Correlation Between Multicultural Training For Pre-Service Teachers And Their Effectiveness In Implementing A Multicultural Curriculum In The Classroom

Lynne Chung
Hamline University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse_all

Part of the Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons

Recommended Citation
Chung, Lynne, "Defining The Correlation Between Multicultural Training For Pre-Service Teachers And Their Effectiveness In Implementing A Multicultural Curriculum In The Classroom" (2017). School of Education Student Capstone Theses and Dissertations. 4291.
https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse_all/4291

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Education at DigitalCommons@Hamline. It has been accepted for inclusion in School of Education Student Capstone Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Hamline. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@hamline.edu, iterveer01@hamline.edu.
Defining the Correlation Between Multicultural Training for Pre-Service Teachers and Their Effectiveness in Implementing a Multicultural Curriculum in the Classroom

by

Lynne Chung

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in Education

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

May 2017

Primary Advisor: Susan Manikowski
Secondary Advisor: Javier Gutierrez
Peer Reviewer: Michael Gerold
Copyright by

LYNNE NGUYEN CHUNG, 2017

All Rights Reserved
To my inspiring parents who have overcome all odds to fulfill their dreams of creating a brighter future for their children. Your continuous encouragement, love, and support throughout the years continue to lift me in the darkest of days. I am who I am because of your strength and courage, you will forever push me to learn more, see more, and be more.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to my unwavering Capstone Committee for their tireless nights reading my multiple draft copies, for your guidance and patience to help me see the impact beyond my study and for urging me to share my experience. Special thank you to my inspiring research participants who helped shape this capstone. Each and every day you make a world of difference to the students in front of you each and every day, I am humbled by your work and honesty.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

- Rationale for Research ................................................................. 11
- Impact of Teacher Preparation Programs on Teachers of Color ............... 12
- Constant Learning ........................................................................ 13
- Background of Researcher .............................................................. 14
- Family History of Prejudice ............................................................. 14
- Sponsorship to the United States of America ....................................... 15
- Hiding from the Skin I’m in .............................................................. 16
- Finding my Cultural Identity ............................................................. 17
- Guiding Research Question ............................................................. 17
- Conclusion ...................................................................................... 18

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

- Historical Background ................................................................. 22
  - *Brown v. Board of Education* ...................................................... 22
- Contemporary Issues ................................................................. 23
- Multicultural Education .............................................................. 25
  - Multicultural Conceptualization .................................................. 25
    - Inferiority or Pathological Model .............................................. 26
    - Genetically Deficient Model ...................................................... 26
    - Culturally Deprived (Deficient) Model ...................................... 27
- Philosophy of Multicultural Education ............................................ 28
- Implementation of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in the Classroom ....... 29
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Chaining versus Topic Centered</th>
<th>30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural Training Programs</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural Education Design for Pre-Service Teachers</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural Education Frameworks</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal Design for Learning</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural Education Model</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Learning</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Educator (TE) Training and Qualifications</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriately Guiding Conversations</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively Seeking Diverse Perspectives</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Programs for Practicing Teachers</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Inequality Awareness</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Bullying Prevention Theories</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State and Government Policies</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Climate and Community Context</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Bullying Factors and Considerations</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 1: Power Shift</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 2: Race Identification</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 3: Acculturation of the Majority Culture</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 4: Privilege Association</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section Summary</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual Framework</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct instruction</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher mentorships</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Challenges Educators Face</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section Summary</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Learnings</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Reflections</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influential Multicultural Pioneers</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Implications</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Limitations</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing Thoughts</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Interview Questions</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Letter of Informed Consent Sample</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: Transcription of Interview with Nora</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D: Transcription of Interview with Leticia</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E: Transcription of Interview with Phoebe</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F: Transcription of Interview with Madeline</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G: Transcription of Interview with Camila</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 - Multicultural Conceptualization and Research…………………………………26

Table 2- Characteristics of the Multiple Dimensions of Cultural Competence Model….53

Table 3- Multicultural Case Study Participants………………………………………………65

Table 4- Five Dimensions of Multicultural Education……………………………………….77
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

As the years progress and our country continues to grow not only in numbers but also in diversity, it is easy to see the depth of our heritage, backgrounds, and cultures are forever growing. It is amazing how schools have changed and how the diversity within our classrooms continues to expand and widen with an abundance of beautiful stories from around the world. How often though, as novice educators, are we faced with situations in which we feel ineffective in addressing hot topics such as multicultural issues of race, beliefs and perceptions, customs, or cultural uniqueness? In an ever-changing society, the future teachers of our schools must be provided effective training, resources and tools in order to discuss and help our students understand the beauty of diversity and inclusion.

This study aims to define the correlation between multicultural training for pre-service teachers and their effectiveness in implementing a multicultural curriculum in the classroom. Within this introductory chapter, there will be a thorough review on the importance of defining this correlation, the significance to the researcher, and how the results may further enhance teaching practices for the future of all students. Chapter one will further describe the importance of understanding the impact of teacher preparation in college and university programs as there is a vast need for representation in today’s schools. In addition there will be a thorough in-depth examination of the importance in representation and role models for students of color as the research further describes her family history, journey towards cultural identity, and how this study has an enormous impact for students who may be on a similar path.
**Rationale for Research**

Over the last few years, time and time again I am reminded of how teaching acceptance and empathy takes an incredible amount of skill. Not only is it important to have a vast knowledge of content and the ability to soundly implement lessons, but also harness the ability to be impeccably patient, open-minded, and intentional in conversations with students. The teacher educators (also referred to as pre-service educators, professors of education, etc.) toolbox of today must be continually revamped to ensure pre-service teachers are provided with adequate, relevant, and appropriate training to address the changing demographics of their students. Pre-service teachers should be graduating, license in hand, prepared to meet the challenges of differentiation, immigration, and parents from varying backgrounds. Pre-service and practicing teachers alike must constantly have relevant conversations and workshops addressing diversity and inclusion. Fueled by policy reform, political turmoil, and police brutality, the United States has seen a drastic increase of students feeling misunderstood by peers because of differences they may not be able to articulate. Examples such as girls being singled out due to wearing a hijab, boys ruthlessly being chastised based on gender norms, and teenagers being shunned for their sexual orientation.

To say that the torment ends following high school is also not accurate. Even with adults, I see stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, and misconceptions hinder empathy and understanding. From my own personal experience in the workplace, playful chides and jokes meant to be conversation starters are hurtful and discriminatory. Who is to blame? Do we place the blame on parents for not having important conversations with their children about race in an earlier stage in life? Do we hold teachers accountable for
not addressing it directly in school? I reflect on the pivotal years where I began discussing these difficult topics and wondered if having these conversations earlier would have impacted how my initial perceptions, not only of myself but also of others, may have formed.

**Impact of Teacher Preparation Programs on Teachers of Color**

When reflecting on my own education courses, I began to ponder the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs and whether the institution or courses could be a stepping-stone for how teachers ultimately teach in the classroom. As a teacher of color, much like other students of color in education programs, I generally found myself either the only one of non-Caucasian descent or perhaps one of two if I was lucky. As I proceeded through my courses, I began to notice there were limited resources, if any, to prepare teachers of color in a system that was not designed for students and teachers like me. Much like our students, being an educator of color poses many uncomfortable risks. For example my personal upbringing and experiences in the public school system is very different than that of my peers and posing a drastically different experience can be threatening. Finding textbooks with faces that look like mine are hard to come by and advocating for more resources that include Asian Americans is difficult to find thus furthering the tunnel of seclusion.

As educators, we are to demonstrate patience, articulate adversity in our own words, and teach to cultural awareness and competency. This study aims to define the correlation between multicultural training for pre-service teachers and their effectiveness in implementing a multicultural curriculum in the classroom. Throughout my education program, Professors warned and made me weary of “the hottest research” or “the latest
trend” administrators will discover and just as hastily implement hoping for dynamic results quickly. Many of these fads do not remain intact much longer than a trial period of a few years. Incorporating multicultural curriculum in every subject should not be one of these trends that drift in and out of our universities and public schools. My research question is aimed directly at the heart of finding what will work best for our faculty, staff, students, and future educators in order to best equip our up and coming workforce and to further teachers of color retention. Within this chapter, I will further review my education background that includes my own experiences with diversity and misunderstandings, as well as discuss my plan to proceed with my research following the analysis of my research question.

**Constant Learning**

I believe that training programs for pre-service teachers cannot be the only source of guidance and there is more that can be done. Diversity awareness and inclusion is a social issue. Faculty, staff, and administrators must be in constant learning. We need to grow in diversity awareness and inclusion as a collective community to support pre-service and veteran teachers alike. Through my research I will explore what may be the best approach to doing this entails. Whether it is adapting our lessons to increase inclusivity to reflect the changing demographic issues our students will face in the real world or reflecting on our national and educational history in order to define how and why our current programs are ineffective, it is important that we take time to understand what gaps exist in our teacher programs for future and veteran teachers alike.

In addition to performing an in-depth case study with five practicing educators, I hope to find universities and/or colleges who are already finding ways to be more
progressive and effective in not only providing appropriate resources but intentional
guidance to issues pre-service teachers may face following their teacher candidacy.
Classroom management, parents, peer discrimination, and racial bullying are all topics
that can easily plague first-year teachers’ thoughts and can also easily be areas that are
supported by administrators and veteran mentors.

As stated prior, our student demographic is changing and our country is
constantly confronted with social issues such as racism and illegal immigration. Our
students are not exempt from consuming these pieces of news through multiple channels.
Whether it be social media, from their parents, or word of mouth, they are absorbing this
information faster than we are able to discuss and sadly through mediums that may not
necessarily provide all of the facts.

**Background of the Researcher**

**Family History of Prejudice**

Being a first-generation student, I knew growing up that my childhood was
different. My family was different. And I, in turn, was different. It feels as if my family
has never been able to escape prejudices and discrimination, even in our homeland. My
mother, Thiet, and older siblings were born in Pleiku, Vietnam where money was scarce
and food was difficult to come by. My oldest sister, Nguyet, is the daughter of an
American soldier she never knew, and spent her life in Vietnam ridiculed for being
Ameriasian often referred to as bụi đời, meaning “dust of life”. My sister and many
others who are considered Ameriasian are treated as if their lives are insignificant, like
that of dust, to be brushed aside and forgotten. Nguyet was ostracized, shunned, and
suffered greatly from the stigma in many ways that many biracial children in the United
States experience today. My oldest and only brother, Lam, was frequently tormented in school for our family being tremendously poor. Many times he would only have access to used or beaten up books, tattered clothes, and morsels to eat for lunch. He was bullied extensively and by his teenage years found it better to abandon his education completely and drop out of school. Instead he worked in the rice fields alongside my mother to help provide for his two younger sisters Hoa and Hien.

After decades of struggling to make ends meet, my mother made the difficult decision to leave her entire family, friends, and the only life she knew behind. She wanted more for her family and the war torn country she loved was not a place her children could prosper in. Following the devastation of the Vietnam civil war, my mother fled. After spending a few years in a Filipino refugee camp, my mother and four siblings were sponsored to immigrate to the United States in 1989.

**Sponsorship to the United States of America**

Upon their arrival, they found solace in a dilapidated Section Eight housing, but anything and everything in America was glamorous in comparison to the thatched roof houses of their homeland. Not long after, my mother met my father, Sau, and his two daughters from a previous marriage. The two wed and I shortly followed. Growing up, my parents spoke very little English and to this day would much rather converse in their native tongue.

As the years grew on, my sisters and I became translators for our parents. I was included in and translated at all of my mother’s doctor appointments, work functions, and of course, all of my parent-teacher conferences. This never bothered me until one of my classmates taunted me and stated that my parents were illiterate and couldn’t understand
anything because they were simply too stupid. I remember being incredibly embarrassed and ashamed that my parents couldn’t be like the parents of my friends. I remember being followed home from school one day and having someone scream horrible things to my mother as she shook her head and repeatedly stated she could not understand. I could not appreciate at it then, but my mother always did her best to try to understand and at an early age, I turned my back in helping her.

**Hiding from the Skin I Live in**

As the years grew on, my demeanor changed. When I was in junior high, I made a conscious decision to avoid sharing anything about my heritage. At an age where your self-worth felt closely connected to the opinion of others, I wanted to hide all of the pieces that could potentially be a target for criticism. I was taught to believe early in life that differences should be masked, hid, and never disclosed.

I stopped inviting classmates over to my house for fear of being misunderstood. My parents are very traditional in many ways: we have an altar honoring my late grandparents, we honor the Buddha and his wisdom, and we still put food offerings out to respect our elders. To avoid being seen as an outcast or “different”, I completely stopped speaking Vietnamese and lost my language. Although unbeknownst to me at the time, in doing so I also lost my cultural connection, the beauty of my ancestors, the love of my homeland, and most important, I lost a part of me that made me special. As the years went on, the bullying subsided. It felt as if the more layers I shed of my heritage and the more walls I put up to assimilate, the more popular I became. All the while, I battled depression and an empty void I could not identify.
Finding my Cultural Identity

It wasn’t until college that I found individuals who embraced their heritage in a way that I wish I could. Growing up in a predominantly white neighborhood didn’t lend itself to many Asian Americans I could connect with. Although my licensing program may not have been reflective of the culture of the campus, it was in my undergrad when I started to discover how beautiful it is to live in a community that is diverse and embraces other cultures. For once in my life, I felt proud. I started to comprehend and recognize the tears, hardship, and triumph my family endured the decade or so prior to my birth. I started engaging in conversations to understand others and their stories. I started taking courses that further deepened my diversity awareness and continued to fuel my desire to understand my heritage.

As I continue to grow in my own Asian-American skin, I realize the power of opinion, the magnitude of stereotypes, and the depth of hate. Had I found an encouraging peer group when I was an adolescent, would this have changed my diverse outlook? Had I been born in a town where there were more people who looked like me, would I have embraced my heritage more readily? What if I had teachers who encouraged multiculturalism and celebrated diversity throughout my schooling years, would I have not thought so lowly of my yellow skin? Although I cannot change my past, I am wholeheartedly curious of what can be done to further challenge the fate of others who may be walking in my shoes and their future to come.

Guiding Research Question

This study aims to define the correlation between multicultural training for pre-service teachers and their effectiveness in implementing a multicultural curriculum in the
classroom. There are many prejudices and biases we have all experienced throughout our lives. In reflecting on these difficult times it would be easy to place blame. We could blame an individual person, we could blame social media; we could even go so far as blaming society. It is indeed the most intriguing when we blame society, when in fact we are society. We all play a part in reinforcing these stigmas, these biases, and these prejudices. Throughout our lives, we are constantly bombarded by subtle messages that instill social norms and shape what we view as good and bad behavior while also shaping within us tokens of prejudice and acceptance (Adams et al., 1997). Whether it is through cultural outlets such as music and media or by institutions such as churches and schools, society is constantly being fed messages of discrimination, privilege, and empowerment.

**Conclusion**

Through my study and the study of research that has come before me, this study aims to define the correlation between multicultural training for pre-service teachers and their effectiveness in implementing a multicultural curriculum in the classroom. As educators, we must hold each other accountable. It begins with how we are initially trained and the ideas we foster into actions. Our lessons and conversations with our students must transcend textbooks and impact the way they view the world around them. As educators, we must also recognize that our training more often times than not reflects the values of the dominant society that may lead to perpetuating the status quo.

We must propel forward to promote bilingualism, personal freedom, and pluralism. It is part of our core role to ensure our students’ voices from all backgrounds are being heard, and as educational leaders, we must also ensure that our pre-service teachers are receiving the most effective programs they can to comprehend, respect, and
embrace multiculturalism and diversity. Preparation on a theoretical and conceptual level is not enough and we must do a better job at preparing educators to face issues of race and ethnicity head on. For all these reasons and more, the aim of my research is to further help pave the way to enhance multicultural understanding for not only pre-service teachers, but also practicing teachers, staff, and marginalized students.

The following chapter will examine the extensive research and findings regarding multicultural education and pre-service teaching programs. Multicultural education arose out of the civil rights movement of the 1960’s and 1970’s that aims for school reform that incorporates people from different cultural backgrounds whether that be in classroom materials, values, or perspectives (Banks & Banks, 1995). Similar to the journey of self-discovery, it is important to first understand the segregation history of our country and how our education workforce has formed and continues to greatly impact our students. Through understanding our past and the development of our current state, the gap in multicultural education becomes more apparent and relevant. It is not a recently developed concept, but similar to the demographics of our classrooms, it is slowly changing and we must be quicker to adapt. Geneva Gay (2004), a leading multicultural education researcher and professor describes the constant need to evaluate our practices to ensure we as educators are being culturally relevant, validating, and affirming of all our students.

Alongside the review of key researchers and using the framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), teacher educators, institutions, and districts can further enhance their programs to become more inclusive, aware, and empathetic to diverse students, faculty, and staff. Teacher educators in particular play a critical role behind the
scenes and must also be assessed for cultural competency. Similar to teachers themselves, professors educating pre-service teachers must adequately guide, support, and nurture conversations to cultivate cultural competence and self-reflection.

Lastly, chapter two will touch on the social impact of misconception, discrimination, and stereotypes. In closely examining racial bullying in particular, researchers are able to distinguish what may arise due to the lack of emphasis in multicultural education in the classroom. When reviewing racial bullying prevention theories and government policies, much can be gleaned from researching school climate, teacher perspectives, and community contexts; all of which will be studied and taken into consideration within this research.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Much has been explored in the realm of multicultural education, but little describes the impact pre-service training has on the proceeding implementation in real classrooms. This study aims to define the correlation between multicultural training for pre-service teachers and their effectiveness in implementing a multicultural curriculum in the classroom. In a university setting, much of the training involves developing lesson plans and practicing in “the perfect world” with ideal classroom sizes and cooperating students. The narrative is much different when educators are in their own classrooms with students from diverse backgrounds with minimal resources and time to plan their perfect curriculum. It is powerful to explore if a correlation exists between the conducted multicultural training programs and future success in addressing diversity. It is important to reveal how educators use the imparted knowledge and what other resources may be needed to build global citizens to further understand themselves and the world around them. By reviewing and analyzing previous research, this study aims to define the correlation between multicultural training for pre-service teachers and their effectiveness in implementing a multicultural curriculum in the classroom.

Chapter two infuses previous conversations regarding multicultural training of pre-service teachers to address the following questions in order to shed light on the systemic influence on multiculturalism.

(1) Why is the history of *Brown vs. Board of Education* still important?

(2) In what ways has multicultural education evolved since its inception?
(3) How are current training programs structured for pre-service teachers and in-service teachers?

(4) How does multicultural education fit into the conversation of racial bullying?

Through unpacking our history and understanding its evolution, only then can we expand conversations on how to best meet the needs of all students in the classroom.

**Historical Background**

*Brown v. Board of Education*

In 1954 the historical *Brown v. Board of Education* openly rejected the “separate-but-equal” doctrine that infiltrated the segregated schools of the United States (*Brown v. Bd. of Educ. of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)*). Marbley et al. (2007) notes that this court ruling continues to be an important decision in our history and remains pivotal for two main reasons: (1) the ruling mandated that the integration of racially diverse students in classrooms be constitutionally sanctioned; and (2) the ruling brought to light, for teachers especially, the need to be prepared to teach respectfully and effectively to all students. Although awareness was heightened in regards to the changes in classrooms, educators were not provided appropriate training needed to accommodate the influx of student diversity. Teachers found themselves with very little preparation to accommodate the differing learning styles and needs of the mixed student population (Marbley et al., 2007).

Due to the various transitions and movement of children who came out of the separate-but-equal doctrine, many schools that previously taught black students were either demoted or closed. As a result, a large population of minority teachers who formerly taught in these schools found themselves without jobs (Ford, 2013). This moment in history has since been noted as the beginning of our present day profile of the
nations teaching force that finds itself overwhelmingly female, monolingual, middle-class, monocultural, and Caucasian. In a recent study, it has been discovered nationally that the K-12 teaching force is 85 percent white with an increasing 50 percent student population that continues to grow racially and culturally (Ford, 2013). This gap in teachers of color further exacerbates and reflects issues that plagued our country nearly a half a century ago.

The cultural difference between the student and teacher population is a gap that continues to widen and is notably troublesome as it raises the question about teacher’s effectiveness to relate and meet the needs of students who are not like them (Maged, 2013). Having educators that reflect the diversity of the students in front of them is crucial in advocating for a community of unity, empathy, and understanding. It is not to say that qualifications are to be compromised for the sake of building a diverse staff but it is important to note that there must be greater effort in both recruiting and retaining a diverse staff of educators. Providing students with a rich community of educators from diverse backgrounds opens doors to conversations stemming from personal experiences that may otherwise not be available. On the contrary, the perpetuation of monolingual classrooms reinforces a uniform thought that shelters a singular value of one-size-fits-all.

Contemporary Issues

Due to the concentrated nature of schools with its large class sizes and small classrooms, it serves as an easy channel for micro-aggressions to take root and perpetuate socio-cultural messages that further enforce cues of stigmatization and inferiority. A recent definition provided by Professor Allen of Drexel University describes micro-aggressions as being “brief verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities that
communicate hostile, derogatory, denigrating, and hurtful messages to people of color” (2013, p. 117). Micro-aggressions have also been seen as verbal or nonverbal environmental cues meant to invalidate an individual’s experience and perpetuate feelings of inferiority. Faculty and staff may also manifest these feelings unconsciously and transfer these emotions into subtle negative interpretations of student behaviors which can lead to ability tracking and labeling.

Professionals who display micro-aggressions feed into the idea that minorities are in some way, shape, or form deficient genetically (the genetic deficient model) and/or culturally (the culturally deficient model) (Sue et al., 1992). These unconscious acts have been known to trigger performance anxiety whereby students develop what is called a “stereotype threat”. Stereotype threat refers to the fear or risk of confirming or conforming to stereotypes about their associated social group. When students experience this wave of emotion, they are likely to perform poorly as a result of feeling as if they are being evaluated through the lens of race and not as competent individual students. These constant micro-aggressions received from peers, faculty, staff, and the community spiral within the student’s psyche and can impact and affect students’ wellbeing, self-concept, and racial identity development.

In an effort to combat these behaviors and raise awareness of the importance of diversity, multicultural education was born. Introduced during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s, multicultural education began as a reaction to the implementation of the Brown case and served as a monumental period for equality (Gay, 2004). The initial inclusion efforts began as having a single-group focus incorporated into the classroom curriculum that included race specific minority units, courses and
programs, such as Asian American Studies. It was soon discovered that incorporating one option alone was not enough and certainly was not all-inclusive. As populations of racial and ethnic minorities in the United States increased, communities found racial intolerance in the form of “hate crimes” (murder, physical attacks, threats, racial epithets, destruction of property, etc.) also rose (Sue et al. 1992).

In the mid-1970’s the content specific curriculum quickly evolved into not only raising an awareness of diverse ethnic groups, but also encompassed the wide-array of issues each cultural group has had to face. Although the emphasis in content was delayed, the purpose and goal of multicultural education did not alter. Since its inception, the priority has always been to penetrate classrooms of all student levels with the messages of developing knowledge and skills to recognize and respect ethnic, racial, and cultural differences (Sue et al. 1992). Proficiency in understanding and competently articulating the significance of diversity in the classroom directly connects to students ability to conceptualize democracy, apply educational equity, and establish unity with diverse populations.

Multicultural Education

Multicultural Conceptualization

There are multiple studies regarding multicultural education. Large emphasis has been placed on the disparity between the achievement gap of majority and minority students and the reflection of dominant values in the classroom. What is important to initially understand is the research that began to conceptualize what causes such a gap to exist in the first place. Historically there were three primary models that created a harming and deceptive view for ethnic understanding: the Inferiority or Pathological
model, the Genetically Deficient model, and the Culturally Deprived (Deficient) model
(Sue et al, 1992). Throughout the study of history, the three models proved to be the
groundwork for generations whereby stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination would be
fed.

**Table One**
**Multicultural Conceptualization and Research**
Based on Sue et al., 1992, p. 479

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Premise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inferiority or Pathological Model</td>
<td>• Minorities are lower on the evolutionary scale (more primitive) than are their white counterparts and, thus, are more inherently pathological.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Genetically Deficient Model                | • Blacks and other racial and ethnic minorities were deficient in desirable genes.  
|                                            | • Differences between whites and minorities were the reflection of biological and genetic inferiority. |
| Culturally Deprived (Deficient) Model      | • Fault lies not in the genetic composition of an individual but the culture for the “minority problem”. |

**Inferiority or Pathological Model.** This harmful model’s basic premise created
the notion of an “us” versus “them” dynamic in which anyone who may be a person of
color is inherently inferior (Sue et al, 1992). In understanding how this may be a thought
process trickled down through the generations, educators are able to address this bias
through conversations, reflection, and empathy in how students of colors may even
perceive themselves in such an inferior way.

**Genetically Deficient Model.** This model articles the idea that minorities simply
cannot help the fact that they are inferior (Sue et al, 1992). By associating this notion
with something tangible such as genes, sociologists were able to tie their hypothesis of
minorities being inferior due to an evolutionary scale. Although reframed in the
Culturally Deprived model, the idea of minorities being deficient can be seen in the
overwhelming preference for whites in most platforms such as entertainment and literature. Educators can breakdown this stereotype by being intentional in course materials and displaying a wide variety of face and backgrounds throughout their classroom.

**Culturally Deprived (Deficient) Model.** Surprisingly enough, well-intentioned social scientists developed this model as a means to blame the culture in an effort to reject placing blame on an individual’s genes. The model of course perpetuates the view of minorities being pathological and a problem needing to be mended (Sue et al, 1992). In the years following this model’s conception, it was used as a working explanation for why minorities may have different norms, values, attitudes and skills. Associating this with a form of deficiency and assumption that students of color are thus less likely to succeed is unethical and very harmful.

By acknowledging the stigmas associated with the three crippling models and holding all students to high standards must become a new standard. Sue et al. (1992, p 480) contends: “there is a strong acknowledgement that racial and ethnic minorities are bicultural and function in at least two different cultural contexts… biculturalism is seen as a positive and desirable quality that enriches the full range of human potential.”

Positioning students to also embrace this enriching mindset allows for perspective taking and the road to acceptance to begin. Through the awareness and celebration of difference teachers, students, and society can become catalysts for advocacy and promote change. Rejecting models that sustain racist, prejudice, and discriminatory schools of thought is detrimental to creating a culture of acceptance and should not be allowed in the classroom.
**Philosophy of Multicultural Education**

Sarraj et al. (2015) supports the National Association for Multicultural Education’s description of multicultural education as a “philosophical concept built on the ideas of freedom, justice, equality, and human dignity” (p. 30). It has developed to promote cultural pluralism in education that includes beliefs in equal opportunity and respect for human dignity. Although it has evolved immensely since its inception, it continues to grow in importance as teachers find themselves encountering learners who are vastly different socially and culturally from one another. This development in diversity is not new but is certainly much more pronounced in certain first world countries such as the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom (Maged, 2013).

Proper multicultural training and education for teachers and students alike allow for the appropriate learning and practice of pedagogy and strategic methods. This foundation takes cultural diversity into consideration when meeting the educational needs of ethnically diverse students. The most renowned framework for these needs is recognized to be Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP). This framework emerged as an asset-based approach that seeks to understand and value ethnic groups’ cultural values, traditions, communication and learning styles, contributions, and relational patterns. As professionals we must always take into account the “average values” of any one cultural group cannot be generalized or assumed to be the average values of any one individual (Sue, 1992).

Geneva Gay, who is a multicultural Educator Award recipient and Professor of Multicultural Education at the University of Washington-Seattle, articulates that CRP “uses the cultural knowledge, prior experience, frames of reference and performance
styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant and effective…it teaches to and through strengths of these students; it is culturally validating and affirming” (2000, p. 29). The ideals embedded within CRP celebrate and encourage the diversity of present day classrooms by moving away from the “melting pot” analogy strips students from what makes them individuals. Sociologists most commonly refer to the “melting pot” concept to describe the assimilation of immigrants in the United States. The metaphor represents the blending of a heterogeneous society into a more homogenous single culture society. It describes the vision of absorption into a standardized acceptance of one culture versus the celebration of the vast abundance of multiple cultures. The CRP model challenges educators of all subject matter to learn about the vast contributions to their field from different ethnic groups. By sharing these notable achievements from individuals outside of the typical white male image, students can become more accustomed to celebrating diverse talent and impactful leaders with a variety of backgrounds. With this small change in practice, educators are able to provide further opportunities for their students to become more versed in the wealth of leading multicultural scholars who have helped shape their field of study.

**Implementation of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in the Classroom**

An important aspect of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) in the classroom is helping students understand and reduce prejudice by addressing critical issues such as racism, oppression, and discrimination. Gay (2002) proposes three specific considerations on how to convert curriculum and instructional designs to be more culturally responsive by doing the following:
1) Analyzing textbooks and instructional materials to be representative of cultural diversity (Formal curriculum)
2) Including positive images, symbols, icons, and artifacts around the classroom to convey important information, values and actions about ethnic and cultural diversity (Symbolic curriculum)
3) Engaging in meaningful conversations regarding knowledge, ideas, and impressions concerning ethnic groups in the media (p. 108-109).

Culturally diverse classrooms need to reflect the ideals and values that reinforce and reflect positive images of the students. Conversations and curriculum are only part of the equation in allowing students the ability to feel comfortable and confident to excel academically.

**Topic Chaining versus Topic Centered.** As a means to further enhance student’s academic ability, there are numerous cultural and custom considerations educators must keep in mind when implementing CRP. A primary example is task engagement and the compatibility of cultural systems in the classroom. Asian, African, Native, and Latino-American cultures practice a communication style called “Topic Chaining” (also known as “Topic Associating”) (Gay, 2004). It is a highly contextual communication style where speakers tend to provide ample background information that is indirect. More often than not, speakers use symbolism or metaphors to convey an idea or message. An example of topic chaining can be seen in the fictional book, *The House on Mango Street* written by Sandra Cisneros. The text skillfully showcases the intermingled communication style of topic chaining where characters stories are constantly overlapping in nature.
This differs greatly from the current style within schools characterized by direct and linear communication called “Topic Centered” which reflects the European American cultural system (Gay, 2004). In this communication style, it is common that educators will focus on one topic at a time and be more linear in thought process. In this way, most ideas are presented alone and then gathered into a cumulative whole. For example, it is common fashion to first dissect sections of a text to better understand the plotline of the book rather than the small details that make up the whole. Teachers who may not be aware of this difference in communication and familiar processing styles may mistake it as a student being difficult, defiant, or insubordinate. Misunderstandings then can often result in alienation and a student’s inability to develop trust and rapport with their teacher. For the student in particular, the conflicting styles may cause incongruent results that do not leave room for differentiation to meet their needs and learn effectively.

Similar to Gay, Dr. Shireen Maged (2013), the Regional Academic Manager of Te Wananga o Aotearoa in Auckland, New Zealand, notes the framework a teacher employs directly corresponds to the success of the student. By training teachers to use Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, they are able to more actively shift cultural paradigms and create environments where all students can succeed (2013). Through CRP teachers are provided a focused channel to better close the achievement gap. Having a framework to reduce the development of culturally alienating learning environments that meets student’s socio-cultural learning needs empowers all students. It is important to note that this does includes students of all races, backgrounds, and socioeconomic backgrounds not simply those who come from dominant socio-cultural backgrounds that reflect monoculture values perpetuated by society.
Furthermore, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy prompts teachers to implement and dedicate large portions of instructional time to incorporating examples, scenarios, and stories that reflect diverse experiences. By infusing examples that are reflective of personal experiences, educators are providing ample opportunity for students to apply appropriate context to abstract concepts, principles, and skills. In doing so, teachers are offering lessons that are more meaningful and more memorable. Other considerations for implementation include the importance of reflecting on student cultures by matching teaching styles with different ethnic learning styles and connecting home cultures with that of the school culture (Gay 2004). Not only is it important to ensure students are feeling well equipped and supported, it is vital educators, faculty, and staff are also provided the resources they need to prepare for a diverse school.

**Multicultural Training Programs**

In an effort to further enhance the learning experience in education the National Council for Accreditation of Teaching Education (NCATE) accepts “working with Diverse Populations” as one of six main standards in preparing educators to work effectively in P-12 schools (as cited in Basbay, 2014, p. 603). Throughout their programs, pre-service teachers need experiences that will prepare them to confront the shifting cultural, social, and intellectual demands of the increasingly evolving demographic of present day classrooms. Students from various walks of life are coming into classrooms carrying their experiences, families, cultures, and customs. Warren, who specializes in urban teacher preparation and culturally responsive teaching, concludes that being an empathetic and perspective-taking teacher can dramatically increase one’s ability to think
critically of how to incorporate learnings regarding multicultural education and apply them appropriately (2013).

Empathy is a culmination of feelings of sympathy, personal closeness, grief, or a human connection to another’s suffering or unfortunate circumstance. It involves reacting to another’s distress by providing equal concern for their wellbeing and emotional state. Perspective taking involves an intellectual process that includes adopting and taking a stance of understanding another’s point of view through two separate forms of imagery. The first involves strictly imagining how another individual may be experiencing their current state and embracing the condition they may be in (imagine other). Imagining other encompasses relentlessly removing all personal opinions or beliefs to fully understand how another may be feeling. The second involves intently imagining how one’s own self may personally experience the condition of another and putting oneself in “another’s shoes” (imagine self).

The culmination of empathy and perspective taking creates culturally responsive teaching that allows teachers to be able to enter into the world of their students and see through the lens of the student in order to best plan and meet the student’s needs. Culturally and linguistically diverse students deserve teachers who appreciate their home lives and are aware of the social and cultural implications that come with being a person of color. Teachers are much more effective in the classroom when they appreciate the student for who they are. Examples of ways to do so involve empathizing with their student’s personal experiences and attempting to reduce prejudice by not only teaching but also modeling for their students how to empathize with marginalized groups. Vice versa, students who are consistently surrounded by educators who demonstrate qualities
of what it means to be a global citizen that is open-minded and empathetic towards others encourages even greater understanding of others inside and outside of the classroom.

**Multicultural Education Design for Pre-Service Teachers**

A critical initial step to empathic teaching is first examining and considering one’s own views and beliefs towards cultural diversity. Data highlights that diversity and multicultural perspectives should be infused throughout teacher education programs in contrast to simply showcasing one multicultural education course (Cho, 2006). Having one or two courses dedicated to understanding multiculturalism is a disservice to all pre-service teachers because it is only exploring surface level differences in culture and language, and it generally does not comprise a coherent curriculum (Assaf, 2010). When designed and implemented properly, pre-service teachers should be provided with ample opportunities to reflect and discuss social inequalities and institutionalized oppression as well as their own role in these systems. Gay & Kirkland note, “teachers knowing who they are as people, understanding the contexts in which they teach, and questioning their knowledge and assumptions are as important as the mastery of techniques for instructional effectiveness” (2003, p. 181). These pivotal courses and conversations provide a sheltered environment and safe space to question and transform preconceived notions. Without adequate guidance and support, pre-service teachers may not see the value of cultural differences and begin to question the validity and importance of multicultural education. As a result, unaware educators may feel uncomfortable with multicultural implementation and application in the classroom.
To combat this occurrence, programs must cultivate strong pre-service teachers who appreciate all students and gain a deep understanding of sociocultural competence. Maged (2013) defines sociocultural competence as:

The demonstration of three key skills or capabilities, firstly that teachers develop a deep awareness of their own cultural assumptions and biases; secondly that they have substantial knowledge of the socio-cultural backgrounds of their learners; and thirdly that they are able to apply culturally relevant and culturally responsive strategies in the classroom (p. 186).

Many education programs have adopted strategies to develop competent sociocultural educators but few programs have truly addressed and continuously encouraged awareness of cultural, ethnic, racial, classist, and socio-economic oppression into their classroom. Due to this, there is a widening gap that emerges between the conceptual knowledge and actual application of methods to decrease oppression of minority groups. As described later in case study results, it can be seen that education programs are spending an abundance of time emphasizing theories and losing sight of balancing how to implement them.

**Multicultural Education Frameworks**

**Universal Design for Learning.** A recent study by Professor Mary Pearson demonstrates the framework of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in the classroom with her student teachers. The method involved “flipping her classroom”, which included having students watch video lessons at home prior to completing homework assignments in the classroom (Pearson, 2015). The UDL model was an instrumental tool for
demonstrating to her pre-service teachers the beneficial framework and planning process of developing a rich curriculum that provides powerful learning opportunities and outcomes for diverse students (Pearson, 2015). As the Flipped Learning Network describes:

Flipped Learning is a pedagogical approach in which direct instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space, and the resulting group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter (as cited in Pearson, 2015, p. 27).

As a means to help pre-service teachers physically conceptualize as well as empathize with the spectrum of learners in their future classrooms, the instructor utilized different types of active learning techniques to model how to increase engagement through the use of technology. The incorporation of video lectures, online modules, online quizzes, readings, and other activities provided active learning strategies that further enhanced learning opportunities and allowed for differentiation and accessibility to all learners.

**Multicultural Education Model.** Another strategy worthy of mention is the reconstructivist multicultural education model that stems from the social justice platform and directly addresses issues of oppression and discrimination (Tinkler & Tinkler, 2013). This framework argues that course content alone will not be enough to persuade and change the views of pre-service teachers about diversity. Other important components such as prior experience, political beliefs, beliefs about schools and racial awareness are also factors that must be taken into consideration when designing a program fit for the
future classroom. Many teacher educators have supplemented various multicultural coursework with that of field experiences or service-learning projects that immerse pre-service teachers directly into diverse settings.

**Service Learning.** Field experiences such as service learning promotes the incorporation of service projects with the intention of allowing both the recipient and the provider of the services the ability to witness change. Courses that integrate these practices acknowledge and provide a safe space for pre-service teachers to make sense of their experience and self-reflect as well as discover valuable skills and knowledge content that will add to their multicultural educator status. A large benefit to service learning and field experiences are the ability to confront as well as raise awareness of previous preconceived notions and misconceptions. Most notable outcomes have proven that the time spent in the diverse settings ignited pre-service teachers desire to challenge the status quo and advocate for their future students (Tinkler & Tinkler, 2013).

Although there were many benefits to service learning, it is notable to mention there have also been unintended effects that have risen from these opportunities. Unfortunate adverse effects include fostering negative perspectives of community members and the creation of deficit perspectives that lead to lower expectations of students. Based on various reflections of pre-service teachers, there are also concerns of an inability to apply their learnings to their diverse classrooms, recognizing that multicultural education is equally important to white students as it is for students of color, and also acknowledging that white teachers who may be teaching in white schools must also incorporate multicultural education (Tinkler & Tinkler, 2013). Regardless of the demographic of the student population, it is vital educators are able to distinguish that
race, culture, and ethnicity are critical components of every individual and not limited to “just minorities” (Sue, et al. 1992). These fearful concerns of application may result in the perpetuation of non-awareness amongst pre-service teachers and their students.

**Teacher Educator (TE) Training and Qualifications**

Much like the qualifications of pre-service teachers, there must also be an examination of those who are trusted to teach the future teaching workforce. In reflecting on field-based learning and observations, it should be the teacher educators, who like the teachers they are training, help their students understand and make sense of what they are witnessing and experiencing. As mentioned previously, university and college professors should be creating sheltered spaces for open conversation and self-reflection where students feel a sense of safe discomfort to challenge their own views and attitudes while also feeling affirmed in their experiences. A recent study by the Teacher Preparation Program conducted at the University of North Carolina found many faculty members described a fear of an inconsistency in expressed importance in multicultural education in peer’s classrooms (Assaf et al. 2010). Others examined faculty peers were intentionally resisting topics of race on systemic levels to avoid uncomfortable discussions that teachers may not be fully equipped to address (Assaf et al. 2010).

** Appropriately Guiding Conversations.** In addition to teacher educator preparation, it has been noted that very rarely is there guidance or professional development provided in order to adequately manage feelings of vulnerability in the classroom while teaching multicultural education (Cutri, 2015). Many times professors may find themselves conflicted with personal emotional reactions when faced with situations where pre-service teachers have opposing views on systemic issues. Although
it may be difficult for teacher educators to push personal feelings aside, it is important to remember that for many students, this may be the first time pre-service teachers are confronted with topics such as oppression and must be guided through this important phase of reflection. Topics such as class, prejudice, privilege, and discrimination are not only challenging the pre-service teachers but also teacher educators alike in how their own personal beliefs translate into actions.

Within the context of academia, it is critical for all parties to negotiate how best to carefully challenge viewpoints and engage in these discussions to create learning moments. Teacher educators must not become tempted to fall back on using ineffective teaching strategies such as the banking model of education out of sheer frustration. The banking model refers to simply dispersing or briefly covering information rather than discussing and thoroughly digesting complex material. It can refer to not only the repetition of facts, but also applies to lectures and discussions that are very shallow in depth and missing in valuable content. Maged contends:

If the ‘main mechanism of development’ is verbal interaction or dialogue between teacher and learner, then an environment that is characterized by a one-way teacher monologue and a passive, silent recipient, is not going to promote learning or cognitive development (Maged, 2013, 194).

The learning environment is exponentially enhanced through an interactive and social relationship between the teacher and learner in contrast to a simple lecture.

By not explicitly addressing race, a presumptive “colorblind” perspective pervades conversations and perpetuates negative connotations toward minority populations. Turning away from challenging multicultural issues continues the cycle of
affirming students who come from dominant cultural values and actively de-values students from minority cultural values (Maged, 2013). Teacher candidates must be provided more than a handful of methods and strategies. It is a disservice not to engage in discourse that challenges, advances, and promotes multicultural teaching learning.

**Actively Seeking Diverse Perspectives.** A simple and effective way to encourage these progressive conversations is to provide ample opportunities to engage as well as recruit faculty of color. Equally important in examining the demographic and population of students of color is that of the demographic and population of faculty/staff that are of color. Jennifer Adair, Professor at the University of Texas who specializes in the role of race, cultures, and cross-cultural experiences, posits, “The presence of stories and storytelling has been a powerful tool to expose racism throughout American history… but storytelling is not just about the stories but who gets to tell which stories” (2008, p. 200).

Similarly important to the future schools of pre-service teachers, it is important universities also seek professors of color who may be able to relate and build on personal incidents with their students to highlight issues through a lens of authentic and private experiences. Comparably, it is critical that students of color in pre-service courses be positioned as experts to share their stories and experiences with their peers. This creates a strong community of respect that takes into consideration the validity of others to empathize and again use perspective taking.

**Training Programs for Teachers Once in the Classroom**

Director of Community Education at Chapman University, Doctor Colon-Muniz states:
A shockingly low percentage of principals said that their teachers were very or moderately well prepared to meet the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds (28 percent); to work with parents (21 percent) and to help students with limited English proficiency (16 percent) (2010, p. 85).

Continual training and self-reflection for in-service teachers is crucial to the success of multicultural and culturally responsive practice. Once pre-service teachers enter a school, they must be even more aware of their social identity and the impact of their identity to others. Workshops, training sessions, and encouragement for teachers to explore, dialogue, and reflect with one another regarding social identities is important to the overall school climate and health of their classrooms and students. Through this comradery and partnership of awareness in both faculty and staff comes the ability to engage with students actively and authentically to inspire trust and demonstrate a commitment to diversity work.

Through a community of school support, the culture and norms of schools has more potential to support multicultural education initiatives and provide for training implementation and continual growth. Once an awareness and foundation has been grounded, powerful exercises such as privilege walks, simulations of inequality, role-playing of difficult situations in the classroom, and simply dialoguing about best practices allow for continual exploration of the nature of inequality and how to best address it as a joining force. Schools must work together to include all personnel, faculty, staff, and members of the community to ensure a consistent message of multicultural education’s importance. Essential topics for discussion must include the multiple
complex dimensions of social identity such as race, ethnicity, nationality, sex, gender, (dis)ability, religion, and social class (Tharp, 2012). This does not require that everyone be able to draw from personal experiences in each dimension but being able to speak knowledgeably and from a place of empathy and understanding is key.

**Racial Inequality Awareness**

Although educators cannot account for all interactions a student may have throughout their day, addressing critical issues in the classroom allows for an environment that fosters openness for students to speak and question what may occur in and outside of the school. Through the multicultural education and knowledge gleaned from teachers modeling perspective taking in the classroom, students are better equipped to practice empathy. Many times teachers can see first-hand the impact of their lessons through the actions of their students and in turn, how students treat one another. They are better armed to incorporate perspective taking to other situations, relationships, and towards other individuals they may meet outside of school.

Throughout this research, it can be seen there are many benefits that arise from an emphasis on multicultural education, but most remarkable is building the confidence in students to become catalysts for change. Engaging conversations about critical issues, students who may come across racist imagery and racial discrimination have the ability to feel confident in addressing, preventing further perpetuation, and intervening as necessary when witnessing racial bullying.

Bullying is defined as repeated acts of intentional aggression toward a target of a differing status. These incidents may take the form of physical, verbal, or nonverbal abuse and through actions such as threatening, teasing, name-calling, intentionally
excluding someone, ignoring, spreading rumors, or sending hurtful messages (Bradshaw, 2012). Racial bullying in particular is the act of targeting an individual or group of individuals for reasons such as the color of their skin, their associated ethnic group, cultural customs/practices, or language the individual may speak.

As mentioned previously, empathy and perspective taking are key elements to reducing prejudice. Emphasizing these qualities and building on these core skills during the training of pre-service teachers has arguably improved the likelihood of educators not only being aware but implementing culturally responsive practices in the classroom (Colon-Muiz, 2010). Significant gains such as a deepened understanding of a student’s situation, difficulties and strengths as well as the ability to appreciate the worldviews of the student are incredibly influential for the bond building of student-teacher relationships. Having a multicultural focus in the classroom has proven to result in monumental gains for the lives of the students involved. Benefits include an increase in engagement and motivation in lessons, fewer discipline problems, increased academic growth and cultural enrichment, as well as a positive impact in social interactions among peers (Colon-Muiz, 2010). As students share their experiences and embrace the depth of diversity inclusion, if provided the structured opportunities to do so, their enthusiasm in turn translates into an increase in academic motivation to engage in continual conversations and a heightened awareness to think critically about racial inequality (Tynes, 2015).

Although prevalence is difficult to determine due to variances in assessment method, evidence from multiple studies suggests that African American and Latino adolescents experience the highest rates of racial discrimination among samples of youth
of color (Fisher et al. 2014). In order to fully comprehend the scope of victimization, it is imperative to take into consideration the contexts in which individuals are more likely to experience peer victimization (Fisher et al. 2014). African American males in particular are more frequently labeled as aggressive by teachers and peers at a disproportionate rate in comparison to any other racial/ethnic group (Tynes, 2015). African American youth have also been found to be much more likely to experience victimization and characterization as being bully-victims in comparison to their peers (Tynes, 2015).

It is essential to highlight that adolescence is the critical period of identity formation and a heightened awareness of self. The resulting and long-lasting effects of these racial occurrences to youth is troubling for multiple reasons: they are heavily associated with an increase in behavioral issues such as conduct problems, higher levels of depressive symptoms, and lower levels of self-esteem (Tynes, 2015). Related to these social concerns is a observable link between racial discrimination and achievement-related outcomes such as lower academic achievement and engagement and lower positive perceptions of school climate and culture. What may seem as playful banter or innocent chastising may be heavily impactful for a student who is in the process of forming their identity and assessing their self-worth. For these reasons and many more, it is vital pre-service teachers are well equipped to confront and address racial bullying in and outside of their classrooms.

**Racial Bullying Prevention Theories**

Evidence-based practice (EBP) and evidence-based preventative programs (EBPP) have been praised as practical frameworks that have incorporated modern anti-bullying programs and initiatives. EBP and EBPPs holistically capture the needs of
teachers and schools to expand and refine knowledge and effective practices in an effort to prevent and reduce bullying (Ertesvag, 2014). Through the proven application of qualitative evidence into useful theories and models to address difficult problems, teachers and schools have been able to reduce reliance on ideological fads, politics, and marketing to address discrimination within their respective communities.

One such theory includes the positive impact of fostering interethnic and interracial friendships at a young age. Professor of Human Services and Rehabilitation Studies, Doctor Pica-Smith affirms that these fundamental friendships “are crucial to child development, decreasing prejudice and developing positive racial attitudes, increasing cultural competence and social-emotional competence, reducing perceived vulnerability, and increasing academic performance” (2014, p. 83). Although frequency of bullying peaks in middle school, research has found that this allows ample room for the incorporation and close examination of cultural awareness in the elementary years (Bradshaw, 2012). Allowing students to form their own ideas and attribute positive associations of other cultures outside of their own with close friendships breaks down barriers of stereotypes and presents a personal context when confronted with discriminatory situations.

State and Government Policies

Equally important as the implementation and effectiveness of multicultural and anti-bullying programs are the institutions and systems that uphold the policies created to protect all parties involved. Guidelines such as the Zero Tolerance Policy and the use of Academic tracking have been seen to further marginalize populations and students of color (Allen et al., 2013). The Zero Tolerance Policy was enacted in response to the Gun
Free School Zone Act of 1990 that resulted in mandating states to expel students who bring firearms to school. As the years progressed, Zero Tolerance absorbed other infractions such as bringing various weapons (such as clubs, swords, knives, or guns), drug abuse, destructive behavior, and other forms of school violence like bullying and cyber-bullying.

Academic tracking refers to the intentional separation of students based on academic ability, most commonly classified as high, average, or low academic performing. Both policies influence student achievement because it limits educational access and resources for students of color who are perpetually segregated into lower tracks. This greatly impacts and deepens both the achievement and opportunity gap that propels psychological factors for minority students such as their “re-evaluation of self-concept, self-efficacy, and overall academic motivation” (Allen, 2013, p. 119).

**School Climate and Community Context**

There are significant effects that arise from bullying and it is important educators spend time addressing and reflecting on the root cause for bullying. Faculty and staff are pivotal in confronting and preventing racial bullying by having difficult conversations and discussions regarding diversity topics:

Much bullying and violence is linked to prejudice and discrimination across differing social identity groups such as race, class, religion, ability, status, and social orientation. Anti-bullying initiatives are often focused on responding to the bullying behavior rather than addressing the conditions that reinforces the bullying behavior. (Pica-Smith & Pynton, 2014, p. 83)
A commitment from the community and school as a whole is necessary for students, faculty, and staff to feel supported through school climate and infrastructure to openly discuss issues such as race, racism, discrimination and prejudice. A large factor in racist victimization may be due to the school climate and contrasting ethnic norms (Fisher et al. 2014). These are the factors that reinforce the bullying behavior. It can be seen that perceptions of the school and normative beliefs may also influence when and the way adults intervene in bullying situations (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, & O’Brennan, 2013). When the entire school is involved and engaged, the gap between intervention and implementation decreases thereby increasing success rates of student comprehension and awareness. Challenges to overcome knowledge gaps are conquered through supportive dialogue and instruction, “knowing what needs to be done is different from knowing how to do it, and both types of knowledge are critical to developing stronger connections between research and practice” (Ertesvag, 2014, p. 362).

School counselors in particular play a pivotal role in developing and fostering a climate of inclusivity. By working with teachers and staff to identify areas of opportunities, school counselors are key to strengthening mutual respect and spearheading efforts to do what is best for all students. Beyond their work as a facilitator and connector, school counselors play a fundamental role in advocating for students and their future. Similarly to teachers, counselor training and effectiveness trends tend to be reflective of the value system of the middle class. This greatly hinders their perspective of what might be considered “normal” or “abnormal” and further perpetuates society’s dominant values. In many cases, marginalized groups have expressed:
Counselors are deliberately shunting minority students into dead end nonacademic programs regardless of student potential, preferences, or ambitions; that counselors discourage students from applying to college… [and] counselors do not give the same amount of energy and time in working with minorities as they do with white middle class students (Sue et al. 1992, p. 46).

There must always be an element of awareness in how certain practices may perpetuate student’s feelings of powerlessness and inferiority. A way to build on this awareness is by ensuring adequate time is spent self-reflecting on one’s own ethnicities and interpersonal style. In doing so, counselors can accurately recognize how varying ethnic backgrounds influence a student’s behavior and goals. When the continuous practice of reflecting takes place, it becomes easier to step back and be able to conceptualize all of the factors that contribute to bullying and victimization.

**Other Bullying Factors and Considerations**

There are many components that factor into racial bullying and it is focal to define these inconsistencies that have surfaced through the research of bullying. The four factors described below have been extracted and modified from a recent study conducted by Fisher et al. to meet the purposes of this research.

**Factor 1: Power Shift.** As stated previously, multicultural education is equally important to white students as it is for students of color. Issues regarding race, culture, and ethnicity are critical components of every individual and not limited to “just minorities” (Sue, et al. 1992). This may also include white students who may find themselves feeling part of a minority group. When examining the United States in
particular, whites find themselves with unconscious privilege in the broader society, but may also find that this privilege does not transfer into all settings. White privilege can be considered “perks” Caucasians have that is not earned but is advantageous over others who may not be white. For example, if a Caucasian student were to cut her finger, she could go to the nurse’s office and find a flesh-colored Band-Aid that generally matches her skin tone.

**Factor 2: Race Identification.** There is also the factor of within-group bullying that may exist among student populations. Individuals who may have negative views of their own race have a higher likelihood of bullying their peers of a particular race. “Students who believe that race is central in their identity, and have low views of their race, publically or privately, tend to have maladaptive achievement and behavior outcomes” (Chavous et al. 2003, p. 1082). Many times bullying and victimization is contrasted with the view of “the other,” but it has also been seen that racial identity, or the rejection of one’s identity, may also contribute to the maltreatment of those in the same racial or ethnic group.

**Factor 3: Acculturation of the Majority Culture.** Similar to the factor of race identification, there are victimization instances of traditionally majority students by traditionally marginalized students. A potential reason for this phenomenon is the “devaluation of the culture of the majority by the traditional minority students such as African Americans” (Fisher et al. 2014, p. 1247). An example of this can be seen when African American students in a predominantly white school are criticized for “acting White.”
**Factor 4: Privilege Association.** Physical characteristics, primarily the color of one’s skin, is used as a marker of privilege and status. Within communities of color in particular, it can either be an opportunity or a burden. As referenced in chapter one, many cultures view mixed individuals who straddle the line between intersectionality as misfits who do not belong in either world. Another example is that of the “brown paper bag test” where African Americans’ worth in society was based on whether or not the color of any given individuals skin was lighter than that of a brown paper bag. Those who were lighter often were warranted more privileges than those who were found to be darker (Fisher et al. 2014). Although the four factors listed do not comprise all scenarios that may be outliers, it is easy to see that multicultural education, the preparation of pre-service teachers, and racial bullying are dynamic and complex issues.

**Section Summary**

There are multiple lenses, frameworks, theories, and perspectives to consider but by coming from different angles and hearing different perspectives, it is possible to piece together the puzzle that continues to infiltrate each generation and evolve with each century. It is important to understand and even more important to find common ground by learning why bullying may occur and where it may derived from in order to thwart future behaviors as result of discrimination and prejudices.

Each school and community a student resides in faces their own set of challenges and difficulties. When resources, support, and adequate teaching and preparation are enacted to build the foundation for addressing multicultural issues, all those involved benefit. The initial ruling of *Brown v. Board of Topeka* was only the beginning of a snowball effect that will forever continue to mold and modify our school systems. The
education system must continue to evolve and incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy to strengthen our students and build their confidence to confront and address issues of inequality.

Pre-service programs are just the beginning of a lifetime commitment to our society and children. It is a continual effort to modify the coursework and programs of teacher candidates to emphasize and infuse multiculturalism throughout all subjects and fields. Through practices such as modeling and recognition of multicultural scholars who have dynamically changed their respective fields, faculty and staff can better ensure continual in the landscape of learning. Likewise, in-service teachers must be continuously supported and provided guidance to deeply dialogue with one another. Administrators must provide opportunities for educators to reflect and discuss on how to address, prevent, and implement best practices to better not only themselves as educators but feel confident to address racial bullying.

It is through my study and analysis of research before me this study aims to define the correlation between multicultural training for pre-service teachers and their effectiveness in implementing a multicultural curriculum in the classroom. In chapter three I will thoroughly outline my method in conducting a case study to further capture the experience of first through third year teachers and their experience not only in their licensing programs, but as they venture into their own classrooms. By conducting multiple qualitative interviews, I am able to capture the joys, benefits, opportunities, and challenges teachers face when entering a diverse classroom for the first time.
CHAPTER THREE

Methods

This study aims to define the correlation between multicultural training for pre-service teachers and their effectiveness in implementing a multicultural curriculum in the classroom. Chapter two, the literature review, identified four monumental components associated with the creation, evolution, and progression of multicultural education training for pre-service and in-service teachers. The components included the historical case of Brown vs. Board, the conceptualization of multicultural models, multicultural training programs, and lastly discussed the impact on racial bullying. It also identified the continual need for reflection and dialogue regarding multicultural infusion in the classroom to better address and feel comfortable confronting diversity issues and racial bullying. In this chapter, I will identify my research methods where I further developed and defined what aspects of a multicultural program prove to be effective for pre-service teachers and in-service teachers alike through various interviews questions. Using the Cultural Competence model developed by Sue, Arrendondo and McDavis (1992), the case study will provide interview participants the opportunity to openly share their experiences, challenges, and triumphs to the researcher. Using this ethnographic format versus models proved to be most valuable as it offered valuable qualitative results in a free form fashion. The verbatim scripting provided insightful anecdotes and narratives that were instrumental and incredibly impactful in sharing multicultural experiences.

Conceptual Framework

Given the provided information regarding multicultural education, the present study is based on the earlier work of Sue, Arrendondo, and McDavis’ Cultural
Competence model (1992). The model was designed specifically for counseling professionals to address the need to become more culturally competent with assisting patients from diverse cultures. Although some components are closely catered to counseling, since its creation it has been adapted to fit the cultural competent needs of various fields and organizations. The modified framework speaks directly to the beliefs/attitudes, knowledges and skills needed of educators in order to accomplish the important work of deeply understanding all students from varying backgrounds through empathy, reflection, and perspective taking.

The following table in Table Two outlines the components of each pillar of the model. Two specific components of the model will be closely examined for the purpose of this study: beliefs/attitudes and knowledge of other cultures.

**Table Two**

**Characteristics of the Multiple Dimensions of Cultural Competence Model**

Modified based on Sue et al. 1982, p. 49

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beliefs/Attitudes</th>
<th>Knowledges</th>
<th>Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>… has moved from being culturally unaware to being aware and sensitive to his/her own cultural heritage and to valuing and respecting differences.</td>
<td>…will have a good understanding of the sociopolitical system’s operation in the U.S. with respect to its treatment of minorities.</td>
<td>…at the skills level must be able to generate a wide variety of verbal and nonverbal responses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…is aware of his/her own values and biases and how they may affect minority students.</td>
<td>…must possess specific knowledge and information about the particular group he/she is working with.</td>
<td>…must be able to send and receive both verbal and nonverbal messages accurately and “appropriately.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…is comfortable with differences that exist between the educator and student in terms of race and</td>
<td>…must have a clear and explicit knowledge and understanding of the generic characteristics of multicultural</td>
<td>…is able to exercise institutional intervention skills on behalf of his/her students when</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen through the many facets highlighted, the model is very thorough and was specifically chosen as the selected framework due to the fact that it speaks directly to the many paradigms an educator must be able to fulfill in order to best meet the needs of diverse students.

**Research Settings and Subjects**

**Participants.** The participants of this study included five teachers: one elementary school teacher, two middle teachers, and two high school teachers. All five participants were female, between the ages of twenty and thirty, and teach in Midwest public schools. Four of the five candidates were Caucasian and only one was a person of color. Having experience and constantly daily interactions in a school with a diverse population can shape, alter, and appreciate the beauty of multicultural education. Participants that are immersed in schools that celebrate diversity was an important factor to the study.

The five teachers varied in how they were selected and asked to participate in the study. The researcher initially sought teacher colleagues to participate and sought volunteer participants by reaching out informally through phone. Through this process two colleagues openly volunteered to be interviewed. The other three participants were

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>beliefs.</th>
<th>education.</th>
<th>appropriate.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>…is sensitive to circumstances (personal biases, stage of ethnic identity, sociopolitical influences, etc.) which may dictate referral of the minority students to a member of his/her own race/culture</td>
<td>…is aware of institutional barriers which prevent minorities from using services provided from schools.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
recommended by their colleagues through an open-call posting requesting first through third year teachers to participate in a multicultural study. All five individuals have a wide range of specialties that include an elementary teacher, a music teacher, a Spanish teacher, and two Communication Arts and Literature teachers.

As mentioned previously, there was a requested requirement that all five participants be in their second or third year of teaching. Having teachers within their first three years of teaching was pivotal as new teachers, generally speaking, rely on their university learnings versus experience as many tenured teachers do. This study aims to define the correlation between multicultural training for pre-service teachers and their effectiveness in implementing a multicultural curriculum in the classroom. First year teachers are the perfect candidate as their pre-service years are not as distanced from their memory. Coincidentally, all participants received licensing through their respective undergraduate degrees from a university within the Midwest versus through a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program in an area outside of their teaching region.

**Procedure.** This study took the form of an ethnographic case study collecting qualitative data. Given the free-flowing nature of interviews, it was best to gather qualitative information from subjects as they reflected on their experiences and provided candid responses to the researcher’s questions. Once approval was granted by the Hamline Human Subject Committee, all participants were provided copies of the interview questions, asked to complete a short survey, and also provided the informed consent form to review prior to meeting. The short survey consisted of eleven different questions sent via Google documents and emailed to the participant’s personal email address. The questions requested high-level information such as where the teacher
currently teaches, what year they are in their teaching career, and what subject they teach. This was done solely to minimize the length of the interview and allow the researcher the ability to study the teacher’s school demographics prior to the meeting.

Upon the commencement of the interview, the researcher briefly read the consent form and asked for their permission to proceed with the study. It was at this time that participants were given an opportunity not only to ask any questions but also was also provided an outlet if they wished to abandon the study before proceeding. All five participants continued with the study and signed the full disclosure letter of consent.

During the interview portion of the meeting, participants were asked roughly 35 questions during the roughly 60 minute one-on-one interview. Questions and conversations progressed organically thus making it difficult to quantify the exact number of questions, but there were four key themes discussed during the interview:

- Current teaching experience
- Extent of multicultural engagement
- Reflection on pre-service training program
- Personal experience with diversity

(Full list of interview questions can be found in Appendix A)

Interviews were both video and audio recorded on a secured iPad that was password protected. The iPad itself was not used by anyone outside of the researcher. It was important to have a copy of the interaction as the researcher later transcribed the interactions verbatim in order to best capture the voice of the participant and protect the validity of the study. In having the verbatim scripting, the researcher could stay true to
what was stated in the interview without adding unintentional bias or interpretations that may not have been emphasized or intended by the participant.

The interviews were conducted where the participant felt most comfortable. The locations ranged from the back of coffee shops, a vacant classroom at a local university, to the classroom of the practicing teacher (conducted outside of regular school hours). Having a location where the participants felt open to sharing their thoughts and opinions was important. Creating a safe space to talk freely and share their challenges, opportunities, and successes was crucial in the validity of the discussion as topics of race and stereotypes are difficult to have otherwise.

**Triangulating Data.** Following each interview session, the researcher will write a two-page, double-spaced, 12-point font reflection in regards to the answers received. This will act as a means to triangulate the data and provide further points for data analysis upon the completion of the study. As stated previous in the literature review, a critical piece to being a successful educator is the practice of continual self-reflection. Through the use of this journal, the researcher will be able to determine additional follow-up questions that may be helpful for the second step in the study. Another benefit in having a researcher reflective journal is to ensure the trustworthiness of the study and separating one’s own perception, thoughts, and opinions of the response and correlating that to the soundness of the participants as an educator. The journal will further prevent bias, assumptions, and drawing inappropriate conclusions.

**Data Analysis.** In addition to journaling, as mentioned the researcher spent time transcribing each interview interaction. Following each transcription, the researcher created a short table of prominent themes in each interview. Through cross-sectional data
analysis, four themes emerged: teaching experience, multicultural engagement, multicultural confrontation, and personal experience. All four played a large role in their comfort level of addressing and incorporating multicultural education in their classrooms. These themes will be discussed in depth in chapter four with other corresponding results.

**Impacting Factors and Current Events**

Participants were selected and interviewed during the academic year of 2016-2017 amidst the 2016 Presidential Elections. This is an important current event to note as the timeliness of the study takes place when the United States is divided on delicate affairs such as abortion and immigration. The political landscape is in great turmoil as protests across the country occur weekly if not nearly daily to spread awareness on actions that may ultimately impact policy reform. Students are engaged in conversations and are actively listening to discussions being had on the news, in the media, and within their own homes. Teachers within schools, administrators within districts, and adults within communities are tuned into the constant rollercoaster of current events impacting their everyday lives.

**Section Summary**

Teachers are subject to countless policies and procedures that impact the structure and facilitation of their classrooms. In addition to teacher workshops, state/federal standards, and weekly meetings with faculty, staff, parents, and personnel, educators must also navigate the complexities of developing curriculum content on very limited time and resources. This study examines the effectiveness of pre-service preparation programs and the extent to which it provided teachers with the needed knowledge and assurance to confidently address multicultural issues such as racial bullying inside their
classrooms. In chapter four, I will review the participants’ personal experience, teaching experience, and multicultural engagement. Through the analysis of themes, challenges, and recommendations of the non-tenured educators, I am able to further delineate and define the correlation between multicultural training for pre-service teachers and their effectiveness in implementing a multicultural curriculum in the classroom.
CHAPTER FOUR

Results

This study aims to define the correlation between multicultural training for pre-service teachers and their effectiveness in implementing a multicultural curriculum in the classroom. In conducting separate one-on-one interviews with five first- through third-year teachers, a greater understanding in the challenges of implementing a successful multicultural education program became much clearer. All five participants are full-time teachers in the Midwest region of the United States who are non-tenured and recent college graduates.

Through the analysis of transcribing the five separate interviews and triangulating the data via researcher journal entries, five key themes emerged, all of which will be described in greater detail in this chapter:

• Mindfulness, empathy, and perspective taking
• Importance of recruiting and retaining a diverse staff
• Developing a strong sense and awareness of oneself
• Direct instruction
• Teacher mentorships.

By selecting participants who are still navigating the waters of teaching and defining their preferences and style, the candid narratives of their experiences offer a raw account of their challenges being new to an emotionally and physically draining profession. The study aims to understand the impact of pre-service programs and the effectiveness in implementation. By choosing novice educators, it further allows the research the insight into the toggling of personal experience and reliance on pre-service
training to implement what feels best in their own classrooms is a stage the participants are facing and still undergoing. The research findings to follow describe the experiences of these five educator by showcasing their personal experiences, teaching experiences, and multicultural engagement.

**Participant Review**

A total of five full-time public school teachers volunteered to participate in the multicultural relationship case study. In the sample, all five participants were female. The ethnic representation consisted of four of the five participants being Caucasian and one participant of Korean descent. Pre-interview surveys as well as one-on-one interviews were used to gather background information on each participant. Prior to the compilation of information, an informed consent letter was also sent to all teachers via personal email whereby all five individuals reviewed, signed, and acknowledged their full participation in the study. For the sake of this study and the protection of each participant’s confidentiality, all names, schools, and districts have been given a pseudonym. The following participant information was compiled during this time.

**Nora – Braxton High School**

Nora is a third-year instructor teaching a foreign language course at Braxton High School. The school’s demographics include 51% white students with the others a mix of students of color (shown in Table Three). She grew up in an urban city where the majority of her friends were students of color who shared their cultures and experiences with her frequently. Nora was exposed to diversity at a young age not only in culture and race, but also in socioeconomic status. These experiences have helped shape her into the
educator she is today and reminds her of the power in perspective taking and in constantly practicing compassion.

Although many of her classmates decided not to attend or complete higher education, Nora was determined to help reach the students she so frequently saw slip between the cracks. Throughout her high school and undergraduate schooling, she sought opportunities to continue learning about different cultures and attended a university known for having a diverse student population. Nora found herself joining different cultural groups, participating actively in school activities, and engaging in school leadership opportunities. In her student teaching experience, she had two clinical placements that allowed her the opportunity to teach in urban classrooms that had roughly 40-50% students of color.

**Leticia – Raphael High School**

Leticia is in her first-year of teaching as a full-time dedicated Language Arts and Communications teacher at Raphael High School. In the previous year she was a long-term sub for a neighboring district but this is her first year in her own classroom. Although she is full-time, she travels between the high school and adjacent middle school where she also teaches two hours of English. Leticia grew up in a small rural town with little diversity and very little exposure to others from other cultures, races, religions, or sexuality. She notes she was able to, “blend in with the crowd” as a white female in a moderately size school with a class size of roughly 500 students.

Upon entering her undergrad, she found herself in a metropolitan city with an abundance of diversity that came to her as a “culture shock” which she fully embraced and enjoyed. Through her pre-service training, she felt more aware of the world around
her and had a drastically different experience student teaching from when she herself was a high school student. The school in which she taught for her 12-week clinical placement for licensure was predominantly students of color with only 8% students being Caucasian (shown in Table Three).

**Phoebe – Leonardo High School**

Phoebe is in her second year of teaching music at Leonardo Middle School where she is among the few recent graduate teachers within her building. Describing herself as a hippy, her hair is multicolored, arms decorated in colorful tattoos, and a warm smile to complement her matching hair tones. She currently resides in the hub of the city center but once studied and taught in a neighboring rural state much like the area she grew up in. Enclosed in a small town, Phoebe had little exposure to diversity in her primary classrooms but was fortunate that her mother ran a day-care center where children of all walks of life were welcome. Through these interactions and the many conversations with her parents, her upbringing was molded by the friendships of children from all ethnicities, cultures, and backgrounds.

The love of music, she describes, runs in her family and she knew she wanted to study and someday teach it. Phoebe later had the opportunity to student teach and later teach her first year in an Intensive English Language Center (IELC) program that welcomed immigrant students to their school. As the program suggests, the students were enrolled in a highly intensive English learning program through which Phoebe was able to immerse herself in the different cultures of her students and learned about a vast variety of cultures and religions. Students of color totaled roughly 78% with the highest concentration of African Americans representing 42% of the student population. She
currently teaches in a school that is less diverse with roughly 51% Caucasian students (shown in Table Three).

**Madeline (Madi) – Donatello Elementary School**

Madeline is in her first full year of teaching kindergarten at Donatello Elementary. Similar to Leticia, Madi grew up in a small rural town with a population of less than 800 people. There was little diversity, but she describes her parents as being very liberal and open-minded of others. Throughout her childhood, she recalls her parents teaching her about different cultures and poignantly shared that her town was not representative of the rest of the world. They encouraged her to step outside of her comfort zone and continue to explore all that there is to offer beyond their county limits.

Encouraged by her family, Madi ventured into the city for her higher education studies and found herself on an incredibly diverse campus. Likewise, in her student teaching she had the opportunity to teach in a school with a 94% students of color population (shown in Table Three). She excelled and thrived in her surroundings enough to be offered a unique opportunity midway through her student teaching experience to be a part-time teacher at the school in which she taught Mindfulness and Yoga Calm for the second half of the year.

**Camila – Michelangelo Middle School**

Camila is in her second year of teaching English at Michelangelo Middle School where she is one of few teachers of color. She is a Korean adoptee who was raised by a Scandinavian family in the northern part of her home state. Here, she and her brother found themselves being the only two students of color throughout their schooling years. Because of this, similar to other participants who grew up in rural towns, Camila made a
vow to move into the city and attend a school with more diversity than she had growing up. To her dismay, the school she chose was not what she expected and she again found herself as the “token student of color” in many of her classes.

She recalls her student teaching placement being one that truly pushed her to embrace diversity first-hand where she taught in a school with students of color comprising 92% of the student population (shown in Table Three). Here she remarks that it was an extraordinary opportunity being an adoptee that had such a high percentage of Asians surrounding her, an experience she never encountered in the past. Embracing the cultures around her, she pursued her desire to teach in a diverse school and landed a position teaching middle school English where over half of the student population consists of students of color.

**Table Three**

**Multicultural Case Study Participants**

Data and statistics gathered from Niche.com

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Name</th>
<th>Student Teaching Demographics</th>
<th>Current School</th>
<th>Current School Demographics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nora</strong></td>
<td>White 62%</td>
<td>Braxton High School</td>
<td>White 51.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African American 16.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td>African American 27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian 12.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic 5.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Asian 7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiracial 2.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Multiracial 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native American 0.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Native American 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leticia</strong></td>
<td>Asian 52.4%</td>
<td>Raphael High School</td>
<td>White 81.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African American 22.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Asian 6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic 13.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic 4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White 7.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td>African American 4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native American 2.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Multiracial 2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiracial 1.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Native American 0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phoebe</strong></td>
<td>African American 42.1%</td>
<td>Leonardo Middle School</td>
<td>White 50.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White 22.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Asian 16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic 21.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic 14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian 6.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td>African American 13.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Findings and Discussion

### Interview Hypothesis

In reflecting on the interviews and reviewing the triangulation of data, it is worthy to note prior to the discussion of the findings why the interview questions were first selected and used as a means for capturing the research information. It is not surprising that the primary goal of education programs is to better train and prepare educators to enter the workforce more knowledgeable, compassionate, and aware than when they first entered. To what extent do the goals match the outcomes experienced by the pre-service teachers?

By using the Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) framework, the case study found qualitative analysis from anecdotes and interview responses to be most fitting to answer the proposed research question. In exploring each educators personal experience, teaching experience, and multicultural engagement, pre-service programs can scaffold their multicultural and diversity training to meet the needs of new teachers as well as
those of students in present-day classrooms. The three hypothesized categories will be
described in greater detail below.

**Personal Experience.** It is commonly said in the psychology field that
individuals rely on what they know or are most comfortable with to address new
encounters and situations. The use of schemas to process information, react quickly, and
answer questions accordingly seems fitting in the world of teaching. Jean Piaget (1932)
first introduced the term and based on his theory, a child may see that a cow is large, has
hair, four legs, and a tail. In the same manner, Piaget’s theory is that the same child may
use a schema to take shortcuts in interpreting the information of a horse in its first
encounter and call it a cow.

Using the same mental framework, the rationale behind the personal experience
interview questions is to first understand the teacher participant’s previous experience
with diversity whether that be in the classroom or in day-to-day interactions. It is
hypothesized that for teachers who have minimal exposure to students of color and
teachers who had few students of color in their classroom may not find it pertinent to
speak to those experiences. When beginning to teach, would a first-year teacher rely on
previous knowledge of how she taught and employ the same teaching strategies?

Of the five teachers, only one grew up in a diverse area, but three of the five feel
prepared to address and confront multicultural topics and facilitate discussions regarding
diversity. Leticia who had very little exposure to others with a different culture, ethnicity,
or religion is now teaching in a school that is 81% white. Throughout her interview,
Leticia notes that she feels uncomfortable being a white-female teacher and was anxious
to present a text to her students written by a Native American other without sounding “all
high and mighty.” Due to her reluctance to engage in difficult conversations, she tends to divert such topics unless directly asked by a student.

Madi also grew up in a homogenous rural town where many families resembled her own. Although her upbringing may prove otherwise, she is currently teaching in a very diverse school with over half of the students being of Latino descent. The trouble she faces in her classroom is not that she feels uncomfortable, but that she is unsure of how to raise awareness with her kindergarteners without seeming to push a hidden agenda. In her interview she states that her students are, “still kind of developing their ideas,” and thus finds it more important to allow them the space and opportunity to create their own interpretations.

**Teaching Experience.** In addition to understanding the educator’s personal experience it is also valuable to have a clear understanding of the individual’s preferences and teaching style. The teaching experience questions developed for the interviews are meant to be a gage for what the teacher’s current classroom looks like, what the student demographics entail, the school norms, and how the teacher is connecting with her students. Being able to visualize the teacher in her element is a beneficial tool in determining how she interacts and feels about working with students on a daily basis.

In addition to understanding her present classroom, learning about previous experience in teaching is important as well. Student teaching is arguably one of the most difficult milestones in one’s teaching career. Since it is the first genuine teaching experience one possesses, the way in which one reflects on performance as well as skills provides valuable hindsight into how they have progressed to become the teacher they are today.
As pre-service teachers navigate the waters of learning their pedagogical preferences, they gain a sense of rhythm for their classroom management style, the way they exchange in dialogue with their students, and school day routines. As the teacher candidates advance to take ownership in their own classroom, similar questions were posed to measure their level of growth and comfort in addressing various student needs. Three questions in particular were used to delineate how they felt leaving their teaching programs and how they currently feel as a practicing teacher with a couple months to a couple of years’ experience under their belt.

*ON A SCALE OF 1-10 (1 being the least prepared, 10 being the most prepared)*

1. How prepared did you feel to meet the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds when you completed student teaching? And now as a practicing teacher?

2. How prepared did you feel to work with parents from diverse cultural backgrounds when you completed student teaching? And now as a practicing teacher?

3. How prepared did you feel to help students with limited English proficiency when you completed student teaching? And now as a practicing teacher?

On average, interview participants felt they increased in their level of preparedness to meet the needs of students and parents from diverse cultural backgrounds and help students with limited English proficiency by two points. In all cases but one, four educators felt more prepared now than when they first left their undergraduate programs. Madeline was the outlier in which she describes her lesson plans were drastically different when she entered her classroom versus when she was planning “perfect world” lesson plans in her pre-service training. In essence, reality did not meet her expectations as she notes,
I was feeling really good about it when I left [my undergrad], I had Laura Cromwell as my professor. I was like, she is incredible, I loved everything I read about in her classroom, I’m going to change the world, and then I got into the classroom and I was like, I don’t even know where to begin.

Many times the classroom can be overwhelming, especially for newer teachers who are within their first couple of years. For this reason, the researcher intentionally developed questions seeking to understand the level of support provided to novice teachers.

In most schools, there is some semblance of a teacher mentorship program where teachers are paired with a mentor who may have more teaching experience or are further along in their teaching career. By understanding what mentorship models exist and teacher’s level of engagement also further provides insight into how they might be continuously seeking feedback and thus modifying and adjusting their practice. It was found in the corresponding interviews that three of the five mentorship programs designed for the teachers was ambiguous without clear definitions as to what the mentor’s role entailed, what their responsibilities included, or how frequently the two teachers met.

One of the three teachers even noted, “I technically have a mentor right now, we don’t talk very much because she’s really busy. She’s starting to become a principal and she’s taking those classes.” Although it may not be the exact circumstances, this scenario is all too common for teachers as they are bombarded with countless responsibilities and thus either are unable to support one another or find it difficult to find the support they need.
Camila in contrast to the others, describes her mentorship program to be incredibly thorough and quite robust. The level of support she receives is worthy of envy by other districts in that she has a school mentor, district mentor, and a teacher of color mentor. All of whom serve their own specific purpose in providing guidance in lesson planning, understanding the culture of the school district, and growing in a field with very few teachers of color to have lead by example. It was fascinating and refreshing to hear the high level of investment and engagement in trying to retain Camila as not only a new teacher but also a young teacher of color.

**Multicultural Engagement.** Reflecting and engaging in multicultural issues can mean a wide range of things to any one person. In posing questions to understand how each participant analyzes and rationalizes diversity in their school and in their classroom is helpful to also understand how they may address these topics with their students. By focusing on their underlying thoughts about race, ethnicities, cultures, etc. the researcher is able to better conceptualize how an educator might teach from a different lens and take into consideration the range of identities they see before them.

It was hypothesized that multicultural engagement would be high for teachers who had more personal experience as well as an engaging student teaching experience in diverse areas. By having strong connections with the community, teachers may become more comfortable in engaging in difficult conversations with their students regarding prejudice, discrimination, and stereotypes. In having a strong community connection within their school as well, teachers will feel more comfortable sharing their concerns and strategies on how to best provide their students adequate diverse representation in
their overt lessons but also in subtle ways such as their symbolic curriculum (images, symbols, artifacts, etc.).

This hypothesis and trend proved to be accurate for four of the five participants. The teachers who grew up in an environment where diversity was celebrated and regularly discussed amongst peers and family members were later very comfortable and would consider themselves advocates and catalysts for change in diversity issues. They prompt their students regularly to consider a diverse set of perspectives, empathize with others, and confront racial misrepresentation without hesitation.

On the opposite spectrum, Leticia had very limited conversations or interactions with others from other backgrounds. In a contrasting sense, Leticia also proves the hypothesis to be true. Although she student taught in a highly diverse school, she continues to explore different avenues to approach multicultural discussions. Unlike the other three who are comfortable in this space, Leticia is unsure how to best bring about these conversations organically as well as through prompting without offending students of color.

Although Madeline grew up in a home where her parents were very encouraging of her to explore other cultures and supported her identity journey into the city, Madi spends very little time scaffolding ways for her students to consider diversity in the classroom. She finds it very challenging to connect with the community reflective of her students and often times finds herself at a loss for how to best approach multicultural issues for fear of speaking out of turn or “stirring the pot.” This may be more due to her level of experience and less due to her lack of knowledge on the matter.
Multicultural Interview Themes

This study aims to define the correlation between multicultural training for pre-service teachers and their effectiveness in implementing a multicultural curriculum in the classroom. By conducting an introductory survey and interview as well as capturing thoughts and summaries in a research journal, five key themes emerged. Each participant shared their personal experiences and candid responses to roughly 35 questions in the span of a 60-70 minute interview were captivating and unembellished. In sharing their challenges and triumphs, each teacher alluded to a common theme that the landscape of their classrooms are changing and have changed quite drastically in the last couple of years. The social issues that plagued the academic year of 2015-2016 as well as 2016-2017 proved to be exceptionally impactful. Such issues include events surrounding police brutality, the Presidential election, and government policies surfaced as occasions that have caused extreme dissonance in schools across the country.

Through analyzing the interview transcripts and comparing the information to that within the researcher’s journal logs, it is notable that all five participants are female and received their licensure immediately following the completion of their undergraduate degree. This is noteworthy as this study selectively chose teachers who were in their first-through third-year of teaching and could speak to their pre-service program with few years to prevent their ability to recall the experience. Since the participant teachers are fresh out of their undergraduate programs, they are in the same age range and may not experience the extent of a generational gap with their students as other teachers may have to overcome.

That being said, one of the main themes present across all five participants is the continuous awareness and implementation of providing students with opportunities to
enhance perspective taking skills. By allowing students the avenue and safe space to envision and critically analyze situations from a lens beyond themselves is essential to multicultural education. Other themes discovered through the interviews include the importance of recruiting and retaining a diverse staff, growing in oneself through an awareness of one’s identity, personal experience in the classroom, and lastly through the practice of teacher mentorship programs. The first theme to be examined will be the exercise of teaching mindfulness in the classroom.

**Mindfulness, empathy, and perspective taking.** Regardless of how it is described or labeled, perspective taking is a cognitive skill that is developed throughout an individual’s lifetime. Piaget (1932) contends that an individual’s ability to provide an empathic response to another’s situation is the result of an adolescents decline in egocentrism and will form as a child increases in age. Though much of this process is thought to occur naturally and spontaneously, there are ways that empathic responding and perspective taking can be shaped.

Through the engagement of peers or through parenting practices and conversations, perspective taking can be developed at a young age through inductive techniques that prompt students to begin realizing and understanding how the effects of ones actions may impact others. In the five interviews, each candidate described perspective taking in two different forms: how they themselves engaged in perspective taking, and how they as educators prompted students to practice perspective taking. The value in both is extremely relevant as previously discussed that one’s personal experience impacts the way in which one views the world.
Phoebe provided insight into her childhood by asserting that both of their parents provided opportunities to discuss the value in diversity. Phoebe in particular had the fortune of having a mother who was a caretaker who embraced diversity and children from all ethnicities and backgrounds. In doing so, Phoebe was able to practice her perspective-taking skills at a young age and interact with individuals with different cultures from her own. Another important point is that she was also able to deconstruct these experiences with her parents as they not only modeled acceptance of others but provided a safe space to help her understand and embrace those differences.

This desire to continue learning about others is demonstrated throughout her classroom as she creates opportunities for her students to learn about one another through the creation of identity posters, singing in different languages, and performing in ceremonies customary to other countries such as African drumming. English teachers Camila and Alice share their common practice of choosing novels with authors of color and sharing perspectives of minority groups such as Night by Elie Wiesel or The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie. By engaging in novels with rich content to explore, the two teachers find multiple ways to connect with students and prompt them to envision the viewpoint of others.

As a language teacher, Nora is fluidly adapting her lessons and structuring them to help students embrace the Spanish language. In sharing her love for the language and helping others experience it as well, she is helping guide conversations into the history, social dynamics, and culture of the Latino culture. More often times than not, Nora attributes her ability to help students empathize with one another by chiming into organic conversations had by her students. In guiding their thinking, Nora spends much of her
time with her students by asking questions as to why they might think a certain way, what a certain event or moment in time might have been like for certain cultural groups, and what consequences might result from a particular action.

Whether topics are related to the Latino culture or not, Nora does not shy from cultural issues that arise in helping her students engage in meaningful conversations to help mindfulness to take place. For example, she notes that when an important question is posed she regularly stops the class to have a group discussions. She commented that she has had to do this multiple times within the last year when topics regarding the political climate and how it may impact social issues come about such as the immigration bans or Black Lives Matter movements. It is important to her that students feel they have a safe space to share their thoughts and be able to discuss them with one another without the fear of being ridiculed or judged.

Generally speaking, the practice of perspective taking and empathy is an importance skill to possess. It is also a critical component to the groundwork of multicultural education. James A. Banks is widely recognized as a leading scholar in the field of multicultural education and has developed the five dimensions of multicultural education. In having a framework of the necessities captured within multicultural education, perspective taking and empathy can be seen as a thread throughout all five. Banks (2004) proclaims that multicultural education is a broad concept with several different and important dimensions as demonstrated on the following page.
Table Four
Five Dimensions of Multicultural Education
Based on Banks, J. A., 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content Integration</td>
<td>Ways in which teachers use examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations, and theories in their subject area or discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Construction Process</td>
<td>Methods, activities, and questions used by teachers to help students understand, investigate, and determine how implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence the ways knowledge is constructed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prejudice Reduction</td>
<td>Relates to the characteristics of students' racial attitudes and strategies that teachers can use to help them develop more democratic values and attitudes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity Pedagogy</td>
<td>Exists when teachers modify their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and gender groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering School Culture and Social Structure</td>
<td>In order to effectively reform schools, the entire system must be restructured, not just some of its parts (such as the curriculum or with staff development). A systemic view of educational reform is essential for the implementation of thoughtful creative, and meaningful educational reform.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This framework will be used as a guide throughout the conversations of the next four themes as it ties into how schools can create lasting change by examining the different components that comprise effective multicultural education programs. As educators are able to model for their students and provide opportunities for their students to practice empathy, they are providing stepping stones to feed into each of the five dimensions of multicultural education.

The five dimensions towards developing a strong multicultural education system is not an effortless initiative. Shaping students into global citizens is an extensive journey but as educators the first step to prejudice reduction and empowering students to empathize with other cultures can begin with recognizing opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations. Creating and prompting openings where students can begin to identify ways for mindfulness is a skill in itself that has proven through the interviews.
with teachers that must also be practiced regularly. Much of being able to engage in perspective taking involves being able to interact with others who have different viewpoints which leads to the next theme of recruiting and retaining a diverse staff.

**Importance of recruiting and retaining a diverse staff.** The five educators interviewed agreed that diversity within in a school is imperative and for many reasons. When asked their personal opinion on recruiting a diverse staff, the teachers agreed that having leaders in the building that varied in age, ethnicity, gender, religion, etc. was important. Despite the witnessed rapid growth in the nation’s diversity, public schools remain predominantly teachers who are monocultural, monolingual, female, and white. The historically white faculty is challenging to pupils who may not necessarily have similar experiences thus creating a cultural and racial disconnect amongst teachers and their respective students.

Camila, an educator of color, claims that it is one of the most important things in her school and it is equally important there is a teacher’s of color support system to further enhance retention. Her district is the only one in her state that provides an extensive network in which teachers of color meet on a monthly basis to discuss the challenges they face, tips on how to overcome obstacles such as macroaggressions, and also simply to provide support to one another. As mentioned previously, Camila teaches in a school with students of color comprising 55% of the total student population. She notes that her students have reflected on the importance of having a diverse group of teachers in their writing and in conversations. She states, “…now more than ever its super important that students have [diversity] reflected in their classroom,” and describes how
the recent political climate has changed the way students view themselves as well as others.

“…after the [Presidential] election our students are afraid. They’ve voiced their fear and I think having a staff that looks and reflects their students, proves to our students that our school is a place for them and it’s a safe place for them.”

The other four interviewees echo her sentiment in the multitude of benefits gleaned from a widely diverse group of faculty and staff in schools. Phoebe describes the value in providing students a depth of complexity and difference that allows them to be able to relate to a multitude of facets composing a teacher’s character. She shared that her students open up to her more readily as she is a much younger teacher than her colleagues, “I’ve had kids come up to me and open up to me because they feel comfortable with that and with me.” Having a range of powerful connections to be able to relate with students on is a influential tool.

Multicultural education lends itself to providing an avenue for teachers to be able to share their own stories and perspectives. As the demographic of students change in rural and urban schools, sharing in connections and narratives that students can relate to on a personal level bridges the gap across cultures. For both Caucasian and students of color, having a diverse network of teachers further creates Bank’s final tier of the five dimensions of multicultural education where school reform is influenced by the entire school’s participation. In addition to recruiting and retaining more teachers of color, it is equally important to ensure there is proper preparation, modeling, and development opportunities for white teachers as well.
Developing a strong sense and awareness of oneself. With juggling state standards, lesson planning, professional learning community sessions (PLC), on top of teaching, it is challenging for any teacher let alone a novice teacher. The teachers were loud and clear in the fact that there simply is not enough time in the day to do it all and for teachers with three years of experience or less under their belt, taking time to shut of their brain from teaching and focus on anything else can be a task in itself. Not only being self-aware but being culturally self-aware includes having the ability to understand one’s own cultural identity, biases, and prejudices. Purdue University’s Center for Instructional Excellence posits that as you develop your own cultural self-awareness, in addition to celebrating diversity, you are also able to articulate your own cultural biases, rules, and identity (Purdue Marketing & Media, Purdue University). An effective way for educators to progress into a stage of self-awareness is to begin by self-reflecting on one’s own identity.

Three of the five interviewees articulated a strong sense of self. Their ability to articulate their own identity and culture was clear in their narratives and how they seek perspectives from students as well as share their own. Camila uses her identity as a starting place to share her experience with her students by embracing her identity of being a Korean adoptee. Nora openly shares her experience being raise in a low-income family and uses this to help connect with her students and relate to their experiences. Likewise, Phoebe draws much of her identity from music and uses it as a medium to find beauty in differences and a channel that also connects us. She shares,

“I was always interested in learning about other people’s cultures [be]cause I think it’s really beautiful and because I’m a music teacher, as you study music,
you realize that everybody’s tied together in so many different aspects of life and that we share a lot of the same thoughts no matter where we live.”

By consistently focusing and reflecting on one’s practice, cultural identity, and surroundings, teachers are better able to understand themselves and gain confidence in owning who they are in front of their students. In doing so and understanding for example that you are a person that comes from a place of white privilege, having the ownership and ability to confront this internally, opens for conversations on how you were able to process this privilege and deconstruct the biases associated with racism. Rather than using it as a place for guilt to manifest itself, self-reflection and self-awareness of one’s privileges, advantages, and disadvantages provides further understanding of how to navigate interacting with others and sharing one’s story to further provide context to those who may not be able to relate or empathize otherwise.

Camila candidly notes that in her identity journey as well as being a novice teacher, there have certainly been moments where she may not have been politically correct or did not have all of the answers but she claims that regardless of whether you are right or wrong it is the following conversations that matters most. Through reflecting on her experience she concludes, “…having an understanding of yourself and just this awareness of, these are my experiences, these are my prejudices, and these are my stereotypes and constantly working to combat those are the key pieces.” As a means to teach multicultural education effectively, being aware of one’s bias and stereotypes will help reduce not only prejudice in oneself but also for the students being taught. It is unfair to assume that educators will be able to conjure all of the
answers for their students or even for themselves, but with effort, consistency, drive, and support, many things are possible and achievable.

**Direct instruction.** Regardless of whether a teacher is within their first few years of practice or tenured with twenty years under their belt, the next theme transcends the spectrum of experience. Within all of the five transcripts, each of the teachers noted at one point throughout the interview that the art of teaching cannot be solely taught within the confines of a pre-service classroom. Until a teacher is in their own classroom, developing their own curriculum, and decorating their own bulletin boards, the practice of education is only practice.

For each teacher, pre-service training served as an important entry into the world of education. Understanding how to develop clear SWBAT (students will be able to) goals, incorporate standards, and integrate graphic organizers is an important skill but much of pre-service programs only focus on how to teach in what is considered a "perfect world" within a "normal classroom." By normal, it is assumed that lessons are written for classes with roughly 25 students who are meeting reading and writing competencies for their grade level and live within the middle-class. Differentiation is commonly seen as an avenue in which groups are modified so that there are strong students mixed with students who may need more guidance so they can work with one another and from each other.

Nora describes her teaching experience as "a lot of trial-and-error" and comments that there are many instances that her undergraduate pre-service program did not prepare her for, but in reality, she also did not anticipate to ask. She explains, as many educators would agree, that teaching is a profession in which many glean insight from experience,
having a grounding and understanding, testing, and revising. Nora notes that her student teaching was the most beneficial as she was able to be practicing with live students versus peers who were a pretend student audience. Having tangible individuals to give her constant feedback verbally and nonverbally so that she could adapt as needed was a true learning experience.

For many who excelled in pre-service programs and found solace in lesson planning, spotless classrooms, and organizing to a tee were quite taken back when faced with the reality of their own rooms. Leticia, a teacher in her first year, describes her greatest learning since beginning her teaching career as the need to be more flexible in her teaching style and classroom management. In pre-service teaching programs, there are countless theories, methods, and discussions on how to proceed in facilitating lessons, but there is little on how to counteract when plans fall through. Direct instruction for many teachers include "learning on the job" and understanding what will work best for each student, each class, and each year. The circumstances will frequently change and being an individual who is able to handle ambiguity, adapt, and adjust is vital to success.

Multicultural education is an area that can be both strategically written into the lesson as well as used as a topic of conversation in responding to student inquiry. Having a clear understanding of how to direct conducive conversations that enable students to think critically about race or have open conversations about discrimination is important to support in the classroom. Stifling inquiry and these conversations to stick to an outlined curriculum hinders a student's ability to question and is not beneficial or fair to both the student and the class. The necessity of direct instruction for teachers to be able to implement, reflect, and modify is a cycle that is continuous and does not end after
receiving tenure. This concept directly opposes previous thought as this study aims to
deﬁne the correlation between multicultural training for pre-service teachers and their
effectiveness in implementing a multicultural curriculum in the classroom.

The teacher participants openly discussed their desire for additional multicultural
training in their pre-service programs but in different capacities to be discussed later in
the concluding chapter. Much of implementation success of multicultural education
comes from external factors mentioned previously such as continuously modeling and
practicing perspective taking, recruiting staff that is equally diverse and can share their
story, and having a clear concept of one's own cultural identity. Being able to hit on these
three and learning within the process, teachers can more readily weave through and
integrate the ﬁve dimensions of multicultural education.

Teacher mentorships. One aspect that can further support novice teachers as
they explore how to implement multicultural education more easily and readily in their
classrooms is utilizing teacher mentors. Most schools will provide at least one mentor per
teacher, usually one who is tenured and has a vast experience in the same subject to be
able to provide guidance and recommendations on a range of topics from questions about
the school/district, to classroom management and curriculum content. In many of the
interviews, teacher mentorship programs at the respective interviewee's schools were
ambiguous and undeﬁned leaving the novice teacher with very little guidance. Camila
described teachers as having "their own little island" in each of their classrooms. Through
their careers, each teacher will develop their own cadence and rhythm in their classrooms
and through a development in routines and pedagogy, students will act and respond
accordingly.
Two of the five teachers had a tenured teacher mentor their first year who would sit in and monitor their classrooms, provide feedback, and be an anchor if any questions would arise. Nora describes that due to the nature of her hasty onboarding, she was assigned a mentor but infrequently, if ever, connected with her. Likewise, Leticia as a traveling teacher splits her days at her high school in the morning and the adjacent middle school in the afternoon. Unfortunately, her circumstance does not lend itself to being able to connect very closely with her peers or meet with her mentor on a regular basis. All four described their mentors role vaguely and was unable to clearly define their purpose or if the mentors were even helpful in their growth. The one exception of the bunch was Camila who has three mentors that she meets with frequently: one school mentor, one district mentor, and a teacher of color mentor. Each mentor has their own purpose and Camila shares her challenges to the three different mentors in order to gain insight and to become better equipped to overcome the hurdles she faces in her diverse classroom being a woman and teacher of color.

The role of a mentor is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary is a person who acts as a guide or an adviser to another person who is younger or less experienced. Similar to pre-service teachers having a cooperating teacher to provide them with the necessary feedback to grow and provide content specific knowledge, mentors serve the same purpose in supporting new teachers succeed in their roles. With any career, guidance and guidelines further propel onboarding, learning curves, and success rates. Understanding the school culture and norms is one of the most difficult hurdles for new teachers as they not only are trying to learn about themselves as teachers, their students in their classrooms, but their administration, peers, and community.
Madeline describes her challenging first year in her school as her curriculum was not yet defined and being unsure as an elementary teacher the types of discussions appropriate for her students. She provides insight into her fear of challenging the status quo as a non-tenured teacher where many of the other teachers were much older and much more experienced than she. There was one instance in particular where she proposed a new lesson on approaching the history of Thanksgiving to which her fellow Kindergarten teachers reacted negatively and suggest she "stick to the books" and not "stir the pot."

As Banks (1995) describes in his fifth element, having an empowering school culture and social structure is the most important dimension in building a successful multicultural education program. By looking at the entire school as a functioning system whereby all moving parts must be equally invested in the goal, it is only then where progress can thrive. Reform requires all participants to be on board through the alignment of policies, practices, and procedures to achieve cultural proficiency (Lindsey et al. 2009).

The process of developing a culture of unwavering support of one another as teaching is not a simple task. Having a network of colleagues and fellow teachers who can provide the necessary guidance, sounding board, and safety net is pertinent to feeling safe and exploring other creative avenues to bring about change in the classroom. Approaching multicultural education in a cookie cutter fashion will not improve the current state of affairs. This component of teaching should be a primary area of focus in order to retain teachers who are willing and eager to provide their students with the knowledge and critical thinking skills to be global citizens and catalysts for change.
In many ways, a teacher’s role is to develop critical thinkers and have students analyze both what is presented to them in the classroom as well as out in the broader world. Teachers unfortunately are restricted from being able to share their open and honest opinion on various political matters. Having teacher mentors who have experienced similar battles and cultural changes can provide the valued insight that an incoming teacher may not know otherwise. Many of the interviewees discussed the challenge of walking the fine line of how to properly discuss matters regarding social movements such as Black Lives Matter, the immigration ban, and the recent 2016 Presidential election without fear of crossing the separation of church and state. This is only one of many challenges teachers in the 21st century face. The following section will go into further detail other challenges discovered throughout the interview sessions.

**Common Challenges Educators Face**

Many challenges educators face range from resources such as money and time to simply having a support network to freely discuss and share ideas. Through the five interviews with the teachers, there were six common challenges observed that will be discussed further in detail in this section. The first of which highlights the political climate surrounding this case study and the impact of relevancy.

#BlackLivesMatter was created following the murder of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in 2012. The Black Lives Matter movement was developed as a call to action from the community to recognize and respond to the increase in anti-Black sentiment throughout the country. Directly from the Blacklivesmatter.com website, “Black Lives Matter affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender
spectrum. It centers on those that have been marginalized within Black Liberation movements. It is an approach to (re)build the Black liberation movement. The group brings to light the prominent discrimination towards blacks in the United States and their commitment to acknowledging, celebrating, and respecting all differences. 

#BlackLivesMatter also notes that one of their guiding principles is to commit to forging an intention path that bond and unifies all Black lives to practice empathy, engage in comradery, and affirm one another.

Camila shares that she created a unit on the #BlackLivesMatter movement as one of the tragic shootings of a young Black man occurred in her school community. The issue was very relevant and topical for her class. In developing the unit with fellow colleagues, she discovered that although she had support from her administration, she had little support from peers outside of her department. She persevered and followed through with conducting her social justice unit and emphasized police brutality although she continued to encounter teachers who did not support her multicultural education. Camila described her experience as, “when your colleagues aren’t on board and they are very open about that, it creates this weird network of feeling unsupported by the people you work with.” Again, this details the importance of having an administration and school that is united in reform and has an established culture of empowerment to implement meaningful educational reform.

The question to be raised then is how and where do we begin? How do we manage creating change in such a systemic issue? Nora describes that in her three years of teaching (this being her third year), an upcoming Diversity Training in the fall is the first time their school has had a staff development focus on diversity. She describes the
school uses a top-down process where many administrators attend diversity conferences and are to report back to the group but provide very little context or insight into the learning's gleaned. She was incredibly excited to be able to participate and have her peers equally participate in a diversity training when there is such a great need for one. In addition to having a guest speaker, there will be various breakout sessions for the teachers to reflect and discuss their experiences as well as share best practices on what has worked in their classroom when discussing diversity and making curriculum more culturally relevant. This is a powerful way to begin the process of reform within a school and building bridges across school departments to start conversations towards cultural proficiency.

Much like the demographics of our students and the country, it is fluid and continuously changing. Districts and school administrators play a large role in ensuring faculty and staff are prepared with the proper resources to have difficult conversations and be able to openly welcome students from different ethnicities, cultures, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and families that may enter into their classrooms. Whether it is through dedicated staff development, the sharing of timely articles, or having the school’s cultural liaison present, having intentional and meaningful conversations is vital to education reform and meeting all student’s needs.

Camila for example describes the power of simply saying a student’s name correctly. She highlights how her cultural liaison presented a brief lesson to the faculty and staff on how to properly pronounce Hmong student’s names. Camila describes the level of confidence it ignites in a student to be recognized fully simply by being able to say their name correctly. Small yet powerful. Brief yet meaningful. Names are described
as a small but powerful connection for people to their history, their families and their culture, “naming can be an act of dominance and a symbol of psychological and sometimes physical control of one person or group over another,” (Lindsey et al. 2009). What may seem as trivial is a quite powerful gesture to a student. The challenge lies in how schools can more frequently share in these learning moments.

For the beginner teacher participants, there is one glaring challenge that many teachers can relate to. The resources that there never seems to be enough of is of course time and money. In addition to simply trying to stay on top of lesson planning, department meetings, and communication with parents, in order for multicultural education to work successfully, there must be a large effort in content integration and equity pedagogy. In order to do so, teachers are spending countless hours researching simply trying to find materials that are both inclusive and representative. In addition to low-funded schools, teachers are also spending much of their own resources to provide diverse materials in their classrooms. For many teachers such as Nora, she states that it would make a large difference having additional funding to be able to provide relevant materials and resources that are inclusive such as having all home letters be translated in other languages. She also includes the necessity of continual diversity training not only faculty and staff but for students as well. Other ways that the five teachers described would be useful with additional funding is to develop a database for pre-planned multicultural lessons as well as purchasing diverse and reflective class copies for school book carts.

Two challenges that surfaced from the interviews were a bit surprising. Camila shared in her interview the constant micro-aggressions she faces teaching as not only a
female but young teacher of color. She described a few instances where parents openly questioned where she was from and whether or not she was their student’s math teacher based off of her physical and facial features. Being an Asian-American, she encounters instances such as these frequently, but it further motivates her to be a role-model for her students. She notes it is a common challenge for teachers of color but being able to provide students with this experience also provides them a safe space to share their experiences with her. Having her students be able to empathize and vice-versa has been powerful in her classroom. She also shares that with the recent political policies, she has found it challenging as a person of color to gain credibility from parents. Rather than deflecting her dismay towards her students, it fuels her desire to further teach her pupils how to delineate between propaganda and legitimate information shown in the media, news, and published works.

On a similar note in having challenging parents, Phoebe shared in her interview the drastic change she has had to overcome with the shift in society’s culture and attitudes towards teachers and the education system. In her first year of teaching, she worked predominantly with students of color whose parents were very supportive of her and the school. In contrast, in her second year of teaching in a predominantly white school district, she is receiving much more pushback on her grading methodology. She is also being regularly confronted by parents when their students do not receive high marks. She solemnly recounts the power struggle she’s experienced between teachers, students, and parents and firmly notes, “I’m having more support from the parents that aren’t from here… they’re thankful their students are getting a free education versus the parents [and students] that were raised in America.” This too was surprising as many would guess that
parents who might not have insight into the American culture would be more hesitant to the feedback offered due to the language barrier. These findings allude to the notion that culture and society play a much larger role in viewing education than previously considered.

**Section Summary**

Psychologists have always wondered the influence of heredity versus environment. As reviewed in the results, the five teachers had various levels of encounters with diversity prior to their career as educators. The individuals who had both the experience interacting with people from different cultures, religions, ethnicities, class, and genders were at a much greater advantage in being able to empathize as they were able to see diversity first-hand. In addition, the participants who were also able to engage in discourse with others about these difference to further make sense of their feelings had another advantage as they were able to practice perspective taking and reflection. As young children trying to make sense of the world they live in, the ability to discuss with parents or guardians about diversity is monumental in developing an open-mind.

As mentioned by Nora, when this cultural curiosity of others is stunted through silence or unwillingness by others to address, this causes dissonance that may ultimately result in becoming uncomfortable with discussing due to lack of insight. This can be seen with Madeline and Leticia, two participants who had minimal experience with diversity as well as had few opportunities to discuss diversity throughout their upbringing. Many of the challenges educators face surrounding multicultural education of course cannot be directly tied to one influence alone. Bearing this in mind as well as the influence of
countless other factors, it is difficult to be able to account for everything that may contribute to the success of a multicultural curriculum.

Based on the findings of this case study, five major themes surfaced through the interviews as was discussed in this chapter. In the next section, the researcher will further review other surprising learnings as well as the implications of this study in how it is viewed from an academic and policy standpoint. It is important not only to investigate and execute, it is likewise important to understand how the information will be used to further benefit the individuals most impacted by the work. By further examining the data and the surprising insight collected, new connections and future research recommendations will also be presented in the following chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

By analyzing research regarding multicultural education and pre-service training in addition to conducting a case study with five first- through third-year teachers this chapter will provide a thorough reflection of the study’s key learning’s, implications, and limitations. As mentioned, this study aims to define the correlation between multicultural training for pre-service teachers and their effectiveness in implementing a multicultural curriculum in the classroom. In light of the findings from the interviews and research provided through the literature review, it can be concluded that the most influential factors that impact a pre-service teacher’s ability to effectively implement multicultural education in their classrooms lies more heavily in their level of diversity engagement prior to as well as during their teaching career. Key learnings from the interviews and comparisons to the literature review will further provide support to this conclusion as it relates to this study. In addition, this chapter will also review the implications and limitations of this research as well as recommendations for the future.

Key Learnings

In conversations with novice and tenure teachers alike, it can be agreed upon that it is hard to guide the development of identity without having a full understanding of one’s own. This notion applies with many concepts for example, coaching a sport. A coach can most certainly teach a sport by reading books, watching videos, and analyzing other players. The training transcends beyond technique and muscle memory when there is a full understanding of how one’s own body works by providing insight into strategy and techniques for someone whose body could possibly be similar to your own. An
additional layer of insight can be provided to players by sharing personal narratives that can help players understand the importance of a certain play based on individual experience. That alone can be the difference between a novice coach and a more tenured coach.

In the classroom especially, having a strong sense of awareness of oneself is a strong asset. Being able to share with students your own cultural and social identity, the experiences you have had, and even the experiences you have not had make a large impact on a student. A theme echoed throughout the interviews is that pre-service training, theories, and lesson plan construction is only one piece of the puzzle. Until a teacher is in her own classroom with her own set of pupils in front of her, strategies such as classroom management are much more difficult to implement when a textbook example looks much different than the scene unfolding. The reality of a live classroom is much more complex. There are much more variables. And the students will never be the same. Having the experience alongside knowing one’s own personal style is more important in the implementation of multiculturalism than simulations on a college campus or discussions of pretend conversations. Trial-and-error was the most notable comment from the new teachers in how to not only approach difficult topics, but also to develop rapport with students in order to build an inclusive classroom to share personal narratives. Both of which are critical components to implementing multicultural education.

The last key piece of successful multicultural implementation in the classroom is knowing where to start. Having a clear mentorship program makes a large difference when starting any job but for new teachers especially. As was seen in Leticia’s case,
having to travel between schools being a first year teaching and not being in either place to gain an understanding of the school culture is challenging. She felt incredibly overwhelmed and that she was always trying to play “catch-up” to keep her head above water. Rather than being present and in the moment with her students, Leticia lacked the foresight many teachers gain in their tenure through experience. She was simply trying to keep up with the mountain of grading, responsibilities, standards, meetings, and lesson planning required of teachers and thus found it difficult to do much more than what was expected of her.

Incorporating multicultural components to an already stressful agenda may be the tip of the iceberg for a teacher struggling to manage her already full caseload. By having a mentor with a consistent presence and defined role in support teachers such as Leticia may have an entirely different experience. Guidance on how to manage her workload, classroom management, and classroom instruction would make a large difference coming from an experience teacher who may have experienced similar feelings her first year. In addition, by recognizing the importance of preparing teachers to think critically and openly about diversity awareness, universities and colleges can further enhance their programs by incorporating ways to develop a large cultural diversity knowledge base.

Teaching is not simply a career but a way of life. In order to be effective, teachers are constantly reflecting, modifying lessons, differentiating plans, and thinking about how they can make the next day better. This is especially true for new teachers as they continue to build their lesson repertoire and determine how to continue evolving their curriculums to fit the students in their classroom.
Research Reflections

Influential Multicultural Pioneers

Based on previous studies conducted by researchers such as Cho & DeCastro-Ambrosetti (2006), it is clear pre-service teachers still felt ill-equipped for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students even after taking diversity courses. Preparing culturally responsive teachers calls for teachers to practice critical consciousness, an awareness that takes preparation and training that can be gained through teaching programs but even more effective when used as a form of self-reflection when one is a practicing teacher. Leading multicultural specialist Geneva Gay affirms, “Teaching is as much a personal performance, a moral endeavor, and a cultural script, as it is a technical craft,” (2003, p. 182) in describing that cultural competency is as crucial if not more in the effectiveness of teaching diverse students content. Understanding this aspect further heightened the researches emphasis on analyzing how teachers are working towards creating learning opportunities for students by teaching in a manner that matches the learning styles of the students and reflects the diversity of the classroom.

Many of the interviewees proved to be working towards gaining more perspective through hindsight and self-reflection. What continues to be the most difficult are the barriers preventing teachers from fully accessing the resources they need to be successful such as financial and administrative support. Through analysis of the case study results, it became clear that the Five Dimensions of Multicultural Education as depicted by James A. Banks (1995) were dependent on the key factor of an empowering school culture. The systemic influence of policy, the community, and administrators can greatly help or hinder the progress of multicultural education.
**Study Implications**

The primary goal for this study was to determine factors that can be enhanced to better provide pre-service teachers the tools and resources they need to effectively implement an inclusive curriculum that provided students with the critical thinking skills to recognize diversity and celebrate multiculturalism. Most pre-service programs are designed to include an aspect of multicultural education, but when teachers enter the classroom they are overwhelmed by the responsibilities and tasks associated with teaching that many forget or potentially disregard their learnings in order to align with state and federal standards. Providing teachers with a supportive network and school culture that provides an environment for inclusivity and cultural competency is critical for progress to take place.

The need to change how teachers are supported in and outside of the classroom is exceptionally important. Having trainings, speakers, and resources as simple as cultural liaisons and diverse reading materials are changes that can be substantially beneficial for teachers and students alike. Recruiting and retaining teachers of color adds an additional layer of complexity and diversity. Administrators must recognize in order to build a faculty and staff that is impactful in their profession, the support provided must acknowledge the changing demographics and the necessity of enhancement in diversity through inclusive teaching practices and resources.

**Study Limitations**

Initially there were twenty participants willing to partake in the case study that included seven male teachers and thirteen female teachers. As there were delays in the approval of the study and the timeline of interviews shifted, many participants found
themselves in circumstances where they were either on holiday with their families, overtaken by other responsibilities, or simply no longer wanted to participate. One of the evident limitations faced was the lack of a male perspective and the minimal insight into the already overwhelming female-dominant field. Along the same lines, it is also a limitation that there is only one participant who is a person of color as more diverse voices would have provided additional insight as teaching is predominantly white and monocultural.

Although it is not a blatant limitation, it would have been a valuable addition to have been able to interview a school administrator or a board member who may have a large input into what comprises the requirements of pre-service programs. Having an administrators perspective would have allowed for another viewpoint as to what measures are taken in order to support new teachers and their thoughts on effectiveness. It would have also been valuable to understand an administrator’s perspective on their school’s efforts in recruiting and retaining teachers of color, whether their efforts are effective and ideas of how to improve if it is not. From a pre-service program standpoint, having a professor’s take on their challenges as a teacher educator and the strategy of education programs would have been valuable as it may be perceived there is a lack of engagement and urgency for teaching progressive cultural strategies.

**Conclusion**

Although there were components that could have been altered and participation would have otherwise been different, the goal of the study stayed true from the beginning to the end. As a researcher, it was challenging to find an appropriate place to stop as there were many times that the study most certainly could have continued. The literature
review could have been endless, the interviews could certainly have been longer, and
participants could have been solicited a second, third, or fourth time. It was challenging
to know when to persevere and move forward.

Another important aspect that is noteworthy is the researcher’s role in conducting
the interviews in knowing when to probe, when to leave the question open-ended, or to
provide guidance. The questions were devised to be prompts to encourage participants to
think beyond the scope of the study and provide further clarification, but it was
perplexing with a limited amount of time as rapport was not yet established and the
questions were very personal. As noted previously, many participants were recommended
for the research. To an extent, this can be translated as these teachers were already
multicultural activists or practicing cultural competency enough to be recognized by
peers and nominated for the study.

As a writer and a learner, it was important to stick to what was said and to
paraphrase correctly as to not misinterpret or misconstrue the thoughts and opinions of
the participants. A large part of being able to stay aligned in this aspect was to transcribe
the interviews. Although this was an unanticipated step, it was crucial to the validity of
the information. This is central to the study as each participant had their own personality,
values, and beliefs. Being able to trust the researcher to capture this through their
narratives and experiences requires a level of reliance on being impartial and unbiased.

**Recommendations**

In order to be a successful teacher, an individual must possess at least a small
ounce of creativity and flexibility in order to flourish. Although it is not an extensive
compilation, the lists below are small ways to add multiculturalism into the classroom.
1. Helping students gain an appreciation for themselves and their culture
   • *Example:* good morning in a different language every week and practicing regularly

2. Building rapport with students by having conversations with them organically

3. Whether it’s with you or the students doing it themselves, critical to have a safe space where students feel they belong

4. Connecting with families through community events

5. Being comfortable that you will and should always be in a state of constant learning
   • *Examples:* learning from peers, students, staying connected with educational issues, attending conferences, etc.

In addition to the previously mentioned ways to incorporate multiculturalism in the classroom, the following recommendations are aimed specifically towards pre-service training and preparation. The subsequent proposals are from the five interviewees on how to further bridge the gap between pre-service programs and implementation in the classroom. The key points are subtle ways universities and colleges around the country can shape their education programs to fit the changing demographics entering schools and support teachers in welcoming them as learners.

The first proposal is to increasingly incorporate multicultural themes in all of the courses within the education program. More than half of the participants stated that their programs only provided one course with sole emphasis on diversity that lasted no more than a three months span. It is impossible to think that everything related to multicultural education could possibly be mastered in one course. Particularly in the field of elementary education where teachers do not have a subject focus, it is even more critical there is breadth of multicultural themes and concentration on how to incorporate discussions in all subject areas such as math and science. Having each course in the
program spend adequate amount of time focusing on how to facilitate and integrate multiculturalism is important for pre-service teachers to practice frequently.

As follows, the second suggestion to further observe the practice of multicultural education in the classroom, it is important to provide pre-service teachers with clinical observations with teachers who can demonstrate this skill. The third suggestion includes incorporating into pre-service programs how to connect and build rapport with parents from different cultures who may have language barriers. The fourth and final proposal includes incorporating an additional emphasis on learning about the different cultures that are predominant in the nearby community of the school, for example an emphasis on the Hmong or Somali community in Minneapolis, Minnesota as there is a large refugee population of these two groups. With these edits to pre-service programs, teachers may feel more apt to enter the diverse classrooms more prepared than otherwise.

Closing Thoughts

Our students are the face of our country, the future of our nation, and the heart of our education system. Raising and teaching global citizens is crucial, now more than ever. Having culturally competent, progressive, and diverse teaching workforce is only the beginning. Teachers must equally feel well equipped, trained, and supported to be successful leaders in the classrooms. This study highlights the need for us to grow in our awareness and empathy to strip the racial divide and develop classrooms where students of all ethnicities, cultures, and backgrounds feel welcome, recognized, and celebrated. We owe it not only to them, but to ourselves.

If there was an opportunity to conduct further research, I would like to make it a priority to understand the connection between cultural competency and racial bullying.
Throughout the case study and interviews, the political climate played a large role in the conversations. Navigating diversity and multiculturalism in our country is vital not only for progressive reasons but for the sake of promoting equality and equity. The current President has chosen to implement executive orders that makes the work of our educators increasingly difficult as students raise difficult questions regarding immigration policies, abortion, sexism, and police brutality. As hate crimes and hate speech manifest within society, it is important to equip our teachers and students with the resources and tools to be able to challenge their own views as well as those around them to make an informed decision on where they stand. Racism and discrimination has not subsided; neither should our strategy to acknowledge and overcome it.


Appendix A: Interview Questions

Personal Experience

1. Describe your personal experience with diversity?
   - Did you grow up in a classroom/school with demographics similar to your own classroom/school currently?

2. In your personal opinion, how important is it to recruit a staff that is diverse (age, race, gender, etc.)

3. What has been your biggest learning since starting your career?

Teaching Experience:

4. Briefly describe your student teaching experience: where was it, for what grade, for how long?

5. Where are you currently teaching?
   - Can you provide for me a brief overview of your student demographic in your school?
   - If it is in a diverse area: how frequently are you able to connect with the ethnic community and in what ways?
   - How might you describe your school norms and culture?

6. How long have you been teaching?

7. What types of mentorship programs exist within your school for first-year teachers?

8. In your experience, what has been the best way to learn about a student’s cultural background?

   ON A SCALE OF 1-10 (1 being the least prepared, 10 being the most prepared)

9. How prepared do you feel to meet the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds?

10. How prepared do you feel to work with parents from diverse cultural backgrounds?

11. How prepared do you feel to help students with limited English proficiency?
Multicultural Engagement:

1. What are the barriers to the implementation of a successful multicultural curriculum?

2. (If we are not meeting in your classroom) what types of images, symbols, icons, mottoes, awards, celebrations, and other artifacts that are used to teach students knowledge, skills, morals, and values are dispersed throughout your classroom?

3. How frequently throughout the year would you say you provide yourself time to self-reflecting, exploring, and dialoging with others regarding their social identities (race, social class, gender, etc.)?

4. Since beginning your teaching career, please describe your level of engagement in multicultural issues, hate crimes, racial bullying, etc?

5. To what extent is there time for you to self reflect on multicultural issues in your school?

6. In what ways do you prompt your students to practice empathy and perspective taking in the classroom?
   - In what ways do you practice empathy and perspective taking in your classroom?

7. In what ways do you incorporate diversity and multiculturalism into your classroom and curriculum?
   - Do you have specific lessons that challenge student’s ideas about race and improve their cultural diversity awareness?
Appendix B: Letter of Informed Consent Sample

September, 2016

Dear ____,

I am a graduate student working on an advanced degree in education at Hamline University, St. Paul, Minnesota. As part of my graduate work, I plan to conduct research with Kindergarten through 12th Grade teachers in the Midwest from September-November, 2016. The purpose of this letter is to request your participation. This research is public scholarship and the abstract and final product will be cataloged in Hamline’s Bush Library Digital Commons, a searchable electronic repository that may be published or used in other ways.

The topic of my master’s capstone is to define the correlation between multicultural training for pre-service teachers and its effectiveness in preparing teachers to confront multicultural issues such as racial bullying. I plan to interview teachers about their perspectives in their respective licensure programs as well as their experiences with racial diversity. The interviews will be recorded and last roughly 40-60 minutes. The interview questions will be provided to each participant ahead of time, but please keep in mind that the interview will be a dynamic activity that may shift in focus as they occur. After completing the capstone, I will summarize the findings in a report to be distributed to interview contributors.

There is little to no risk if you choose to be interviewed. All results will be confidential and anonymous. Pseudonyms for the district, schools, and participants will be used. The interviews will be conducted at a place and time that is most convenient for you. Although the interview will be video and audio recorded, these pieces of documentation will be destroyed immediately following the completion of my study and kept on a secured device.

Participation in the interview is voluntary, and, at any time, you may decline to be interviewed or to have your interview content deleted from the capstone without negative consequences.

I have received approval from the School of Education at Hamline University to conduct this study and want to inform you that my results may be included in an article in a professional journal or a session at a professional conference. In all cases, I want to assure you that your identity and participation in this study will be kept strictly confidential.

If you agree to participate, please fill out the duplicate agreement to participate on page two and return it to me by mail or copy the form in an email to me no later than September 30th. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Lynne Chung
Informed Consent to Participate in Qualitative Interview

Keep this full page for your records

I have received the letter about your research study for which you will be interviewing Elementary-Secondary teachers. I understand that being interviewed poses little to no risk for me, that my identity will be protected, and that I may withdraw from the interview portion of the project at any time without negative consequences.

___________________________________  __________________
Signature                        Date

Informed Consent to Participate in Qualitative Interview

Return this portion to Lynne Chung

I have received the letter about your research study for which you will be interviewing Elementary-Secondary teachers. I understand that being interviewed poses little to no risk for me, that my identity will be protected, and that I may withdraw from the interview portion of the project at any time without negative consequences.

___________________________________  __________________
Signature                        Date
Appendix C: Transcription of Interview with Nora

Date of Interview: 11/02/16

Lynne: The purpose of my study really is to understand what the gap is between all the learning that you do in multicultural training in pre-service training and how that is applied in the classroom. And if there are additional things you wished you would have learned in your undergraduate years and in your licensing.

So I’m just going to ask you a couple of questions about your personal details and how your personal experiences help with your understanding of diversity as well as some of your teaching experience and multicultural engagement so we’ll just start with some personal questions.

The first being, what is your personal experience with diversity?

Nora: You mean outside of teaching?

Lynne: Yeah

Nora: Okay! Well I grew up in North Minneapolis so my neighborhood was very diverse. But I went to a high school in Plymouth which was slightly more homogenous. I think there was about 60%... no I think 70% -73% something like that... white student and the other percentage were students of color. Out of the kids in my neighborhood, I’m the only one who went to college or like successfully completed college. I know that some kids who went to college but didn’t complete anything or ended up at a community college and only taking a couple of classes.

But yeah I grew up in a super diverse neighborhood... hung out with a very diverse group of friends which kinda gave me a very interesting perspective on things when I got to college... and college was a lot less diverse.

Lynne: Really?

Nora: Yeah, just in comparison to like, yes Hamline was very diverse in comparison to a lot of other colleges but just in comparison to the people that you know lived in the dorms with me and the people that I saw a lot... like I ended up hanging out with more with a lot of people of color but in like the actual population of people going there... it was a lot more white.

And you know... not even that but socioeconomic statuses like looking at the differences between like the people I grew up versus the people I like met along my path in life... it was really interesting and it kind of made me see a lot more of the lack of resources there are in areas and also like how fortunate people are to NOT have to be in those types of situations. You know I had friends who didn’t even apply for FAFSA because they were like, “I don’t even know what that is” cause their
parents just paid for their entire schooling. Or actually it was their grandparents, but still… you know… they had a full ride of money.

Lynne: Yeah, that's really interesting!

Nora: Yeah

Lynne: I guess I never had those conversations with people!

Nora: We found out because we were all like applying for FAFSA again... so like our freshman year of college... everybody who lived on our floor in Sorin was like really good friends pretty much... like we were, like four- five rooms in a row hung out all the time and we were all talking about it and one person was like, “What is FAFSA?” and I was like, “Wait what?” *Giggle* And so it was just like one of those moments where it was just like, “I thought everybody... like I thought EVERYONE had to apply... like basically to get into college cause how else do you get scholarships and funding you know? So it was just... and I think she had already gotten a scholarship but it wasn’t anything like significant to make a big difference... ya know? Especially going to a college that was so expensive.

Lynne: Did you grow up in a classroom with a demographic similar to the school you are currently teaching? I mean I don’t really know what your demographic is right now but would you say it’s comparable?

Nora: No... it’s a lot more diverse here and even in the type of diversity that we have. We have a very large Muslim population here which is something that I didn't see a lot of at my school. When I was in high school I remember there being like... very few Muslim students and the only reason we... and I only hung out with one friend that was Muslim and the only reason we knew anyone else was Muslim was because there would be days when they would have to wear certain outfits for religious reasons and things like that but we had... I think there was probably... and you know my school was a lot bigger than this. The entire school has about 900 kids, give or take a few.

Lynne: For all four grades?

Nora: All four grades. Whereas my graduating class was like 530 kids. And that’s... we probably started out with like 600 and that many kids just didn’t graduate or transferred schools or something. You know? *Giggle* so it’s a very different ball game here.

And I think there’s a lot larger immigrant population here on top of the fact that there is also religious differentiations here, but it’s even like thinking back... I didn’t have that many friends even out of my friends that were students of color who were not born here or... there were a few whose parents weren’t but I have a significant amount of kids who were not born here. Majority of them have been here since they
were... ya know before the age of 5 when they moved here but ya know... I had one really good friend in high school who moved here from Brazil when she was 11, but she very much so had assimilated to American culture kind of in the melting pot of things. It wasn’t like she still used her native language frequently and also because she spoke Portuguese and not a lot of people spoke Portuguese! So that was a thing too but like we have a lot of kids here who like they are from Somalia, their families are from Somalia who will speak Somali to each other like in class. Or we have a lot of kids who will speak Arabic to each other in class so we have a large EL population here too.

So like out of ... I mean I don't know exact number wise but we have 2 full time EL teachers and then we also have... like um... I can’t remember the type of classes they call them but the type of class where it's like Science for EL students or History for EL students. So we have to have/offer more options for things you know and I have had like in my level 1 Spanish class, like a level 1 Arabic speaker but you know they really just want to try to learn another language and it’s also really good for them. Usually it’s like those kids will end up getting like ya know a pass/fail grade cause it’s just about a lot of these kids are coming from where they hadn’t been in school for a while or they haven't been through the American school system so it’s just working on getting through the day to day things like this is what happens...

It’s also good cause if they ever have like an Arabic speaker, yeah they could take Spanish because Spanish is fairly similar to Arabic and on top of that it also helps them learn English too which is kind of nice.

So we’ll put like if we have level 1 Spanish speakers, we often put them in the higher Spanish classes, it’s nice too because a lot of them don’t know how to read or write in Spanish, they just know how to speak it. So it’s actually good for them to know those things but it also helps improve their English which is nice.

Lynne: That’s awesome.

Nora: Yeah, I don’t remember a whole lot of kids being in EL and here it’s really common. I mean every single one of my classes has at least one, probably more, kids in it that are EL. Like one of my classes now has like 4 kids in there that are EL but they’re in the higher levels.

Lynne: How many classes do you teach?

Nora: We teach 5 of 7. So of seven periods, we teach five. And then we have one period every other day, it’s like a meeting. We go to like a meeting.

Lynne: In your personal opinion, how important is it to recruit diverse staff... in age, race, gender, etc.
Nora: I think it’s really important. That’s the thing that is really interesting about here, our school is extremely diverse. I mean we’re probably, I guess I don’t know exact numbers but we’re 50% students of color. But we have 1 teacher that is a teacher of color and we have 2 para’s and then we have our community liaison person... and one other person who works with our AmeriCorps people. So like our number of staff that are people of color is significantly different from our demographic of kids.

So we just hired a new Spanish teacher this year who is Muslim, he’s from Afghanistan. But like visually, looking at him, he looks very white, but you can also look at him and know that he’s not American European white. But he’s our only staff member who’s Muslim. Even though if you look at my level 1 class that I have this year, I would say over half of the kids are probably Muslim in that class so it’s interesting.

It’s been a learning curve for almost all of the staff who have started here... is just learning how to work with the different types of diversity that we have here. It’s not just learning how to work with African American youth, because I feel like that’s something that is extremely pushed on people when you’re in college. It’s like, “Oh America is all like you’re black or you’re African American.” No, there’s a wide variety of people here. But so like I think a lot of teachers get here and they’re like, “I have no idea or anything about that culture so...”

Lynne: Do you have any suggestions of how best to kind of engulf people in that culture in learning about their students?

Nora: One of the best things I’ve come to realize is just talking to my students about it. And not in like a, “Let’s stop the entire class” and you know, whatever but if there’s ever like during an activity and you hear them talking, ask them a question about it, ya know? Like, “Oh what was that like?” or “What does this mean?” or things like that.

And I’ve actually, last year, people called it my like “Afterschool Outreach” thing. They’re like, “your outreach program.” Because I was always like one of the staff that stays late after work because I don’t like coming in early in the morning so I was like, I’d rather stay later. But so I would end up with a large group of kids in here and they were kids who I had come to have a really good relationship with and they would all be female, Muslim students and so they would probably be like anywhere between 4-8 of them in my classroom every day after school hanging out.

Lynne: How did you get any work done? *both laugh*

Nora: I mean, I would work and they would work on stuff because a majority of them were in my Spanish Class so they would be working on stuff from my class or other classes and I would just be working on my stuff too, but I would just get to listen in on some interesting conversations or even HAVE interesting conversations
with them about things... especially with things when everything... I feel like last year they really got a lot more intense with like the kind of divide in our nation of religious divide... and even racial divides and it was really interesting to hear their perspective on it.

It kind of helped me see things from a different lens. And you know you always here like, here’s one narrative of one situation and it’s really nice to get the kids opinion on things and get THEIR narrative. Because every kid has a different lens and every kid see’s each situation differently even if they are in the same age group and they are the same race, it’s interesting to see the difference.

So... I like talking to my kids 😊

Lynne: No it’s really great that you are there for them.

So a couple of my questions now are more about your... not only about your student teaching but a continuation of your teaching now so could you describe to me briefly like where did you student teach, what grade was it, how long you were there?

Nora: I student taught at Jackson Middle school which is in Champlin. That was my first student teaching section and that was my big one that I was there for 12 weeks... right yeah... that one was 12 weeks my other one was 4 weeks.

That one was all eighth grade level 1 Spanish *giggle* it was very very repetitive teaching.

Lynne: So you had another 4 weeks then?

Nora: Yup, and then I had 4 weeks in an elementary immersion school... that’s why I couldn’t do a 50/50 split because I’m not getting an immersion license.

Lynne: Oh okay.

Nora: But so I did it at Richfield Dual-Immersion so half of the kids there are native Spanish speakers and the other half are not native Spanish speakers.

Lynne: I think I have a peer whose son goes there right now. So you’re currently at Fridley... and I’m guessing it’s a 9-12 range that you teach?

Nora: Yeah, so we have six levels of Spanish. Yeah... so I get every grade.

Granted level 6 is all seniors because it’s the... we’re an IB school so that’s the DP classes where they take the college test for college credit.

Level 5 is mostly juniors and a few seniors who aren’t quite ready to take the test so they take level 5 instead of level 6.
And then level 3 is kind of split freshman and juniors. So it’s a lot of freshman coming over from the middle school who already took Spanish level 1 and 2 over there. And juniors who now took 1-2 here.

Level 4, there’s no freshman. We start our native Spanish speakers in level 3 so they can take levels 3-6 their four years here. So if you are a freshman and a native speaker you would go to level 3.

Lynne: So 1 and 2 is at the elementary?

Nora: Well we have levels 1-2 here as well. So level 1 is predominantly freshman, level 2 is mostly freshman and sophomores.

Lynne: Okay, awesome. I know that you mentioned that you had your outreach afterschool program. What other ways do you kind of connect with the community?

Nora: Like me personally? Or the school in general?

Lynne: You personally.

Nora: I think I just do a lot of external research on my own to figure out where kids are coming from. We have to do a, it’s called an IGP, so it’s like an Individualized Growth Plan every year so it’s part of our alternative compensation plan. So if we do that, you come up with like a goal that you want to do and the first goal I ever did was to do a lot more research on best practices for diverse classrooms and things like that.

Just kind of trying to close that achievement gap within my own content area and stuff like that so... I had to read a book, it’s called White Teachers, Diverse Classrooms. Which is kind of an interesting title but it had a lot of interesting stories in it that kind of opened up a lot of things and I started changing my grading practices and things like that because of it.

Lynne: Really? That’s awesome!

Nora: So we’re moving... now the entire school is moving towards standards based grading which is kind of where I have been moving towards already. So coming in there were a lot of teachers who were doing like 60% summative and 40% formative and this and that and I was like that just seems like ridiculous! That just seems like a hard amount of homework. You know? And just like thinking on things and we have a lot of... we have homeless kids like where are they supposed to do homework? Like shelters are not set up to do homework... or if they’re sleeping on someone else’s couch... you know? It’s just not a good situation and it sets them up for failure.
Lynne: Yeah...

Nora: And so... I was like well... I’m not going to do something like that low. So... I think the lowest I’ve ever done is 70% summative and 30% formative. But so now they are making it so that all teachers have to do at least 80% summative and 20% formative. LAST year, err... 2 years ago I started doing 90% and then 10%. I broke that 10% up into different things. Just because that way even if a kid was super smart and like did a bunch of work in class and stuff like that versus being in a bunch of activities but didn’t have the ability to like go do homework, they could still pass my class with like a decent grade.

Cause I did have a lot of kids, like I mean I would have a lot of kids who would turn in absolutely no homework but they would ace every test so it was just... you know... and that’s just what it is. They worked on things, where it’s like, “I know I need to work on this,” so they were able to self-manage a little bit better which is very fortunate for them.

Lynne: Right.

So how would you describe your school norms or the culture here? I mean it looks like you have quite a bit of school pride.

Nora: Yeah, we do. And I think just being a small school, I mean a lot of these kids have been together since Kindergarten so it’s like they went to elementary school. There’s two elementary schools in the district, there’s one middle school and one high, well there’s technically two high schools... we do have the alternative... we have ALC which is the Alternative Learning Center.

But even then, like those kids don’t... they come to the senior graduation here, they do all the stuff the seniors do... they’re part of the senior photo, you know what I mean? So those kids still... and they all... Fridley’s its own district so the kids who live in Fridley, usually go to Fridley. Some of them go to Columbia heights cause that’s also... it’s like a mile from here... and Totino Grace. But Totino Grace is private school... you have to pay for it... so umm that’s a little bit trickier for kids here! Because it is a fairly low income school.

We have I think like 80% or more of our kids are on free or reduced lunch...

Lynne: I’m sorry how many?

Nora: I think it’s like 80%... I would have to look... it’s more than three-fourths I believe are on free or reduced lunch.

Lynne: Okay.
Nora: And so, we have a lot of, a lot of, alternatives for those kids... I can't even think of the word.

So for like sports and things like that they instead of having to pay full fees there's a different fee and if there's... like we were just talking about clubs. So I run two clubs and we were talking about kids who can't afford to be a part of club. Clubs are $10 and so we were talking like if $10 is really [too much] you can set up a payment plan for them and if it's still an extreme hardship you know, we're never going to have it where money is an issue for you to participate in that extra-curricular.

Like we will find a way to either fund it for you or find a way to work with your family to get it funded... or like allow you guys to pay for it. Same thing with like yearbooks, we have like a payment plan set up for those kids so like you put down $20 on a yearbook and then you just pay it as you can until the end of the year.

Lynne: Right.

Nora: That's one thing too... it's not just diversity of ethnicities and of cultures and of religions here but we also DO have a very wide variety of socio-economic statuses.

But so a lot of the kids here you know have been together forever. They know everything about each other. They know a lot about their families and things like that, so I think that kind of helps a lot of the other kids learn about each other's culture. You know what I mean?

Lynne: Mhmm.

Nora: So I mean when something gets brought up, a lot of kids already know a significant amount. You know like if we know that, like Eid is coming up, you know something like that. We'll be like, “Okay, well let me know if you guys aren't going to be here tomorrow,” and then people will be like, “Oh why aren't you going to be here,” and a majority of kids are like, “Oh, because Eid starts tomorrow.” You know? Even if they are white kids who are Christians, they like KNOW! *giggles*

You know and then occasionally there's kids who are like, “What's that?” and someone will explain it to them. You know? And so I think that's really interesting to see that.

And we also have a lot of organizations that works towards... like we have a multicultural organization which has a lot of our immigrant students in there.

We have our African American Student Union which changed their name to the Black Student Union this year. We have, so, I help lead Spanish club and we have a lot of our Latino students are in there. All of our languages have a club, there's a German club and there's also a Chinese club. We just don't have a large German or Chinese population here. We have one kid whose dad is a native German speaker so
the kid’s kind of a native German speaker too. Chinese... I don’t think we have any native Chinese speakers.

We have a large Hmong population. So, and then we have also a large group of kids that come from... I want to say Thailand. Well they come through Thailand, I think they have been taking refuge in Thailand and then they came here. We have a large population of people from that area.

And then a few years ago we had a huge influx of Iraqi students. And then, I think we’ve just had an increase in the number of refugees that we get in general. We had a few come last year from El Salvador. Like on their own. And it took them about two years to get here. *giggles*

Lynne: WOW!

Nora: So they have a really interesting story. They have like, I keep getting bits and pieces from them about it, they'll just be like, “Oh that reminds me of this one time that blah blah blah” and I’m just like, *Shocked face* “oh my gosh...” *giggles uncomfortably* “I went camping one time...”

Lynne: Oh my gosh I can’t imagine the things they’ve been through.

Nora: Yeah, and we do, we have a lot of kids that have been through a lot of things so it’s interesting... so we... my first year here for homecoming week. They did like a camo day and a bunch of immigrant students apparently were really nervous and they went to one of the EL teachers and was like, “I don’t know what’s happening today, was I supposed to wear camo? Is the government coming?” like they were all freaking out because they’ve been through these experiences.

Lynne: Yeah...

Nora: Then we did away with camo day and then some kid brought it up, I think the next year or later on and I explained it to him. And I feel like any normal teenager would be like, “Oh well that’s stupid,” but I think because so many of our kids here, like have friends who have been through similar situations or have heard about the stories of the kids at their school, understand that like, “Oh yeah, I could see where that’s kind of, you know, an issue.”

I mean one of the kids who would have come to school and they’re freaking out because they think the government was coming. You know?

Lynne: Oh my gosh... I never would have thought of that.

Nora: Yeah, you know, I wouldn’t have either. Not in a million years would I have ever thought that that’s the issue. I could have seen it maybe more from like a perspective of part of your religion is not to kill animals you know, or things like
that. I could see it from that perspective but never would have thought like, “Oh yeah, the government’s coming today,” which is a hard reality for a lot of our kids. From like all parts of the world. I hear some of my students, like their parents are here from Mexico and they’re like, “Yeah, the school two towns over like they showed up at their school with guns and kidnapped a bunch of kids.” Like these are the realities of the things that our kids have been through and it’s like I think a lot of people don’t understand what sort of impact… like that’s a big thing and I think there’s a big disconnect between the teaching of working with diverse groups of kids and the disconnect with working with a diverse group of kids who have like PTSD. And even PTSD that hasn’t even been diagnosed, I mean I’m sure there are a lot of our kids.

You know I have a kid, he jokes about it all the time and it’s kind of, you know, comical the way he jokes about it but he’s from Mexico and when he was like eight he came here, but his mom told him they were going to Mexico City and instead of going to Mexico City she drove them to the border and then came here. But like that’s how she convinced him of that they were leaving.

Lynne: Yeah...

Nora: *Giggles* She was like, “Oh get in the car, we’re going on a road trip to Mexico City, JUST KIDDING we’re going to the U.S.”

Lynne: We’re just going to another country.

*Both giggle hysterically*

Nora: YEAH! And so he didn’t even know that he was leaving everything behind. You know? And it’s like here we are almost ten years later and it’s kind of funny but it’s like, to think about it when you were EIGHT. I can’t imagine leaving everything behind and going to another country where I didn’t even speak the LANGUAGE.

Lynne: Wow! That’s big.

So that really ties into a couple of my other questions. So this is more of just a scale of 1-10 on, one being the least prepared and 10 being the most prepared...

Nora: Is this pre-teaching? Or now?

Lynne: Now.

Nora: Okay.

Lynne: Yes. Well actually, that’s a great question! What if we did like prior to, and then if you can think back, and then now.
Nora: Yeah

Lynne: So how prepared did you feel to meet the needs of students from diverse cultures and backgrounds on a scale of 1-10.

Nora: I think before, I thought I was extremely prepared but in all reality, I was probably at like a 5. *giggles* maybe a 6, just because I was like “ahh, I come from a very diverse setting” you know, but I mean no where near what diversity really is.

Lynne: How do you feel now?

Nora: I would probably say about an 8, on a good day I'm at about a 9.

Lynne: And then, how prepared did you feel to work with parents from diverse cultures and backgrounds?

Nora: That's something that I continually think about, like coming up in conferences and I was just thinking, “shoot, what's like the proper way to introduce myself to a Muslim father? Versus a Muslim mother?” You know, things like that.

I would say probably about, I would say before probably about a 5 too. Umm, and now, probably like a 7.

I think with just like the cultural disconnect between everybody. Or I just continuously find myself like, you know, a parent joking around about like, “he’s going to get a whooping,” but you know that’s probably not going to happen. He's probably just going to get grounded. But a lot of teachers are really concerned, like “oh does he get beat at home?” It's like no, it’s just a cultural thing that people just say.

Lynne: Yeah.

How prepared do you feel to help students with limited English proficiency?

Then, and now?

Nora: I would say prior to, and this is probably just because I teach a language, I'm already working with students who have a language deficiency in A language. Um, and just the way we teach the language and things like that. I would say probably about a 7, and now I would say probably about a 9.

Lynne: Awesome, so my next couple of questions focus on multicultural engagement.

So how would you define multicultural education? In your own words.
Nora: I don’t know really.

Umm, it’s one of those things where I’ve been through so many trainings it’s pretty self-explanatory.

I think a lot of it is just teaching things from different lenses and kind of always from a global perspective or always trying to like get kids to think about things outside of their own lens; and always pushing back on their comfort zone.

And I think that’s part too here we’re an IB league school. We always have to talk about like the IB league profile, which kids don’t really care about but I think is really interesting. So like one of it’s like, “being a risk taker” which is like being willing to step outside of your comfort zone, being open-minded, and things like that.

But I think it’s just always, like, for example English classes, not always teaching about “Dead White Guys” what people always joke about and things like that. But even if you are teaching the classics, you have to put a lens on it so kids these days are going to understand. And that even goes into, it could go as deep as getting into terms of their reading abilities in general and how that affects them in all of their other classes.

And then you have to look at the framework of your class and how that works for all of the different variety of learners you have you know and knowing that like for some parents homework is an extreme issue and for other parents, not so much, they just want their kid to learn how to be a functioning member of society. You know? And some parents they don’t care, like I want my kid to get an A, I don’t care if they learn to be cooperative or whatever.

Lynne: So would you say has been some barriers you have seen that has prevented you from being an effective teacher in a multicultural education space?

Nora: Like on a systemic level?

Umm, I just think a lack of resources you know? And you know, we are a small district, we are a low-income district, like we don’t have a whole lot of money to deal with anyways but we don’t have like a PTO that is out there funding money for us and people to donate money and doing fundraising. We just don’t have the parent engagement we would need from that perspective of things.

It was one thing learning that just because I don’t have explicit parent engagement, doesn’t mean that they don’t care.

I think that’s something a lot of people think about. Like, “oh, I think the parent doesn’t care, because the student is doing poorly in school.” But it’s like; the parent
probably doesn’t even know that the parent portal exists. Like that was one thing that we are slowly discovering.

Like at conferences, we rarely get an interpreter for conferences. We get them for when we do targeted conferences cause then we know what specific parents are coming. But we get conferences here where luckily, a lot of students parents speak Spanish so I can do conferences in Spanish with them but then a lot of my co-workers will be like, “hey are you in a conference, can you come translate for me real quick?”

And you know, realistically, that shouldn’t be on teachers, like we should have that provided. On top of the fact that we have an even larger number of kids/parents that speak Arabic and you know Somli, which is mostly a spoken language and less of a written language, but we should still have these things available for these parents.

And on top of that we found out this last conference we were talking to, I was interpreting for another teacher and we were talking about parent portal, which is a tool they get on to look at all their students information like grades and stuff and the parents had no idea what it was. And then we tried to give them documents, well all of the documents are written in English ya know, we don’t have things translated that parents need. You know? We get very minimal things translated.

So that’s been a huge issue and like the parents are like, “if I had I known about that,” so it’s not that they don’t care to know, it’s they literally DID NOT know. They didn’t go to school here, they don’t understand like what happens in the education system in America.

Lynne: So just thinking about your strategies in multicultural education, just making sure that you use all of those lenses in a global perspective. How frequently do you get, do you feel like you get enough time to just sit and reflect about your education practices and talk about it with other people? I know you probably do like PLC’s, but...

Nora: So instead of doing PLC’s, we have what we call “Tiger Time” which is that meeting we have every other day during one of our prep hours. But, I don’t think, we... Let me take a step back. This is my third year here and this is the first year where we have had staff development on diversity.

And I don’t mean like, cause obviously we’ve talked about the fact that we have diverse classrooms. Obviously we have talked about the fact that we need to make things culturally relevant. But this is the first time we are having like a speaker come in and talk to us directly about “here are the hard facts about diversity, here are the strategies of diversity specifically,” You know? And it’s just like, absolutely shocking that our school is this diverse, and we have this many kids with this many needs, and these many at risk kids and this is the FIRST time we’re doing it.
Some people were like, oh yea we did this so many years ago and oh yea we got invited to go to this that and the other. A lot of it has been our administration, has gone to trainings and they’re suppose to bring it back to us. Well it’s like, here’s the person who knows everything and gives the presentation that our administration goes to, our administration gets this much of it, and then we get this much of it. You know, it’s a terrible trickle down.

And so this is the first time, and it’s in two weeks now so I’m super excited about it. And I from day one, have been like, hey I know I don’t know everything about cultural relevancy but I feel fairly comfortable with it because I… you know… we have teachers that are like, “Oh this kid got loud with me and I was concerned he was going to punch me.” It’s like, that’s just how that kid and how that culture expresses themselves; like you have to understand that that’s just how they express themselves. He’s probably not going to hit you.

No, it’s kind of like that white flight sort of thing that people start to get. But it’s you know, I’m like I’ll offer my services and I’ve kind of been saying that. So now, we have a new principal here whom I think is so much more ready to take on those types of things. So, I’m excited for this.

I’m excited to see where it comes from.

Lynne: That’s awesome! And that brings up a really good point!

Since you’ve been here, this being your third year, what’s been your level of engagement in multicultural issues, hate crimes, racial bullying… how frequently have you seen it? Have you seen it?

Nora: Last year we had, cause there was multiple police shootings that happened in Columbia Heights, which is three blocks that way. So it had already been a hot button for a lot of our kids and it just got increasing more so, so it was something that was getting talked about a lot on social media, it was being brought up a lot in classes, I mean I had multiple kids in multiple classes asking me, “What are your thoughts on this?” you know and it’s so hard to be unbiased in having those conversation with kids. It’s like when kids ask, “Are you going to vote for Trump or Hilary?” you know, it’s really hard to have these conversation with kids and not be biased towards things when you have an extremely strong perspective on things.

And it’s difficult to hear teachers that are like, “I don’t want to talk about it in my classroom, I don’t feel comfortable talking about it in my classroom.” You know and it’s like almost the worst thing you can do is stifle that curiosity in them. They want to talk about it; you need to acknowledge that it happened. You need to acknowledge that this is an issue with them.

Lynne: So how do you approach it?
Nora: So I like to have, quite frequently, what I call “Off topic educational conversations” so if a kid brings up something in class, and I’m like this should be talked about because you kind of need to know about it, even though it has nothing to do with my class, we’re going to talk about it. You know, I mean everything from like sex education to like major political issues that are happening.

But so, it got brought up a lot during that time and we as a staff kind of talked about it and I sent out a few talking points to people. You know? Cause like, I don’t know how much research people are willing to do about these things, but I find them to be really interesting especially because these things happen where I grew up. And so, I sent out talking points to people on things and then things slowly progressed with our kids and it kind of accumulated into a girl sent out a tweet, I want to say this was like February, after... after some shooting... I can’t remember exactly what it was, but she sent out a tweet and said, “I’m done with all this Black Lives Matter bullshit” and of course a large group of our kids, and our seniors last year that we had that were part of our African American student union were really “woke,” they were really knowledgeable about the things that were happening with their community, in this nation, and things like that. And so, a lot of them came at her from like a, let me education you on what is happening perspective, but then of course you have those outlier kids who were like, “you’re just a dumb blah blah blah” and they were saying extremely crude things to her which of course then it spilled into the next school day.

So then we had kids the next school day where it became a huge issue and it became like a very tense situation and a very intense racial divide. And a lot of our kids were very frustrated about things and a lot of our kids were very outspoken. It was kind of a time where a lot of kids were just talking about how they were feeling about things, which was then creating a lot of issues because a lot of our kids... on both ends didn’t know a whole lot about the situation. You know what I mean, they were just like, “Oh well all cops are killers,” and then we had kids that were like, “well they are just a bunch of black thugs,” I mean we had from both perspectives and it turned into... there was this huge sort of conundrum at lunch. Not like a fight but like...a few...the girl ended up having to go home because people were like saying things to her and things like that so she didn’t feel comfortable and so they had like an unplanned meeting with our ASU like committee members because a lot of our kids wanted to talk about the injustice in our school and how the majority of the people that are on the boards of our clubs, the majority of our board members of our clubs are white kids which is not representative of... I mean even on our student council... there was only one student of color on our student council board and he was the... I don’t even remember, like an HR person, it just was not... like he wasn’t like president or vice president or something like that. You know and our KEYS club, they do like a lot of community outreach, service work, and this that and the other. There are not very many students... there aren’t very many students in any organizations because kids don’t know that they exist, the meetings happen at 7AM and kids can’t get rides to school.
You know, we start school here at 8:10, most kids arrive around 7:50-8. They can’t get a ride to school, they can’t get a ride after-school even though we have after-school busing sometimes buses don’t go where they live. You know so it really kind of narrows it down to the kids who are available and can be in these types of organizations so they had a big conversation about that and then it turned into, they were all leaving the meeting that they were having and they were walking down the hallway and one person started chanting, “Black Lives Matter Black Lives Matter” which then turned into, and this was during lunch, so it wasn’t like there were any classes happening or things like that but they were all just walking down the hallway chanting “Black Lives Matters” and it went on for probably like half a hallway and that was it. But then, you had the kids that heard what happened and got super amped up and were flicking off every white kid they say and it just became this huge issue and massive racial tension between our students and we ended up having a racial forum where we had the leaders of some of our bigger clubs and the leaders from our African student union come up with talking points and things like that and they opened it up to the entire the school. If they wanted to talk about it, they could talk about it, whatever they wanted to talk about.

Lynne: During school?

Nora: Yup, yeah we did it during school. It was kind of one of those things where if we don’t do this now, there’s probably going to be a huge fight by the end of the day.

So um, yeah, it was a crazy week! But it was interesting because a lot of my afterschool outreach program girls were also part of ASU, so a lot of ASU kids ended up coming into my classroom afterschool to kind of talk things out. I kind of became ground zero for them. I mean not like me personally saying things but just I was trying to be the voice of reason. Like if I was sitting here and hearing some things like a lot of them would be like, “Oh we’re going to do a walk-out,” I’d be like, what is the purpose of a walk-out, like what are you trying to get from that? And they were like, “Well, I don’t know,” okay, well what do you want, we need to figure out what you want and how you plan on doing if you don’t get it, THAT’S what you need to figure out.

But so yea, it was really interesting, I think that’s been kind of a lot of the Segway into what’s happening this year with like staff development and things like that. I think FINALLY we’re seeing this great need for training of our staff and just in general, like how can we create a more knowledgeable community within our school. Like how can we, help kids understand from a different lens. How can we help all of our outliers, kind of come more to the middle of things and so it’s been interesting now to see how we’ve been taking all of these extra steps this year and we’ve talked, I mean even during our workshop week, we’ve talked a lot more about diverse needs and things like that and how can we make things more culturally relevant.
Just the idea of bringing these things up, and yes they get brought up but more of like a figure it out on your own, you know you need to make things culturally relevant we’re not going to give you the resources for it, but now we’re finally GETTING those resources for it which is nice.

Lynne: I’m sure!

Nora: But yea, you know we have a large population of kids that are very passionate about a lot of different topics. So it’s like, you know, we need these things.

Lynne: Yeah... So I just have two more questions for you!

Kind of going off of that, so would you say your pre-service program prepared you for the type of racial diversity you met in the classroom?

Nora: To a certain extent it did, but like I said before, it kind of was a narrow lens of diversity that we looked at. I feel like we spent a lot of time talking about diversity in terms of kind of a... white student, black student, type of view and less of like a “here’s the specific cultural differences and here are the specific cultural differences with different religions,” you know like we talked about the fact that like here’s a bunch of diversity and making sure that you are trying to meet the needs of each of these kids but we didn’t talk about like why they have these different needs and what these specific needs are.

You know like, I was never told like “you should never try to like touch one of your male Muslim students,” I mean obviously not in any sort of [sexual way] but like, “hey you need to calm down,” and you touch their shoulder or something you know what I mean? If you have a kid who is recently new to this country that is predominantly Muslim, they’re going to be like wow, what’s going on because that is a thing! Like, females and males do not touch until they’re like married.

And these are things that weren’t explicitly taught. I mean occasionally it would be brought up but it was never like in-depth research on these things and I feel like we spend so much time talking about things that there is already a lot of resources for and not enough about things like... I remember we spent a large amount of time talking about how can we help American Indian students who specifically end up getting put in special education classes and things like that, but in all reality they make up less than 1% of the U.S. population.

And I mean yes, we need to reach out to all of our population and it’s something that needs to be talked about but why couldn’t we have talked about each different culture that in depth?

Lynne: Do you think that would be the best approach? If you were to do it all over again, knowing what you know now, how would you change what you had learned back then and what suggestions would you have for Hamline’s school of Ed.
Nora: I don't think there's any perfect way to solve anything, or to prepare anyone. It's a lot of trial and error. And I've come to realize that, I wasn't like "Oh someone should have taught me this," I don't think you can teach these things.

I mean a lot of it is experience and a lot of those times it's like you can't get that experience it unless you're one on one with a student or it's just you in the classroom with the kids.

So it's like, student teaching can prepare you for a certain extent but it has to be added on with different things that you do. And just as a country when we think about diversity, we do just think about our major minorities. We think about, oh well we have a lot of African Americans, but it's like we have so many variations of people and so many religions, and everything and I think it's just crucial that we discuss all of these different things. And talk less about how we can, like I just remember having to come up with like a million lesson plans that were so fake! It was just like, in all reality, this is just so fake! And talk more about where these kids are coming from.

You know, when I first started reading up on standard-based grading, I was like, oh yea this is a really good idea! But it didn't really hit home for me until I read a story about one teacher who was like trying to get into contact with these parents and was having a hard time getting into contact with them for one reason or another and this kid wasn't turning in his homework well then she found out that their power had been cut off for like the last week that she had been trying to contact them. And this kid had to wait for their dad to come so that they could do homework from the headlights of their car.

That is ridiculous.

We are requiring these kids... we have kids who come from families of you know, their parents both make 50-60,000 a year EACH, and then we have kids whose parents make maybe 15,000 each and you know, even on both ends it's not like these [middle class] parents might not have a lot of extra money because they might have large families, they might have different things that they have to pay for but its like you can't hold all of those kids to the same standards.

When we talk about differentiating, it needs to be on a level of, I mean there are so many different facets to differentiation. You know, we need to talk about reading levels; like that's one thing we didn't talk about a lot. I mean I found out, we started talking about lexisles, "oh how difficult of a reading thing is this?" so we were putting some things through a lexile determinator, and looking at the different scores of our different texts and stuff like that. And then we were also looking at our kid's different reading scores and I found out that I had a student who was in 10th grade who read at a 4th grade reading level. And it's like, even if I had something that's
easy to read in Spanish, that’s going to be significantly harder for him because he doesn’t even have a full grasp on reading in his native language.

You know, and it’s like things like that, I wasn’t told how to really fully differentiate a text. I was taught how to make and differentiate groups in a class and things like that, but it’s like how do you then use that to your benefit, like how do you use those different groups to like really work through things.

You know, I just feel like we talked about things in a... “If we were in a perfect world and you had this minimal amount of diversity...” it was like if you had diverse kids that were all understanding of the fact that they all needed to work slightly harder and kids don’t understand. They don’t know, ”hey by the way, you read at a fourth grade level,” and they’re like, “oh shoot, I should work harder on making that better!” you know, you can’t explicitly teach some things, you have to slide them in, but you need to do it in a way that is not calling kids out. You know because kids are going to be like, oh why is his article so much easier than my article even though it’s about the same amount of information in there? You just need to be very careful about how you approach them because they are extremely sensitive about these kinds of things.

I have so many kids on IEP’s that in their IEP say, “don’t ever call them out on having an IEP” so I’ve come up with a system where I come over and tab your table, and that’s your warning number one. It has to be different things, it can’t just be like, “oh if you don’t stop, I’m going to send you to your case manager!” cause then kids are going to be like, “oh what’s a case manager?” and then their going to know! So it’s those types of things, you know, like we talked about the major ways to differentiate things like kids who are visual learners, kids who are more hands on, kids who need to work independently but it’s not about the little things. And I know those little things come from experience but it is a lot of things that I’m just like huh... that could have been brought up at some point.

Lynne: So sorry, this is off topic, I’m just super curious, coming from Hamline then, and then coming here, was there like a mentorship program? Did you have to learn about all of this on your own? Did you have someone to bounce ideas off of?

Nora: We actually just started to do like a “teacher-mentorship program” here this year. So I’m a mentor teacher for one of our teachers this year. But it’s really vague, there’s not a lot of specific guidelines to it, which is understandable they’re like, they more so want you to be kind of like their go to person if they have a question or their go-to person if they need to vent. Like be more of their friend and less of a higher up.

Um, but when I first got here, I didn’t. I kind of came here in a weird way because I was a late hire. I was hired 2 days before workshop week so I missed the whole new employee workshop week. So I got in, I didn’t know how to print anything, I didn’t know to reserve a computer card, you know, so I didn’t use computers my entire
first year! I was like; do I just go in there and see it’s open? You know, yeah, I was just swimming in the sea of the unknown.

It was also weird because I traveled, my first year I was here the first three hours, but I only taught two classes though. There was one, cause we were on trimesters my first year which was terrible and now we’re on semesters. There was one trimester where I taught first hour and then I would have second hour prep. But then I would go to the middle school and I taught one Spanish class and then I taught a science class. Literally the principal came and was like hey, I remember you telling me in your interview that you were originally a biology major, and he’s like, how comfortable would you feel teaching a science class? I was like uhh... what kind of science class? They were like it’s a 7th grade life science, I was like oh okay, so it’s like biology stuff... I’m like yeah, I can do it.

I mean that was really interesting, so I didn’t really have a home base. Like I mean I had a classroom here, but I was only here for the first few hours and didn’t get a chance to interact with too many people. Even people that were in their second year were like, oh is this your first year here? I’m like no... I was here... like I never had lunch in the lunch room or like our staff lunch room cause I left to go to the middle school and people who were at the middle school didn’t know me because I left to go to my afternoon meetings here so it was just really weird.

And that’s the reality, because we are such a small district, we have quite large classes. We have so many teachers that have to travel just because it’s like... so that’s one of those things we really need to work on... larger class sizes... and that’s one of those systemic things we need to change. It’s not one of those, how come I didn’t learn about this in college. Which is another thing too, I think we talked about class sizes in college being like 30; well that’s a pretty decent sized class.

I mean it’s not ideal for like a lower level Spanish class, ideally if they were all 25 per class that would be perfect. But that’s not the reality, they’re like 38! But then we also have a lot of kids who transfer in and out during the semester. We’re an open-enrollment school so we take kids all year around.

Especially Sylvester, I get a lot of kids from Sylvester to here and I’m just like, I have no information on you. What was like your Spanish skills somewhere else?

Lynne: So how does that work? Do students need to test in order to get into certain Spanish level classes?

Nora: No! And we really should have it set up like that but they literally try to match up their schedules to how it was at their other class. And it’s like, what if we matched it up on what they were doing well in...

I mean, I’ll get kids and then two weeks later I’ll get their transcripts. Where it’s like, “oh these were their scores at the end of the semester.” It’s just like, these kids
should not be in my class right now, but then it’s like, their classes are too full to move anybody around. Like we had, Chemistry classes that were too full, so we couldn’t change anyone’s schedules so we had to ask a Chemistry teacher who retired last year to come back to teach one section of Chemistry so that they could open up and move kids around.

Lynne: You’re kidding...

Nora: Yeah. So it’s just like, LAB classes, there’s only so much space. It’s not like you can add an extra desk or something and then you have a lot of safety issues at that point so yea. That’s how I ended up teaching science at the middle school because their classes were like 42 and they had so many kids like coming in... and I think just like with the area we have here too. It’s interesting because we have a lot of kids that come in late because they don’t know that you have to enroll in school because most families just don’t know these things.

They don’t know where the school is or how to go about that so it takes them awhile to figure that out. Or even that school is starting! If you come from a different country where kids go to school you know, during different times of the year, they don’t know that school is starting. So it’s like, oh, we’re two weeks in and you’re just coming... and you’re not coming from another school, you’re just starting.

You know, so it’s, how do we overcome all of those things and figure out how to put them in classes where the classes are already so big? So it’s one thing that we’re really trying to work on with our union... trying to get our class sizes down... which then requires us to hire more teachers. We’re already tight on space here as it is. Like the other Spanish teacher, this is his desk [points to small desk adjacent to hers].

Lynne: Oh really?

Nora: Yeah, so he travels. He’s here the first three hours, and then goes over to the middle school and teaches three more classes over there.

He teaches in the Chinese room first hour, the other Spanish room second hour, and then in here third hour. I just happened to have two teacher desks so I was like, “you can take that desk,” cause you know, I don’t ever, I literally just have my TA sit there.

[End of Conversation]
Appendix D: Transcription of Interview with Leticia

Date of Interview: 11/11/16

Lynne: The premise of my capstone, I know I’ve been sending a ton of emails, is to understand what kinds of gaps exist, if there are any, in service teaching. And when you are student teaching. I know you did yours at SPPS?

Leticia: head nod

Lynne: You know what other opportunities or experiences, etc. that we can do to best help train teachers to be more multiculturally aware. If there are any gaps, and if you feel Hamline did a great job based on some of the answers you provided in my first questionnaire, it kinda sounds like?

Once you got to here, or other experiences you may have had, what other things you wish you would have learned at the time... what have you learned since, that you wish you would have been taught... some of the questions are along those lines?

It’s only about two pages worth of questions but it will probably span about an hour because we’ll have random conversations along the way.

Leticia: head nod, okay

Lynne: If I could first get to know a little bit more about you and your personal experience, we can start there and build off of that?

Leticia: okay, sounds good!

Lynne: So if you can tell me, and describe your personal experience with diversity, prior to becoming a teacher.

Leticia: I grew up in Forest Lake, which isn’t too far from here actually so it’s kind of like coming back home. We had some diversity but it was very limited, a couple students here and a couple of students there, but a lot of students were white, either Christian or catholic or one of the like very... well we weren’t too religious but people were going to church and talking about that...

Mostly, middle class as far as I know. So yea, it was a lot of similar people and some that weren’t part of the general make-up. Then Hamline was kind of a culture shock, which was appreciated! It was nice getting away from Forest Lake and meeting people other than people who looked like me and thought like me. So that was what I had.

Lynne: So how would you describe your cultural journey since then?
Leticia: I definitely feel more aware about things that occur at home, perhaps cultural traditions for some people. Holidays. The way they talk with their parents. I've always been super close with my mom. It was just my mom, my sister and me growing up so we always had to be close. We never really had a choice. But some people I talk to don't have good relationships with their family and would prefer to be more independent.

And just holidays: we don't really celebrate holidays a bit, we get together but we don't do anything extreme. You know, people have really religious ceremonies like they go to midnight mass or they just all sorts of things. Meeting people who were more willing to talk about those experiences different than mine was really eye opening and really wonderful.

Lynne: I hope you don't mind, I’m just going to take a few notes.

Leticia: I always take notes so that’s no problem.

Lynne: Okay, so can you tell me a little bit more about the demographics of your students here as well as, you teach at the middle school right?

Leticia: I would say, it's hard to give a number ... I'm trying to think. So I've got about 90... I actually wrote this down...I have about 90 students here, and that doesn't include my advisory. I would say that... I definitely have a lot of students of color, but I wouldn't go so far as to say that it's the majority? White bear does have a changing population, and that’s been pretty recent years from what I've heard. But I would say a fair number of students are students of color?

Lynne: And at the middle school?

Leticia: Same at the middle school. Again, not majority, but... it’s a pretty even mix at the middle school now that I think about it.

Lynne: Do you happen to know the extent of free or reduced lunch by chance at your school?

Leticia: I don't but I could probably look it up.

Lynne: No worries, I can look it up as well...

So based off on what I'm hearing, it doesn't sound like what I'm hearing is what you’re experiencing now isn’t the same demographic as when you had grown up.

Leticia: head nod

Lynne: In your personal opinion then, how important do you think it is to recruit staff of color that’s diverse whether that’s in age, race, socio-economic status, gender
etc. In your own opinion, what do you, do you think that’s important and in what ways?

Leticia: I think it should definitely be something employers keep in mind. Obviously, I want the most qualified person but also try to have a diverse staff so kids feel like they are being represented or they have someone they might not know but because they look or think or sound like them, they can be their anchor.

So something definitely to keep in mind.

Lynne: Do you ever feel like you are at a disadvantage with your students of color because you’re not a person of color? Has that ever been brought up?

Leticia: I don’t know if I would use the word, “disadvantaged” because I think we’re all at a disadvantage for different reasons, but I definitely feel like I don’t always know where they are coming from. I mean, I’m a woman so I deal with that, but I’m white and it’s assumed that I’ve had it good, which I haven’t, but that’s a whole ‘nother story. But I just feel like sometimes I don’t always know the experiences that they’re dealing with at home or at work or wherever it is. So sometimes it is hard to connect and understand but I’m doing my best to be open minded and ask questions.

Lynne: What has been... so how long have you been teaching?

Leticia: Well this is my first kind of full time gig. Last year I was a long-term sub for the first trimester while a woman was on maternity leave. And then I subbed the rest of the school year day-to-day so this is my first time where it’s my own classroom... my own kids... still not full-time but pretty close.

I guess technically this is year one.

Lynne: Were you here when you were a long-term sub?

Leticia: No, I was in Woodbury.

Lynne: Okay

Leticia: It was a different demographic, yes.

Lynne: Do you live in this area now?

Leticia: I live in Saint Paul, but it’s nice because it’s a 20-minute commute against traffic.

Lynne: Oh really?
Leticia: Yes.

Lynne: Yeah, I noticed that! Cause I came from Hamline.

Leticia: Well yeah, I live on Energy Park Drive so I'm really close. So it's nice to be against traffic. It's super nice.

Lynne: So you've had roughly, kinda say give and take, like about a year of experience and then almost half of a year now? What has been your biggest learning since you've begun your teaching career?

Leticia: I don't know if this is exactly what you are looking for but being flexible. I'm a very organized person and I have an idea of how things are going to go in my head and then when you walk into the classroom and it all goes out the door cause it all depends on what happens in class that day... if a conversation needs to be had and we push something back and that needs to happen? That needs to happen.

So that's something that I'm learning to do and a lot of that has happened this week with the election. So like, “Okay, we might need to put this on the backburner for now and come back to it later,” so I don't know if that's exactly what you're looking for but that's something that I've learned from. Learning how to push back and not stick to my schedule but stick to their schedule.

Lynne: That's awesome.

So in what ways... how did you kind of handle that? Cause I'm the exact same way and I feel like ambiguity and trying to go with the flow does not come naturally to me so how did you kind of combat that?

Leticia: Like I said, it's still a work in progress but I'm just trying to keep day-by-day, “Well if we didn’t get this done then we’ll do it tomorrow. Then I just move things back by a day and if it takes longer than I push it back even more. And it's really nice because the staff here, we're very supportive of each other from what I can tell so far. Four of us tend to meet at least once a month to plan out the month. So even if we don’t stick to the day-by-day schedule, you have an idea of what that month will look like and so if you ever get lost or feel like you need to shuffle around some things, you have that back-up plan.

So having that in place has helped me kind of loosen the reigns a bit. Like, "Okay, even if I mess up, I know where I can reign them back in... but yeah I just... learning to let go is difficult.

Lynne: For sure.

So you said you meet once a month?
Leticia: At least, yeah. It’s hard for me because a lot of happen in the afternoon and I’m already at Sunrise in the afternoon. School ends here at 2:15 so I am able to come back but it’s just another 10-minute drive back here so umm they met on Monday but I ended up having to sub at the end of the day at Sunrise because they were short staffed. So sometimes I miss the meetings but they always check in with me and they always send me links to things that have made or discussed, but we’re really good about keeping in touch.

Lynne: So who does it consist of? Like others who are teaching... I’m sorry what do you teach?

Leticia: Language arts 9

Lynne: Okay, perfect. Are they also English teachers?

Leticia: Yes. Yup, they have other classes as well but we meet to discuss LA 9. And then a couple of them have honors classes so they obviously change the schedule to adapt to their needs and one of them has “Academy” which takes things a little bit slower but we have a general outline and then we all plan accordingly.

Lynne: Okay, so I think that falls right in line with talking your student teaching experience. We’ll just kind of shift gears a bit.

Leticia: Sounds good.

Lynne: Going back to what you mentioned about your student teaching experience... in one of your entries you had mentioned that we should be providing Hamline students with more experiences in diverse environments such as you had at SPPS. Can you share a little bit more about your student teaching experience? Such as what took you by surprise, what age range you taught, etc.?

Leticia: Definitely! While student teaching, I taught 9-10th grade language arts. So 14-16 year-olds. And I knew St. Paul was a very diverse district. I tutored at Hamline Elementary for almost four years so I had an idea of the elementary school but going into an older classroom and seeing that diversity and how that effected interactions and romantic relationships and cliques and all that fun stuff... not always fun but... you know what I mean.

So it was definitely a change for me. It was almost the opposite of Forest Lake. In Forest Lake, I was able to blend in really well and be almost... unnoticeable. At Saint Paul, a lot of people... I just stood out because I was white and because I was a woman... and obviously I look like one of them because I’m tiny and I have a young face which is crazy because they seem so different from me and it was just the opposite of what I was used to. Even in going to Hamline, “Okay you’re going to have diverse classrooms,” but I walked in and it was a majority of students of color and the minority was white which was refreshing, but it was definitely a change.
Lynne: How did that make you feel?

Leticia: I was nervous at first because I didn't want to make any assumptions about students based on the limited knowledge that I have of their background so I tried to ask questions only when I felt it was appropriate. And if I didn't understand something I would follow-up.

One thing that worked really well with my tenth graders, we read The Late Homecomer and so a lot of my Hmong students were able to open up about the expectations that they have in their families and how they reflected that of the authors. Even if I felt uncomfortable, they thought that was a bridge that we can meet on. That helped, but yeah, I just try really hard to be respectful and not assume anything and let them reveal themselves to me.

Lynne: Wow that sounds amazing!

Leticia: It was tricky though because I like to talk so I had to listen a lot!

Lynne: So where you're currently teaching, how are you continuously connecting with the community? Whether it's with your white students or students of color, their parents? How do you continuously interact with them and try to meet them at their needs?

Leticia: That’s something that I am always working on. It’s especially hard being at two schools. My 9th graders only get to see me in the morning and they are kind of cut-off from me in the afternoon. My afternoon students are cut-off from me in the morning. So it’s hard sometimes to show that I am wanting to be part of their learning and their life in general.

Whenever I can, I strike up a conversation with them. Whether it’s right away in the morning before the first bell rings. Whether it’s during passing time. If we have work time, I try to monitor, walk around the room and check-in with students not only about their work but how things are going.

I haven’t had to send a lot of emails this year because for the most part, my 9th graders, surprisingly, know what to do. We’ve had some issues but nothing to the point where the parent needs to be informed. It’s just constant redirection and they usually get it. Their friends usually call them out on it before I do.

I’ve had to send a couple of parent emails at the middle school, but I try to make myself available as possible. I let them know, “I know it seems difficult to get ahold of me, and it’s hard that I’m not here when you want to talk to me but if is something that you need. Email me. I'll be there.” So just try to be as present as I can be while I’m here and be present in emails and posting on our website.
Lynne: How are you doing? That sounds very stressful!

Leticia: Well you’ve got the first year teacher, combined with new to the district, combined with traveling, combined with 0.8. And so because I’m .8 they had asked me to supervise lunch to get me closer to that full-time. Something a little extra each year.

So it’s stressful. There have been multiple breakdowns this year but I’m trying to take each day, one day at a time.

Checking in with my colleagues whenever I can. Especially this week. It was rough. It was end of the quarter, grades were due and even though they don’t make it part of their transcript or GPA, it’s just a snapshot of where they are during the first semester… a lot of kids still want to get their grades to a point where they are happy about them. So they’re freaking out, “my parents are going to ground me, they’re going to take away my cell phone”.

That combined with the election combined with a modified schedule on Monday, the sophomores are taking pre-ACTs. My old sophomores are my advisory so that’s interesting. So I think all of that this week was just a lot for me. So I’ve noticed more teachers than usual have come in to check on me which is appreciated, a lot. Usually I have a couple of teachers who say, “If you need anything, just let me know,” but several teachers have stopped by my room and have actually planted themselves in here and said, “Hey, if you need something, you talk to me.”

So it’s been stressful. Very very stressful, but I feel like I have a really good support group here. So yeah, I’ve just been trying to find healthy ways to let it out. It’s been a challenge but I don’t think I’m doing a horrible job. I mean obviously no one’s come to me to talk about my poor performance or anything but it’s definitely been a learning experience this whole time.

A lot of the other teachers have been in my position where they’ve had to split their time or they’ve been a part time so a lot of them know where I am coming from and have given very good advice.

Lynne: Is it pretty typical then to start out doing the split work prior to becoming full time?

Leticia: Something that my department head told me one time was that she actually thought that a part-time position should never be combined with the traveling. If you are part-time, you should be in one school. If you’re traveling, you should be full-time. That’s how you should be compensated.

She said there was no way to avoid it this year and unfortunately that’s what happened. A lot of teachers have “paid their dues” by doing one of those but it’s not typical to have both on your plate. So it’s a very unique position this year and I think
that's why a lot of peers are reaching out to me—even people who aren't in my department. The administration has been really good, “Hey if you need anything, just let us know how we can help.”

It’s okay. Like I said, just taking things day-by-day.

Lynne: I have all the faith in the world that you’re doing a lot better than you give yourself credit for!

Leticia: Okay, well I hope so!

Lynne: Is there any type of mentorship program that exists within your school for first year teachers or teachers within their first 5 years or something of the sort?

Leticia: head nod

So they kind of have a mentorship program. When I first was hired in and it got to be close to the end of the summer where we were going to be doing training and stuff, they gave me the name of one of the teachers to contact and because she taught one of the same classes as me. She’s a fairly younger teacher, I think mid-20s to mid-30’s so she’s fairly new but she’s been teaching long enough to give [advice on her] experience and the said, “Hey, check-in with her” so she’s kind of my “unofficial mentor.”

The department head is just across the hall so she checks in on me a lot but they don’t exactly call themselves, “my mentors.”

Same as over at Sunrise, they gave me the name of one of the language arts teachers over there, “okay, check-in with her” but we just kind of check-in every once in a while.

I plan with another teacher that is there but the mentorship program that we have is more of an observation one. So our mentors are three people that have been hired by the district. A lot of them were teachers at one point and have taken a further role. So each of the three get a caseload.

We’re observed 3 times our first year by the administration and 3 times by our mentor so that’s really just to talk about how we’re doing and how we can better use technology for the 4 C’s or ...

Lynne: What’s the 4 C’s?

Leticia: Collaboration, cooperation, communication, and critical thinking. That’s really something they’re trying to implement here. Which is fun because I taught the 4 C’s a lot last year as a sub.
I was like, “Ah! I know what we’re doing here!”

So they’re just here to help give us ideas of what to do to better our classrooms. They give us a score and it’s mostly just, “Needs improvement”, “Doing really well”, or “Nice Job,” but that’s pretty much the mentorship program that’s in place.

Like I said, we check-in with each other a lot and I don’t always make it to the department meetings but they always make sure to email me the copy of the agenda. They stop in to let me know if there was anything that came up. So yea, that’s what we’ve got going on right now.

Lynne: Okay, in what ways does your school support you and your learning of multiculturalism? Does that happen? Is it a topic that comes up in your department meetings or is it in passing? Or during that mentorship program?

Leticia: I feel like I get a little bit of that in each. A lot of times, if one of us finds an article that we feel would be really helpful in teaching a topic or it’s relevant—we usually forward it to the whole department. And if we feel like we want to talk about it, we meet up.

If there’s a topic or discussion that’s been going on in the classroom a lot lately we’ll usually share that during the department times. We had kind of just a brief one at the beginning of the year for staff training and then yeah… a lot of it happens over email for me because I’m not here.

Admins are really good about, “If you need anything, let us know” same with our department in knowing that I’m a new teacher.

Lynne: These next couple of questions are more of a rating scale of how prepared you feel in certain areas. What Lizzie did in a previous interview was she kind of gave me a, “When I left Hamline this is how I felt...” and a “Now, where I’m sitting, this is how I feel.”

So on a scale of 1-10, 1 being the least prepared and 10 being the most prepared, how prepared do you feel to meet the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds? Then? And Now?

Leticia: That’s hard! You don’t want to overestimate and you don’t want to underestimate. I would say, a safe number somewhere in the middle. I have a lot of theories in place it’s a matter of how to implement them.

And I guess that’s the same at Hamline where all of your theories are great and all, but how do we do that in the real world on your own? I would say like a 4 or a 5 and I just hope that over the next few months or years, that would go up.

Lynne: So you would say about a 4-5 for both then and now?
Leticia: head nod

Lynne: Okay, how prepared do you feel to work with parents from diverse cultural backgrounds?

Leticia: I would say probably the same and hoping that it’ll shoot up.

Lynne: How prepared do you feel to work with students of limited English proficiency?

Leticia: I would rate myself a little higher on that one because when I did tutor at the elementary school it was always with ELL students so I might be a little bias there. I’d probably give myself like a 6 or a 7. Because it’s that, I was doing it with younger students, so while their skills may be the same, you can’t really teach a 14-year-old like a 7-year-old or they might not want to talk to you again.

Lynne: With your students now, do you ever leverage other resources around the building like ELL teachers or other teachers who are more likely to work more frequently with students on language proficiency. Do they ever come in and assist you in the classroom?

Leticia: They haven’t really. I’ve had a para stop in, I’ve had one of our resource teachers stop in, so students know they are available, but not many of them have approached me to ask for their resources.

I suppose I could make that more clear to students. To say, “You know these people are here to help,” but yeah I don’t have like a special para anymore. That student was taken out of the classroom to work in a resource room so I lost that para. I don’t have an ELL co-teacher. Tiffany usually gets most of those kids across the hall.

If someone were to approach me or I see a problem, I would be happy to direct them elsewhere. Something I should probably be more pro-active about.

Lynne: Have you had your first round of conferences yet?

Leticia: Nope, that is the week of Thanksgiving... so about a week and a half.

Lynne: Do you happen to know what kind of resources are available to parents who aren’t English proficient by chance?

Leticia: I don’t... that’s a good question... I should look into that.

Lynne: Oh, I’m just curious.
Leticia: I know that when I was at Harding, we definitely had translators available just because it was such a diverse population but I haven’t even thought about it in White Bear.

I’m just trying not to think about conferences. It came up way too quickly!

Lynne: I can’t believe it’s November already! It seems like the school year JUST started.

Leticia: YES! I mean I’m glad it’s a quarter of the way done but oh my gosh we have so much to do still.

Lynne: Okay, this is the last, maybe another 20 minutes.

It sounds like a very chaotic time and I’m so sorry…

Leticia: Oh my gosh, no worries, I did this because I wanted to help! Don’t apologize.

Lynne: So what do you believe are some barriers to the implementation of a successful multicultural curriculum? I know you said, theory is great, but implementing is a different story. What kind of barriers do you see that prevent you from being able to do that? As well as some strategies that you hope to use to overcome those barriers?

Leticia: Well I’m just thinking about our most recent unit, we’re wrapping up the Absolute True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie. Even during silent reading time, it was so hard to scold kids because they were laughing at some of the parts. I was like, “I want to scold you, but it is a funny part in the book.”

So a lot of kids really liked it. I was really worried about teaching something that wasn’t taught by a white author which I’ve done before, but again with such a diverse population, how do I do that without sounding high and mighty? Or very very white?

One thing that we did as a staff, something we’ve been doing for years. We have the “Mascot Debate” so in light of recent arguments about sports mascots, like the redskins, the Indians, or the chiefs. Sports teams in general and even at the college level.

So when we’re doing the Part-Time Indian, they have a Mascot Debate and something we did differently this year was give students a perspective. So with the mascot debate, they have to fill out this organizer with their personal perspective as whoever and they had to do a perspective of someone we gave them.
So one example you are now the owner of the Washington Redskins and you are furious they are trying to change your name... How would you feel about this situation? And then they have to answer the question.

Okay, how do you as Natalie feel about this situation? And then after they fill this out, they had a debate one day and so the approach in that, in multiculturalism, it’s very hard to put yourself in another person’s shoes but we really tried to push them to do that here.

And some of them had really easy ones like, “We really don’t care about the name change,” well okay, that’s something you have to get a little more creative with or, “you’re already white but you have an opinion” or something like that so I had to get students to think outside of their own shoes. They still got to express their ideas but they also had to do it from another person’s shoes.

So that’s one thing the other teachers do. I take a lot of their ideas because I’m new. Just trying to help kids put themselves in the character’s shoes as much as possible and in each other’s positions because we all have different experiences.

In the future, just try to find ways to introduce topics again, not as a white teacher but someone who has a diverse lens. It’ll kind of depend on how the year goes. We’re going to try new things.

Lynne: You have a lot of things on your plate and you’re doing a lot of things. How often do you get the opportunity to self-reflect on your own thoughts, views, how you’re approaching your students. Whether it’s about multiculturalism or anything in general, how often do you get that chance to just sit and de-compress to think about your pedagogy.

Leticia: To be honest, I feel like I do that 90% of my time. Even in transition time and putting things away, I’m just like, “Wow, that really didn’t go well” or “That went really well, we should do this next hour” or “Okay, this went well BUT...” so just little things like that but usually each night, I don’t usually sit down and write out each reflection but I sit there and I’m like, “Okay, this is how the lesson went, how does that impact my lesson plans for tomorrow?” and then how does that effect the end product or the outcome or how does that fit our goal?

So it might not be fully structured and formal by writing it down but I definitely reflect as often as I can in thinking about the day. And like I said, a lot of the time teachers will come in and check on me and that gives me a chance to vocalize it and hear myself try to explain things and if it doesn’t make sense to me I have to reflect on how I’m teaching. So I’m like, “Oh, that really doesn’t make sense. No wonder why my kids were like freaking out because obviously I was using big words or I was talking too fast because I do that.”
And it’s also nice to bounce ideas off of people. I try to reflect as much as possible and I feel like I may not be the best at altering my plans but I’m very reflective in nature and I’m also very critical of myself so that probably doesn’t help. So yeah, I would say a lot.

Lynne: And then how much of that time do you think about how you can make your lesson plans more inclusive of students of color. How often does that come up?

Leticia: I would say fairly frequently. A lot of things I try to do, I try to have them think from a character’s perspective and then give them a chance to give an opinion from their perspective just because it’s very likely that your friends in here already know your perspective is on something. A lot of these kids have known each other since elementary school or at least middle school. About half came from Sunrise and about half came from Central. So some of them might not know each other very well but they at least know someone from each class.

So I think by giving them a lens or a perspective to look from, it changes it. “Okay you’re no longer Joe, you are Junior. Your dad’s an alcoholic, your mom’s just doing your best, your sister just died, how do you feel about this?” And their like, “Oh, okay.”

Right now we’re doing a lot of step-by-step, we’re easing them into the school year but I think it’s working, they’re like, “Okay, I’m not a Native American, how am I supposed to think about this?” “Well okay… think about this… you’re dad’s an alcoholic” and you give them that, and they’re, “Like okay” and then I’m like, “You’re just thinking like Junior” and they’re like “OH! Okay.”

So just ease them in, and give them a chance to express themselves and whenever possible just have them look from another person’s perspective.

Lynne: How do you build that environment? It’s been about 2 ½ months now how do you build that environment where they feel comfortable sharing their perspectives?

Leticia: Well the first week was a lot of get to know you type of team building, you know find someone you trust in this class. Obviously branch out. One thing I recently did was groupings. I had them choose one person that they can handle sitting by, but you work really well together. So they have an anchor for when they are not comfortable, but as long as they have one person next to them that they do feel comfortable with, I’ve noticed they’re more likely to branch out as long as they can go back to their one anchor. And I’ve been doing that a lot with “Find and Shares” like okay, go find someone with the same color shirt, go talk to them.

So it might not be whole class, the first week was but I’m trying to get them comfortable in small groups so that they’re not just going to their friends. Be like, “Okay, if my friend is going to that person, I know that person, okay, I’ll go over
there.” And just trying to remind them of what expectations we have in the classroom like general respect. I always have clear expectations on the board for each activity so like, “I’m serious, these are the things I expect you to do and if you can’t handle them we’re going to have to end that activity, or you’ll have to sit out, or we’ll have to find something but these are the expectations or it’s not going to happen. Even if you don’t want to do it, other people may be wanting to so play along… pretend like you care…”

If you really don’t care, pretend you care, like the sports teams! I really don’t care about sports, I’m sorry but I pretend I care because I know some of you care. Just smile, fake it, you’ll get your points.

Lynne: Since beginning your teaching journey, how would you describe your level of engagement in multicultural issues, hate crimes, racial bullying? Have you had to confront any issues of that nature since your time?

Leticia: A couple, I’m thinking of one at the middle school. I don’t really know what exactly went on but I did send three kids out one day. They kept calling each other and saying, “You Jew” and I don’t know what had gone into that or if there was a reason?

I don’t think it was meant to be derogatory, I don’t know what is going on in teenage boy’s minds but I said, “Okay, that’s not okay. I don’t care if you meant something good by it, I don’t care if you meant something bad by it. You do not need to roast anyone based on a slur like that. Even if the person was Jewish or a Jew or whatever, that is nothing to be ashamed of so don’t be using it like you’re roasting someone.”

So those things have come up. A lot of them have just happened recently… Well I think with just Trump being elected, some people are trying to be funny about it. But a lot of it is coming off horribly.

I know hunting season is opening and one kid said they were going hunting last weekend. And a black student said, “Oh are you going to hunt black people?” and the student was like, “No, why would I do that?” “Cause you’re white.” Again, I don’t know if that was a joke or if they had something running between them? But I was like, “Okay, we’re moving on. We’re not going to talk about that because it sounds like a conversation that we all know is wrong. We’re going to move on.”

That student has a problem with nitpicking at students so I know there wasn’t anything serious behind it and if there was... well I’m just hoping not. So, I’ve had a couple of incidents, but nothing that have taken it physically.

Like I said, the one dealing with the Jew one, I did write up and refer it to the assistant principal and he dealt with that. They lost their passing time to talk with friends. There are consequences and I have not heard it since, whether or not they
are saying it behind my back or not? They haven’t said it in my presence since I’ve written them up. I guess that’s the big one.

I’ve been on high alert this week just because of what has been going on in the media and trying to stop it before it becomes a problem. Most of the time I can tell if it’s a joke meant to get a rise out of someone but still, I’m trying to cut that down. Because it’s such a touchy subject for most people—myself included.

Lynne: So my very last question is, would you say that your pre-service training at Hamline prepared you for the type of racial diversity you met in the classroom. If yes, how so? If no, in what areas would you have liked more emphasis?

Leticia: Well I definitely feel good about going into a place that won’t necessarily reflect me. Hamline definitely taught you and prepared you, well at least I felt that way, it prepared me not necessarily of the worst situation but if you can handle being very uncomfortable, not necessarily uncomfortable, but being with a group of people who look different than you, if you can handle that? You can handle anything.

So teaching, for a very urban demographic, if you can teach an urban classroom, you can teach a rural. Because that will be much easier. So in theory, I felt very ready for anything, but since then. My groups since last year while subbing, it was one population. I come here and it’s another population. So it’s constantly adjusting.

I feel like I have the tools needed to thrive in different situations, it's just a matter of HOW I do it. And getting that done as quickly as possible and not waiting. Like showing, “Okay, we’re going to have an opened mind, we’re going to treat everyone with respect, we’re going to listen to their views, we’re going to listen to their backgrounds. Just getting that to be a clear expectation from day 1 and I always struggle because there are a thousand things to do on day 1.”

Lynne: And there’s a thousand things they are thinking of on day 1!

Leticia: Right! Well on the first day of school, in the first period, the fire alarm went off! I was like, are you kidding, I haven’t even introduced fire alarm plans yet! Luckily we are right next to staircase so I was like, “okay, just follow the herd” but like I have freshman, this is their first year of school and they were like, “What do we do?” and I was like, “well just follow them…”

So yeah, they were obviously thinking of other things and I was thinking of other things...

[End of Conversation]
Lynne: So I have a couple of questions. Some of them will be in regards to your personal experience, your upbringing, and then kind of your multicultural engagement, which you clearly have experience in. Just for me to get to know you a little bit more, can you describe your personal experience with diversity?

Phoebe: Growing up, I definitely was kind of put into that, multicultural experience. My mom ran a daycare and we had a lot of different cultures coming through my daycare so right away my family was very prevalent with talking about it and making sure that me and my sister were understanding kind of like, you know different cultures and talking about it and making sure that we weren't “white washed”, you know what I mean?

Lynne: Yeah

Phoebe: And growing up, I never really, I mean they would talk about it, but it never really occurred to me that there were different cultures because I was so immersed in those types of cultures. I mean, I grew up in Eagan and also Duluth, MN and I went to high school in Apple Valley. We didn't have a very wide range of diversity in our school. It was mostly white, but I never felt like there was an issue with culture but it was definitely predominantly white. We did have other cultures and races there but I mean, it was never really an issue which was kind of neat to see.

I definitely am in it more now that I am teaching than what I did when I was personally growing up but because of the fact that my parents were so open with talking about different cultures and accepting other cultures and celebrating them? It was a lot easier for me to learn more about it once I got into college and then starting teaching. I was always interested in learning about other people's cultures cause I think it's really beautiful and because I'm a music teacher, as you study music, you realize that everybody's tied together in so many different aspects of life and that we share a lot of the same thoughts no matter where we live.

So there's that!

Lynne: That was so pretty!

Phoebe: Thanks!

Lynne: So in Maplewood then, I'm kind of guessing based off of your experiences then, did you kind of grow up in a classroom that is similar to yours now? Or would you say that it's pretty drastically different?
Phoebe: I would say that it’s definitely more multicultural NOW, and Maplewood has been going through a lot of changes lately. In the past, you know 10 years there, they’ve been seeing more kids coming through from different cultures, different backgrounds. You’re seeing more color in the schools rather than it being predominantly white or Caucasian. And it’s nice to see though because it’s bringing a lot more life into the classrooms. Kids are able to talk about it more. We’re seeing a higher population of Asian cultures in my classroom. We have a large Hmong population, I’ve been learning a lot about that culture THROUGH my students.

But yeah, I mean growing up myself, we did have some but definitely not as much as this. It’s about 50/50 so we have about 50% Caucasian and then about 50% other cultures with, we have a very small population of Native American but we do have some. We have, I want to say about 30%, like 25-30% African American, and then Asian American as well.

Last year when I was at my school down in Des Moines though, it was mostly predominantly other cultures.

Lynne: Really? In Des Moines?

Phoebe: In Des Moines! Des Moines, Iowa. I was at an accelerated IELC [Intensive English Language Center] program down in Des Moines. So we actually took all of the immigrants that were coming from, um, coming into Iowa and into Des Moines and they would come to our school. So we had an intensive English program for students who did not speak any English at all. Last year I actually could count on my hand the number of kids that were Caucasian in my school. So the majority of my kids were of different cultures and it really... that’s what really immersed me into it and I LOVED it. I got to learn so much about so many different kids and families and it really opened my eyes to kind of see where that gap was in education which made me want to continue to work with this multicultural movement and trying to make sure that we’re not just talking about race or even religion, but we’re also talking about all of the different types of cultures like age, sexuality, and everything like that.

So yeah!

Lynne: No I love that!

Phoebe: I had a lot of kids from Africa actually, which was really really neat! So we did an African drumming unit so the kids that were wanting to do that in their villages in Africa that moved to America had the opportunity to do that and had their transition into adulthood so that was fun. And teaching all of the other kids too that culture was really really cool and then at the end of the year we did a multicultural, we do a multicultural fair down in Des Moines so I kind of combined that with my class and I asked all of the kids to wear their traditional outfits so whatever was “traditional” to them, they got to wear and I got such a cool wide
range! I had kids in kimonos, I had kids come in with full on paint, it was like the coolest thing and they were excited to celebrate it and be themselves. And that was, that was really neat.

Lynne: And share it with you!

Phoebe: And share it! Yeah! And talk about it with their parents and share it with everybody else. It was a really really cool thing.

Lynne: That’s so neat

Phoebe: Yeah!

Lynne: So in your personal opinion, how important is it to recruit staff that is diverse. Whether that’s age, race, gender, etc.

Phoebe: HUGE. I think its huge to really, like you said, it’s not just about race, it’s about different ages, even different sexualities. I’ve had kids come up to me, in my school, just because I’m a little different. I’m younger, I’m white, but ya know, even the way that I dress and the way that I color my hair. It’s a different culture than some of the other teachers that are in my school right now so I’ve had kids come up to me and open up to me because they feel comfortable with that and with me. And that’s my culture, and that’s what I talk about with them. I say, you know, my culture is different than yours. I was raised in a different era than you guys are right now. So we talk, and I’m very open with them and we talk about that a lot and right now we’re doing that rock and roll unit and so that kind of helps tie that all in.

But we, I think at Maplewood we’ve done a really good job of hiring people, male and female so we have a REALLY good split with that which is good. We could use more kind of younger teachers, but we do have a wide range of either English speakers and then also second language. So we have a teacher that also teaches Spanish and she comes, I think she comes from Spain actually. But English is her second language and she immerses her kids in that culture right away and talks to them completely in Spanish. But yeah, I think it’s really important for people to be looking and hiring based off of what they need. So somebody that you know, might be gay and looking at that so those kids feel open about talking about that. People of color, people of different religions, people, just you know, everything just so you have a good mixture. Because if you only have one type of person, they’re not open to really taking everything in.

I don’t know, it’s hard to explain.

Lynne: Do you think it translates to their, like you were saying with your Spanish speaking teacher, do you think that translates into the classroom and how they interact?
Phoebe: Definitely. Definitely. I mean I know I teach different than some of the other teachers but it connects with certain students. You know, you have to be yourself and you know, be able to understand and adjust the way you are teaching you know, to your students, but making sure that you are showing your true self and where you were brought up. You know, I talk a lot about the way that I was raised and where I come from and how I have used my life experiences through the different forms of my cultures and who that makes me today. And I think that helps the students kind of connect with what I'm trying to teach in the classroom and feel more comfortable with me. And even experiencing new things, you know, my big thing with my culture is music.

I was raised in a very musical household so sharing that and sharing different kinds of music through different cultures has been helping them open their minds a little bit more and sharing that with each other and trying to understand each other and where each other comes from. So I think it’s really important.

Lynne: So how long have you been teaching now?

Phoebe: This is my second year. So I did one year down in Des Moines, but then I wanted to come back up to Minnesota because I am originally from here. So I'm in my second year. This is my first year at Maplewood. And it's my first year in a middle school.

So I taught Pre K-5th last year and I was their general music teacher and I taught about 700 kids in that school. And this year I’m doing 6th grade – 8th grade and I have about 300 students who are registered in choir with me right now and I’m teaching... I’m a .75 teacher right now, and then it’ll probably go up for next year cause I'll have more students registered but they wanted to get kind of a younger teacher in. They had kind of a more older school teacher so it’s kind of like a woooaahh shock to them.

I get the whole, “you have purple hair!” and I was like, “yeah!”
“I want to be in choir now!”
“Because of my hair?”
“Yeah!”
“Okay”

Lynne: “Alright, let’s do it!”

Phoebe: “C’mon in!”

Lynne: So where did you do your student teaching and where did you get your degree from?

Phoebe: I went to Iowa state university. I was in their vocal music program down there. I’m licensed K-12 in Iowa. I did my student teaching down there as well and
because I knew I wanted to do more urban schools that had more culture in them, I student taught down in Des Moines.

The first place I student taught was in a middle school classroom, 6-8th grade. That one was a pretty high diversity rate there. I was actually the middle school, it was called Callahan Middle School, and that was the middle school that my kids at Edmunds where I taught my first year, they would transition to go to. So very high diversity, very high percentages of students that had English as their second language and that made me want to do it. And I loved it!

The kids were kind of tough but they made me work for it. And I loved it, I connected really well with the teacher. I connected really well with the students. Got to teach an African drumming class, it was awesome.

Lynne: That sounds like so much fun.

Phoebe: It was SO much fun. And they rocked it! They had a lot of fun. Those were kids who didn’t want to do choir or band so they had an opportunity to do an African drumming class so they did that and it was great. It really helped with the behavioral kids who got to BANG on something so meh, it worked!

So that was my first student teaching experience and then I did... 8 weeks there? Yeah. And then my second placement was at Samuelson Elementary and that was also in Des Moines. That one was very much like the school I’m at now which is about 50/50%. And I taught kindergarten through 5th grade there, student taught that. And that was under a guy named Mike Jones and he was a very very nice guy but made me want to start off with elementary school and see how I enjoyed that. And so, I got my first job there, in Des Moines after I did that.

Lynne: So how long were you in both?

Phoebe: Eight weeks in each. So it would be one full semester and I did that in the fall of 2014. So I graduated in December of 2014.

Lynne: So, you’ve mentioned that Maplewood is pretty diverse. How frequently are you able to connect with the community and in what ways? I know you’ve mentioned the Hmong community and then you have the African American students.

Phoebe: Yup

Lynne: Do you ever get a chance to get out into the community and learn a little bit about the Hmong cultures like, I think they just had their recent new years?

Phoebe: Yeah, their new year. Um, not, at this school, not as much which is something we’ve been trying to work on more. We’ve been trying to go through a
new program called vabb-ing so it’s validating, affirming, building and bridging. It’s something from Sharrok, Dr. Sharrok… I forget his last name, but his name is Dr. Sharrok.

And he’s based out of California and it’s all about accepting cultures and so that’s something at our school we have been trying to talk about how to connect with the community a little bit more and kind of drawing that into Maplewood. So that’s something we do. Every Wednesday we’ll do like a, we have our meetings and we’ve been working on this culture piece this year. That’s pretty much what we’ve been working on and so we’ve been trying to talk about bringing people in to do a community dinner in the middle school or having a like community movie night or just doing something like that.

So that’s something I think that we can do a little bit better as a school. And as a district, they’re getting better at it, but their just... you know, we’re just starting to turn that wheel right now. Last year, I will say, I had a really good experience with reaching out and being in that community piece with the families. My principal last year was awesome about getting families into the schools because, like I said, it was a very high diversity and immigrant population. So our school was actually built right across the street from the community that most of them lived in.

Lynne: Wow!

Phoebe: Which was really really neat. So it was super easy to literally just cross the street and walk the kids home. There were many times kids would come to my classroom and say, “Ms. Gobel, will you walk me home today?” And I said “Sure!” We would walk them home, and we’d talk to the parents face-to-face. We would do these things called “blitzes” where we would, if we had information for students we know wouldn’t get home, us teachers after-school would physically walk over and hand flyers to the parents to make sure we were connecting one-on-one with them.

We would frequently do community events. We would always do a Halloween event where we would do games at their community center. We did like a haunted house that we put together with that community center and our school, we’d pair up a lot. Their community center would use our school for basketball training and would use it for an afterschool program which I taught the afterschool program. And it was just a really cool thing cause they communicated so well and I had never been in a school like that. I’d never had that opportunity to be like, “yeah, I’ll walk you home today.”

Lynne: That’s a huge collaboration

Phoebe: Yeah.

Lynne: And I’m sure it takes years to build too.
Phoebe: Yeah, and well the school is pretty new. So Edmunds was there before and it’s been there since the 70’s but they tore the old school down and built this new school right across the street from this community because they knew that’s where most of our kids came from. So they built that school, and it was only 5 years old when I was there so it was a pretty new school. It was a beautiful school. But yeah, they kept it open so people could use it and would allow... it invited them and it allowed the kids to feel comfortable about going to school and be excited about it and that was their home.

Sometimes the kids were a little too comfortable at the school because it was so close to home, so their behavior sometimes... differed and was sometimes challenging and that also had to do with the culture piece. You know, they were coming in with different cultures. But it was nice because we had a lot more parent activity because it was so close. So the parents were able to come to the activities at the school and we could invite them to do stuff there because they knew it was a place they could go and feel welcome so that was a really cool experience.

Lynne: That is super neat.

Phoebe: Yeah

Lynne: And parent engagement is so huge

Phoebe: Yeah and I got really close to the parents last year. You know, they would come in, they would bring me food, and just food from all over the place. There was this Vietnamese family that, the mom, she could barely speak a lick of English but every, once a month, she would come over with a new dish, some new food and I was like, “That’s awesome! Sweet!” And the kid would always be so embarrassed cause here comes mom, like wrapped up cause she was freezing all of the time so she was always wrapped up and bringing me food!

And we had a huge Muslim population too.

Lynne: Okay

Phoebe: So we had a lot of kids that wore the hijabs. Our school was also really good about the religion piece and allowing kids to be gone on holidays, you know?

Lynne: Yup

Phoebe: So, I got to learn a lot about the Muslim culture.

Lynne: So, I think I talk about it a little later but that brings up a great point about your different types of student populations. How well did they work together? Were they respectful of each other’s different religions, like those holiday’s where it’s like I’m going to be gone at this time. Was it ever weird?
Phoebe: Not like, no, not with the religion part of it. They never really, I don't think they ever really noticed because they lived in that same community. I would say that, I did have a little more problems with the Muslim boys. And how they respected the girls, because it was a different kind of culture. Some of them, because they aren't allowed to touch or share things so I had to always be very careful about, like pairing them for drumming? I had to be mindful of that, like oh hey, a Muslim boy and a Muslim girl can't be on the same drum because they're not allowed to do that, you know, it's against their religion.

But I never really saw kids picking on each other because of that. Which was really cool to see. If I did, I would always make sure, which was very rare, but I would always make sure to make a point of it in that class. Be like, hey! That is not okay, you know, and then I would speak about it. And I think if you address it right away too, that kind of stuff goes away.

I see it more in the school that I'm at right now? Then I did in that other school, because I think there was so much diversity and that they lived in that small community together, they were used to being raised together. You know? They didn't really think about it.

I see it a little bit more at Maplewood. And most predominantly, it is the Caucasian kids.

Lynne: The Caucasian kids picking on...

Phoebe: The Caucasian kids treating separately. Yeah. And it's not necessarily the religion. The piece I see MOSTLY is the sexual orientation.

Lynne: Okay

Phoebe: That's the piece that I am finding is a little harder. The race piece, I don't see as much where there are kids picking on each other. It's more of the sexual orientation and you know, my LGBT kids. Especially my transgender kids which I do have a few that have come out to me.

That's the piece where we're having issues now. And it's usually boys picking on... on that group, is what I've noticed. And actually too, the African American boys kind of picking on the white girls which is kind of weird to me. So, that's also a piece we're trying to focus on. And its middle school, a lot of the “picking on” is like, “oh I think you're interesting, and I don't know how to communicate that with you so I'm going to make fun of you because yada yada yada.” You know what I mean?

Lynne: Yeah
Phoebe: “I don’t, I can’t understand what I’m trying to think. What is going on in my brain” [giggles]

Yeah, so other than that I don’t really see any issues with religion at all. I don’t see any issues normally because of their color. Yeah, and gender norms I think are kind of weird in the classroom and that’s something that I talk about. And that blurred line of gender norms, that kind of fits in with that sexual orientation thing.

Lynne: Yeah, okay.

So, in your experience, what has been the best way to kind of learn about a certain background and culture?

Phoebe: Honestly, I talk about it. I’m very open with my kids. We do a weekly discussion on things that they’ve learned or experiences that they’ve had. At the beginning of the school year, we do this circle group thing where we sit in a big circle and we kind of talk and get to know each other. And we do games and we kind of do this community building thing and I openly ask them about different cultures and ask them where they’re from, where their parents are from.

I ask them, “Raise your hand if you were born in Minnesota,” “Raise your hand if you were born out of the country,” and then if there are people then I say, “oh cool! Where are you from?” can you tell me about it? And we kind of have this cool open discussion about it at the beginning of the school year so that it’s just right out there. So that kids know, because they probably have grown up with each other, they’ve gone to the same school but they’ve never really connected on like where that is so it’s a part for me but it’s also for the other students to see, “Oh you’re Hmong, I’m Hmong too,” or “Hey your parents were born in Ethiopia, cool! My dad was born in Somali,” You know something like that and connecting that way.

I also have them write on cards, so I just have them write on cards about their name, a contact info for their parents, something that’s interesting about them, what they prefer to be called. And I ask them too, if there are any religious or cultural based things you are not allowed to do, please write that on there too. Because I have some students who are not allowed to dance to non-Christian music and not allowed to, like I said, hold a boys hand, stuff like that.

And that’s really good to know, so once I found out where they’re from I do a lot of my own research. But my school is really good at providing that stuff for us too if you go and you talk to them about it. We kind of discuss it together in those Wednesday classes.

Lynne: I have a couple of questions here about how you were feeling when you were student teaching versus how you are feeling now? And it’s on a scale of 1-10. 1 feeling like you weren’t prepared, and 10 being you felt the most prepared.
Phoebe: Okay

Lynne: So how prepared did you feel meeting the needs of kids from diverse cultural backgrounds, when you were a pre-service teacher? And now?

Phoebe: I think as a pre-service teacher I would say like a 6, I felt like my education was really good but the applying it wasn't as strong because I wasn't immersed in it.

We had a lot of classes that prepared us, we had like actual multicultural classes that we had to take in college. And it gave me the information but I didn't know how to apply it yet.

Now, I feel like I'm around an 8 or a 9 because there's always that room to grow obviously but I feel really comfortable about how to address it and looking for ways I can learn about the different cultures and how to make it more inclusive in my classrooms.

Through Maplewood and through district 622, they provided a summer intensive program through that Sharroky Hollie, I couldn't remember his last name! Dr. Sharroky Hollie, he does this culture based program where you break apart these cultures so I did a 4-day intensive program where you learn how to kind of address it and not only how to immerse it in your classroom but how to kind of understand so dealing with the behavior aspects of well. Realizing like hey this kid is speaking out or isn't speaking out. Is it because they are being defiant, or because it's their culture and opening up their mind that way?

So after I took that class I felt way more comfortable going into that. And just the experience of being a second year teacher too.

Lynne: Yeah

Phoebe: At a multicultural, I feel like I can address it a little bit better. That I handle myself better when it comes to the different cultures as well.

Lynne: Did you have a mentor at all when you were in your first year?

Phoebe: I did, but it wasn't necessarily for... specifically for culture. It was more of, “Hey, how are you feeling on writing your lessons?” Which I never really had a problem with. I technically have a mentor right now, we don't talk very much because she's really busy. She's starting to become a principal and she's taking those classes. To be honest, I feel really comfortable in my classroom, but I think it could have been a little bit better?

Yeah, last year I would have someone come in every week and observe me for at least half an hour. She usually stayed longer and watched a whole class because it
was 50 minutes long... which for elementary school kids... you should never have a kindergarten class in your classroom for 50 minutes long to do music.

Lynne: That’s a long time!

Phoebe: It just doesn’t work! But um, yeah she would come in and we’d talk about what I could improve. How well I’m doing and she would give me ideas on how I could change to make it more relevant and stuff like that.

Lynne: I know you’ve talked about your experience with parents already but how prepared did you feel then? Working with parents from diverse backgrounds? Versus now.


Now? I would say like a 6. I think we could do a better job on preparing on how to deal with some parents. Parents can be kind of a scary thing and especially now! Parents’ kind of look at their students differently from when I was in school. When I was in school it was more of a, “You did something wrong? What did you do your teacher called me?”

And now it’s, I call home and the parents are arguing with me on the phone like, “Well, you’re just picking on my kid.” I don’t know if that’s a culture based thing? I think it’s more of a generation thing, but the transition of the power between, the power struggle between teachers, students, and parents is a lot different now.

So, I have to work a little bit harder that I connect with my parents, and also making sure that I am doing it in a way that they don’t feel like I’m attacking them or attacking their students.

So I feel like we could work a little bit better as a school and as a district to provide ways and also have the administration kind of back up its teachers cause I’ve definitely have had experiences already this year because of the fact that I gave a kid a zero for a concert because they didn’t show up.

Lynne: Rightfully so.

Phoebe: Rightfully so! Because that’s their test? Like you’re in choir, you’ve gotta come to the concert?

Lynne: Right

Phoebe: I got yelled at.

Lynne: You didn’t support from your administration?
Phoebe: I did, my principal did after the fact, but the parent came directly to me and was screaming in my face and I didn’t know what to do. I showed them the syllabus, and they were like, “I never got that.” “Well, your student was supposed to bring this home. Your student also didn’t get it signed by you and they missed the points on that too.” I said, “If you need help, if you guys don’t have internet, I post everything online. I send emails home and I’ve never gotten anything back.”

So it’s, it’s a hard case dealing with parents. I didn’t have as big of a problem with this last year. The parents last year were a lot more supportive. The parents that were more culturally diverse, were more excited for the students to get a good education so they really had the teachers back.

I had awesome times with my parents last year. I LOVED my parents last year. This year, it’s a little different.

Lynne: Would you say that the parents coming back at you are just as diverse? Or would you say it’s just as mixed or one or the other?

Phoebe: American-based. And it’s not any race, and it’s not any religion, but it’s definitely American born, American raised.

Lynne: And that’s obviously not a clear correlation or anything, I was just curious.

Phoebe: Yeah, no and it’s kind of weird for me to cause its like, I would have thought that because other parents were not maybe born in America they wouldn’t understand that school system. But it’s the complete opposite. I’m having more support from the parents that aren’t from here and that have students here that have a free education. Like they’re thankful that their students are getting that free education versus the parents that were raised in American and their students are you know, here too. And I’m getting more pushback from them than my immigrant families.

Lynne: Interesting

Phoebe: Isn’t that weird?

Lynne: That’s super weird!

Phoebe: That’s the trend I’ve been seeing.

Lynne: Okay! So how frequently throughout the year would you say you provide yourself the time to self-reflect and explore and dialogue with others regarding your social identity, how you feel and then I know you mentioned you have your meetings in your classrooms on Wednesdays but do you have staff meetings where you kind of directly talk about that?
Phoebe: Yeah, that’s the Wednesday classes that I’m talking about.

Lynne: Oh okay!

Phoebe: Yeah, so that’s our day where we talk... it’s either with the other choir teachers sometimes or with our entire school. When we do it with our entire school it’s usually based off students that are trauma based or students that are of different ethnicities and we kind of pick a subject and focus it on that and talk about that.

A lot of it is a presentation, and I don't feel like all of the teachers really take it to heart. I really wish it was kind of a collectively discussing group then somebody doing a PowerPoint presentation and talking at me. I don’t feel like I get as much from that then sharing some of my experiences. We do get to talk sometimes but for the most part it’s more of a traditional classroom where you sit and you listen.

Lynne: I know we’re not meeting in your classroom right now but could you describe what it looks like?

Phoebe: I have a lot of Star Wars posters up in my room.

At the beginning of the year I had my students make like a little poster of themselves. I provided them with different colored sheets of paper and I required them to bring in a picture of themselves, it didn’t matter when it was from, what it’s about or who’s in it with them as long as they were in the picture itself and it described them as a person. I had so many pictures! But then I also had them decorate their poster on who they were. So they could draw or write a poem, they could really do anything to describe who they were so what I did was cover my entire back wall with their faces so it’s this big collage of these pictures of my kids.

Lynne: So how many kids do you have total?

Phoebe: At Maplewood where I’m at right now it’s about 300.

If this speaks to anything to, I’m really open with my kids. But I kind of let them be themselves in my classroom because they don’t usually get that opportunity.

I try really hard to incorporate who they are and showcase that in my classroom and on my door too. I have a bunch of pictures of them. If they draw me a picture or write me a note I’ll put it on my office door so kids can read it.

Lynne: What do you think are some of the barriers to implementing a successful multicultural education curriculum?

I guess it's kind of hard since you teach choir, but you had your African drumming which is really cool.
Phoebe: I think the hardest thing for me actually, finding music that is culturally inclusive.

So I have a pretty high rate of Christianity in my school but I also have so many other cultures. And it's really, the one hard thing with music is pleasing everybody because you're going to offend somebody. Especially with music! If I do a Christmas song, then I have to do one of another religion which I love doing anyway, but you're going to get pushback from somebody.

So trying to make it okay for everyone and then you almost have to take out that religion piece at all which is really hard for me because music is so deeply rooted in so many religions and that is where it all developed. It developed in a lot of the Christian churches, that's where you get your symphonies. It came from that sacred place and then developed out of there. So not being able to talk about that is really hard in the classroom.

And then trying to find a piece where I can implement all of these other cultures so I think that would be a barrier because you can't talk about religion or it's frowned upon even though it's such a big part of my subject. And it's not even that I can't just talk about Christianity, I can't talk about you know, the Jewish faith, I can't talk about the Muslim faith. Like you can't do any of it because it's just such a faux pas where you can't do that. But I fight back and I said well this is where it comes from, if I'm teaching history, I've got to be true to where it's at and my principal is really supportive of that but...

Lynne: That's nice

Phoebe: He's really cool. He's like, “as long as it fits within the standards Hannah, and you're not offending anyone, go ahead.” He's like, “I'll back you up.”

So I think that's the hardest barrier for me is not offending anybody when it comes to religion. I think that's the hardest one. Other than that, I'm pretty good in my classroom.

Lynne: Since you've been teaching... in your past two years have you ever seen any kind of multicultural issues come up, especially within the last year that we've had and all of the different incidents that have come up with the news, media, etc.?

Have you seen anything specifically happen in your school?

Phoebe: We had a big issue when Donald Trump was elected. We had a lot of families, well not a lot of families but some families that were very open about Donald Trump and their support with him and the pushback on other cultures and our school. Some of our students reflected on that. A lot of notes going around our district about Donald Trump and about you know, build that wall, and about the fact that the immigrants need to go back to where they're from.
I nipped it in the bud in my class. I did not allow it. When he was elected, I talked about it with my kids and I made sure that I said, “No matter what, this is your safe place. You are allowed to be who you are.” I said I didn’t want to talk about it today, no student is allowed to talk about it in my classroom. This will give me an opportunity too to let it marinate a little bit and let it settle and then if you have any questions or concerns you can come and talk to me, my door is always open. But today, I want us to not talk about because someone is going to be hurt. At Maplewood we did a pretty good job addressing it and talking about it.

And actually the day that he was elected, my principal came in and observed my classroom! So that was awesome! But I said that in front of him and he was happy that I did that and that I just put it out there. But yeah, I had notes being passed around.

Lynne: In your classroom or in the school?

Phoebe: In the school. I had to confiscate a few of them. Just with kids being kind of jerks. And some of it was Trump supporters and some of it was non-Trump supporters. Some of it was, let’s assassinate trump and things like that. And regardless of whether I support him or not, that’s not okay. You know, and having to address that. But we did have some pushback on that and I had some kids that did not come to school. My LGBT kids did not come to school for a while. Some of my Muslim kids did not come to school for a while because they were afraid to.

And we saw some fights happening in the high schools because of that so that would probably be the one that has happened recently. Other than that I haven’t really seen very much pushback.

Lynne: I guess the last question I have is, in what ways do you prompt your students to practice empathy and perspective taking in those situations where you have those supports and we don’t have those supporters, any type of instances like that?

Phoebe: We have advisory every morning and we have this AVID program that we do. They give us prompts every week to talk about and they’re usually based off of positivity and respect and inclusion. This week it’s about positivity and about perspective. And so, I have a 6th grade classroom or my advisory and everybody’s advisory tends to have around 15-20 kids. So I have 19 in my classroom.

And so we talk about it. And a lot of it, they have like videos that they provide for us but one of our administrators puts together the PowerPoint presentations and puts together the lesson plans and then delivers them to us so we teach it through that week. And there’s activities, like large group discussions, small group discussions, sometimes we have them write summaries, sometimes we play games. And with my classroom, they just like to talk out loud. So a lot of the times, I kind of stray from the lesson plan which they are okay with us doing as long as they are getting that
concept and we do a lot of examples. But we talk a lot about empathy in my classroom and how no matter, and kind of in that perspective aspect, we talked a lot about that today. I said, “You know, people look at things differently guys. You have to put yourself in someone else’s shoes and stop and think sometimes and listen because people grow up in different situations. People relate to things differently you know. You might like chocolate ice cream, I might like chocolate chip, and she might like strawberry. Is anybody wrong? No. So trying to make it a realistic viewpoint like that they can start to understand it and then gradually getting deeper and deeper into those conversation they really open up.

No my advisory classroom is awesome. They are super supportive of each other. We did a secret Santa in our classroom. We each drew things and got stuff for each other. And at the beginning of the year most of them didn’t know each other. They were all really quiet, some of them were really shy, like did not talk and now they’re all kind of bunched together and you see them move together in this little huddle throughout the school.

And I talk a lot about random acts of kindness and including one another so very frequently we’ll just… if we see there are struggles happening throughout the school, we as an advisory will take little notecards and write little positive notes and go around the school and post them on people’s lockers throughout the school randomly. And they’re just stupid little sayings like, “You’re beautiful” or “you’ve got this” and just like things like that. Or they will write at least once a month write little notes to teachers to say like, “Keep going, you’re doing awesome” “Thank you for doing all this type of stuff...” and just showing them that you need to think outside of that 2-foot bubble around you. You’ve got to think about everybody else. I do it a lot in my class.

Lynne: That is so awesome. You’re the best! I would have loved to have had you as a music teacher in elementary school.

[End of Conversation]
Appendix F: Transcription of Interview with Madeline

Date of Interview: 1/12/17

Lynne: So I’m a grad student here and my capstone really is just to try and understand the gap between pre-serving training on multiculturalism and how it gets implemented in the classroom and if we provide enough resources for teachers prior to entering the classroom or what resources we can provide once you’re there and get some experience under your belt.

So really for me, it’s just to understand that gap and how we can fill it with additional training or workshops, whether it’s getting more time in the classroom when you’re doing your training with your service hours and etc. so the interview itself poses no risk to you. Like I said, your students, your school and your district’s names won’t be used in the actual writing of my thesis so what’s in front of your is my consent form. If I could possibly get you to sign this form...

Madeline: Yeah, I’ll just read it quick...

Lynne: Yeah! Sure, no problem!

So most of the questions will really be more about your experience.

Madeline: okay, everything’s confidential, that’s all I care about.

Lynne: Yes! Absolutely!

And if you want a copy of my capstone, after I finish writing it, I can send it to you as well.

Madeline: Yeah!

Lynne: So a lot of these questions are really to learn about you, your experience with multicultural classrooms. Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me.

The first couple will just be about your experience so if you could describe your personal experience with diversity and then we’ll kind of go from there.

Madeline: Like outside of education or... that’s such a weird question.

Lynne: Yeah, like growing up, what was your experience?

Madeline: Okay, growing up, I grew up in a town of 800 people in Northern MN. It was basically all white people. Little diversity. My parents were very liberal and open-minded and were like, “This is not the world, and we’re going to share, you
know, what we can with you, and you need to leave this place.” It’s a beautiful place...

Lynne: Really?

Madeline: Yeah, they were like, you need to get out of here. Most people, not like my colleagues, but like my peers from [high] school, stayed around the area and are still there to this day and definitely hold strong opinions about one side of the spectrum... and then... there’s our family basically.

So yeah, that’s my upbringing I guess.

Lynne: Okay, so was the classroom you grew up in, and the demographics of what you had grown up in, is it drastically different from where you teach now?

Madeline: Yes

Lynne: where do you teach now?

Madeline: I teach in South Minneapolis

Lynne: You said, you teach Kindergarten?

Madeline: Yes, I teach kindergarten in South Minneapolis

Lynne: So what was the demographic like in your town versus where you teach now?

Madeline: Um, I would say, really, we were 98% white in my classroom, whereas where I teach now is... I don't know the exact percentages... do you need those? I can get those to you.

Lynne: What's the elementary school called?

Madeline: Folwell... Folwell Performing Arts Magnet – it's primarily Hispanic students, we have a... I was going to look this up too... but primarily Hispanic students and some African American students, native American students, Asian-American students, Somali students, and white students

Lynne: So, primarily Hispanic in regards to students of color or the entire school as a whole

Madeline: The entire school as a whole, yes, both

Lynne: So in your personal opinion, how important is it to you to recruit a diverse staff. Whether that’s in race, gender, sexuality, age... what are your thoughts on that?
Madeline: Yeah, super super important. I think everybody brings different things to the table and if you are only representing one type of human, one specific stereotype, then you’re showing kids that it’s not okay to be different. Or you’re not representing them in the people that they are seeing, working there every day and they are not seeing themselves in those people. Or their family members or whatever it may be... if they’re not seeing differences than they’re like... “Well this is what it is”

Lynne: Okay, where did you go to school to get your teaching license?

Madeline: I went to Hamline, I just only have my undergrad right now. My license is in Elementary education K-6. And I also was a music major here as well.

Lynne: Oh cool! When did you graduate?

Madeline: I graduated in 2014, I think. Yeah, it was 2014.

Lynne: Where did you student teach?

Madeline: I student taught at City View in North Minneapolis.

Lynne: Okay

And then was that Kindergarten as well?

Madeline: It was Kindergarten, yes.

Lynne: Okay, and then how long was that for? Was it 12 weeks?

Madeline: I student taught... I think it was 12 weeks. Mine was a weird experience because in the middle of my experience they were like, “Let’s hire you,” and I was like, “Okay,” so it was cool and I was student teaching part-time in Kindergarten and then I was teaching Mindfulness, like health and wellness: yoga calm sort of things... which I have no experience in but they really needed someone and I was like, “I’ll do it, sure.”

Lynne: That is so neat!

Madeline: It was really cool; it was a really good experience there.

Lynne: Okay

Madeline: Mhmm

Lynne: And so you teach at Folwell now, how long have you been teaching there?
Madeline: Two years

Lynne: So I know you mentioned that you have a large Hispanic population. How frequently do you get to branch out and learn about that community and immerse yourself in that Hispanic culture? Do you get to?

Madeline: I think, just personally, I’m not... I mean I guess in the community... I try to go out as much as possible in the community which it doesn’t lend that much time to me because I’m a teacher and we’re all kind of in our own room... our own world doing our own thing. But I guess not as much as I would like to, but I don’t feel totally disconnected either. I don’t know.

Lynne: And why is that, not as much as you would like to?

Madeline: Not as much as I would like to immerse myself?

Lynne: Mhmm

Madeline: I guess I don’t know how to like delve into that. Is it like through families?

I’m not sure. I’m not asking you, ya know, just hypothetically.

I guess I hadn’t thought about it in my personal school community... like delving into the culture.

I mean, I guess as far as research and reading things, I’ve done a little bit. But not as much as I should, is probably a better way to put that.

Lynne: As far as your school culture, is there a mentorship program for incoming teachers like when you first joined... Did you have a mentor your first year at Folwell?

Madeline: My first year at City View I had a mentor. Minneapolis does this; something called a par-mentor, which is with retired teachers in the district. Not retired... well, I don’t... they might be retired... older teachers who aren’t teaching anymore but have experience teaching.

I had one at City View and then when I moved to Folwell; I mean when you move [schools], they usually give you one too.

Lynne: Okay

Madeline: I had one my first year and a sort-of portion of my second year.

Lynne: What is their role?
Madeline: That’s a really good question! Nobody that I know knows their role.

My first year was really a challenging year because the class I was teaching wasn’t really well defined. There was no curriculum. I was kind of creating it. So she helped me a lot in that sense and figuring out what I was teaching. She helped me a lot with classroom management and you don’t really learn anything about that. Pretty much at all before your teaching. So she was helping me with management and curriculum.

My second year, I had it a lot more together and knew what I was doing. She just came in and watched a couple times. I had some specific students that I was concerned and I was like, “I don’t know what to do with these students.” And she would come in and observe them and we would sit and talk through some strategies I could use with them. And then she released me like really early so I didn’t work with her very much, just like a month or two.

Lynne: And then you didn’t have a mentor after that?

Madeline: No, she was like, “You’re fine, you’re good to go”

Lynne: You’re just killing it

Madeline: Haha, yup, kinda.

Lynne: Okay, in your experience, what has been the best way to learn about a student’s cultural background?

Madeline: Um, that’s a good question too! I’m like reflecting that I need to do this more.

Um, I think, so what we’re “required” to do is look through each student’s portfolio... not portfolio, but like online we have this thing where your incoming class shows up and it’s like: student’s home language, student’s blah blah blah for whatever, their race, if they’re English Language Learners, and things like that so each student I look through and you know, you kind of classify the needs of students.

And then, you know, my first year I did a lot more with like identity.

It’s hard, it’s hard to like answer these questions actually cause going to Hamline you’re like, “I will do all of these things and I will have time to do all of these things,” and my first year I did, it was a specialist class and I could talk about identity and we could talk about, you know, different things where I wasn’t trying to hit these standards of math and literacy.

Lynne: Right.
Madeline: And now I’m reflecting and I’m like, no, I’m not doing a lot of that, I’m doing a lot of math and literacy. But um, my first year we wrote books, um, like “All about me” books and we wrote books about, or we did projects on identity like I said. That was my best way to do it I guess, projects and talking with them and having them share.

We did some restorative justice circles where they shared um, about their home lives and things like that. But those are kind of heavy, those get really heavy.

Lynne: Yeah. I guess I’ve never had an elementary teacher. I’ve done three other interviews and they have been with middle or high school students. I’ll be completely honest, I didn’t think about how I would rephrase these for elementary students so I’m sorry about that.

Madeline: No, that’s okay, it’s totally fine. We’re in it together.

I’m trying to think too because I think, you know, like I said, going here it was like, “We will do all these great things! And we’re going to change the world!” and my good friend who is also a middle school English teacher, we’re always reflecting and we’re like, this is not what we thought it would be. You know, like we wanted to do all these things and now we’re like pressed with this, and they give you this new curriculum, and this new thing, and you don’t get to do all the things you want to.

Lynne: And that... is one of my questions actually. What do you think are some of the barriers to implementing a successful multicultural curriculum?

Madeline: I think for sure all of the things that are expected of teachers. We’re expected to do... my school, we have a lot of initiatives that are just like we have to learn all of these new programs and curriculums and Minneapolis is definitely, I’m learning as I’ve been there three years, they don’t stick to one thing. They’re always kind of, you know, turning over the next new thing and it’s like, “You have to go to training for this, and learn this” and we can’t focus on... on THOSE important things [points at my list of questions].

They’re not built into curriculums [multicultural education], I’ve never seen... there’s like one lesson of all of the curriculum that I have taught in the last three years in Math had anything to do with really culturally relevant like built into the actual curriculum. It’s like me own, it’ bringing it in or reading books that’s representative of different cultures or different types of people. It’s like my own stuff.

So TIME too I think, to find quality books and quality things on my own because they aren’t laid out for us as easily.

Lynne: Okay, so there’s a research aspect that goes above and beyond.
Madeline: Yeah, it’s not just given to you. And I think, coming into a new school or coming into a new grade level, people aren’t really doing like, super upfront, like cultural lessons or anything. Like, they’re afraid to. I had talked about it last year around Thanksgiving because I was like, what are you guys doing? What do we do at this school? You know, because we want to make sure that we’re telling the right story and they were like, we either don’t touch it or we like we go this route and I was like, I don’t really know... I couldn’t really read like how my school was handling these things. You kind of have to like, feel out your culture of teachers and administrators so that’s another barrier too. So like, yeah, the culture of your school really, and like what’s allowed, and how far can you bring conversations, especially in Kindergarten like what’s appropriate. And you kind of have to gage that too if you’re not tenured it’s hard to have conversations cause you’re not really sure what the response and reaction is going to be.

Lynne: Yeah, so that’s really great! I’m really happy you bring that up because I wasn’t going to ask. How would you kind of describe your school norms and just the culture of your school overall? Is it like, is it fairly inclusive? Like, you know, we stick pretty well to the books and standards and making sure that we’re following this mission or...

Madeline: Yeah, I would say my team is really inclusive they’ve all been teaching for quite a while so they’re not really into the new ideas. So when I bring things up that you know, I would want to be supported in talking about or like wanting to know what they think about me having those conversations they’re like, “Nooo,” you know, they’re like mmm, they don’t want to stir the pot in regards to everything. They’re stick to the books kind of people, but they ARE inclusive. They’re just not having the kinds of conversations that I think we COULD be having. And then I’ve definitely tried to and they were like, “You did that?” and I was like [puzzled look] and it was like one...I think it was last year I did something and they were like, “yeah, no.” I was like, I don’t know! You know, I don’t know.

Lynne: So who is your team? Are they just other Kindergarten teachers?

Madeline: Yeah, there’s four. We have 100 Kindergarten students in our grade level and there’s 4 classroom teachers and there’s one EL teacher on our team so there’s five of us. Four classrooms and then the EL teacher rotates and pulls [student] groups throughout the day.

Lynne: All right; thank you.

Madeline: Mhmm. Elementary—so different.

Lynne: So these next three questions are more on a scale. 10 being you felt most prepared and 1 being you felt least prepared; in regards to when you left Hamline and how you feel now.
So how prepared did you feel to meet the needs of students with diverse backgrounds, when you left, and now?

Madeline: I was feeling really good about it when I left Hamline, I had Leticia Basford as my professor. I was like, she is incredible, I loved everything I read about in her classroom, I’m going to change the world, and then I got into the classroom and I was like, “I don’t even know where to begin.” Like, I know resources, she’s given me these book lists and whatever else I have kept from her class but like that was really the only class we had and I didn’t think it was included in other classes. In science classes they didn’t really include how to bring it in, like in the literacy classes.

In Elementary it’s broken up into science, social studies, English, and math so you take those four courses and I didn’t think they brought it into those courses. You had your own separate multicultural, diversity, I can’t remember the name, they’ve changed the name since I’ve been here, like that class and it’s really it’s own category and I had wished that they had shown me how to implement it like while I’m teaching math or while I’m teaching literacy. Cause really, in the classroom, that’s where you’re going to fit it in. It’s not going to be like, oh and now we’re guna do, we’re guna have time for like individual cultural studies. Whatever you want to call it.

There’s not time in the day for that cause, like I said, you’re trying to hit all of these standards and so if you can pull it in which is what I’ve tried to do a few times, but then it’s like... you have to do all the extra research and all of this extra time and planning and it’s worth it. But it’s like if it was just, if there was just something easy to go to, I think more teachers would be like, “Yes, okay, pull this out, I can do it.” Instead of spending an hour of your own time, when you’re already spending two hours of your own time to plan the rest of the lessons.

Lynne: That’s such a great point.

Madeline: Yeah!

Lynne: This is why I need more elementary participants!

Madeline: I’ve got ‘em!

Lynne: So if you were to say score then, how would you rate it on a 1-10 scale?

Madeline: Before and after?

Ooft, I don’t even know. Before, I would have said I was a 7, woo! 8 or 7, I don’t know, I felt like ready, but I had no idea.

And now... ugh... I mean I have the tools, I would say like a 4.
Lynne: Okay, cause we just have this idea of ourselves right. I was thinking the exact same thing until I hit student teaching.

Madeline: I was just trying to get by when I was student teaching.

Lynne: Yeah, I was like; just give me 4 hours to sleep.

Umm, how prepared did you feel to work with parents from diverse backgrounds? Then and now?

Madeline: I think I’m just, I mean I guess haven’t really thought. I wasn’t really thinking about it in college, I’ll be honest. I wasn’t like worried about working with parents. I like talking to people and I’ve never really... I don’t know. I hadn’t thought about it in college. If you need a number, I guess I would probably say 7, I mean I didn’t have any qualms, I wasn’t like woohoo, I’m going to work with so many parents. But I wasn’t nervous about it, and now I think, I would rate it higher than 7 because you’re really, you know, calling home, I’m using the language line a lot which is something that’s new for me.

Lynne: What’s the language line?

Madeline: Language line is a, you call a number, I think the district must pay for it, you have like a subscription and an identification number and you just call, push the number for whichever language to call home, and they provide a translator through the phone. So they call the parent, you’re on the other line and you’re talking through a translator on the phone. It’s super super great system for parents who don’t speak English at all, they feel more connected to the school and they feel like they can actually talk to you and call you if they have an issue.

Umm, so that was new for me but I still feel pretty confident. I feel like a 6. I know that was a lot of talking to get to the answer.

Lynne: Nope! That’s alright! I love it! I would have never learned about the language line otherwise.

Madeline: Language line is a great tool!

Lynne: How prepared do you feel to help students with limited English proficiency?

Madeline: If I didn’t have the help of my wonderful co-worker and EL teacher, I would not know anything. I think coming from school that was not really covered. That wasn’t like and then to teach in different, you know, like this is how it’s gonna work. Um, that’s a good question. You want a number on this one too?

Lynne: Yes, then and now.
Madeline: Then? I would say like a 5.

Lynne: Okay.

Madeline: And now, I would say like a 5. It’s the same. I’ve definitely learned more just being in the school, but I didn’t learn much in school. Yeah, I would say a 5, that seems right.

Lynne: Okay! Great, thank you!

So I know you said, you think about it every now and then with your friend who is a middle school teacher. But frequently do you give yourself time to really self-reflect, explore and dialogue with others about your social identity, how you’re incorporating that in your classroom, or just how you’re trying to incorporate some of these multicultural tools that you’ve learned in the past. Do you get to do that in school meetings, is that ever a topic that gets brought up?

Madeline: I mean it definitely comes up, people are very aware of that in my school for sure. My school’s very strange in their meetings. We haven’t had a staff meeting this year, so honestly I don’t have a good answer for that.

But specifically to reflecting on social identity... my social identity?

Lynne: Yeah

Madeline: In like...

Lynne: So like, a big thing in research right now is that teachers need enough time to self-reflect on their own social identities so that when students ask questions they can speak on their behalf. Like, this is... I’m a proud Asian American, this is my story.

Madeline: Right right. Yeah, I think not verbally reflecting on that often. I think I definitely put into perspective when I’m thinking about students. Which I reflect on all hours of the day, every day, even on like Sunday mornings. They don’t leave your brain. But I don’t think I’m explicitly... well, I’m still trying and am in the process of figuring out who I am. I don’t know, I don’t have an answer to that.

Lynne: That’s okay! Since beginning your teaching career, have you ever come across any like multicultural issues or you know, especially in this past year where we’ve had so many different events and with Trump’s election. Things of that nature where of course, like in high schools for example in those types of [hate] incidents. Have you seen anything like that in your school?

Madeline: What do you mean by those types of incidents?
Lynne: So like, the other week, I was interviewing a teacher who had like hate notes being passed in lockers and things like that.

Madeline: Yeah, in kindergarten… no. I haven’t noticed it. They’re like aware of their differences and sometimes you can pick up on it. But it’s positive like one of my students the other day was like, I know that this student doesn’t speak English and I really want to learn Spanish so I can talk to him. They talk about it in terms like that, but it’s very positive.

But they are very aware of what’s happening in the world. Like when Trump was elected, the next day… I mean I was hyper-aware of them, just because I was also very upset about this situation, but like they were talking about it. Like, “A bad man had gotten elected.” Like before he had gotten elected, the year before one of my students had emigrated here from Mexico and I don’t really know what had happened but he had been deported and then they were discussing that and like I didn’t know he was going to leave but all of my students did, so he had been telling them. It wasn’t negative, they weren’t like, “Oh, he got deported.” They were like concerned and I asked how did they know and they said that he was talking about it. I mean how did I not know this? But that that was right around the time when Trump was like, not like a front-runner, but he was becoming a thing. And they were like discussing that. And I was like WOW, like 5-year-olds are aware, that like, especially at our school, because like I said, we have a huge population of Hispanic people who have come from you know… emigrated here. First-generation immigrants.

And um, yeah, I don’t know, they were just having these really in-depth, not in-depth but I didn’t think 5-year-olds were going to be speaking the way that they were. And I know they hear it at home and I know they hear it from their siblings, but they were having really good conversations and scary conversations about that topic. Even last year, and this year. It hasn’t been as much this year but definitely kids after he was elected were like, “Wow, this happened. What’s going to happen?” They were like kind of scared. They weren’t like crying and beside themselves and hateful of each other but they were like aware of what happened.

Lynne: Interesting

Madeline: Yeah, they know. Five-year-olds, they’re smart, they’re like aware.

Lynne: Yeah, they definitely pick things up!

Madeline: People don’t think that they do, but I’m like, yeah but they do.

Lynne: Okay, um so in your classroom with your students in particular, in what ways and how frequently are you able to prompt your students to practice empathy and perspective taking?
Madeline: So with my background in teaching mindfulness and yoga calm, it’s sort of ingrained in some of the things that I do. We do morning meeting and sometimes we’ll do like a circle where we release our feelings in yoga and in breathing and they are able to like verbalize it. You know, students are like patting each other on the back and giving each other hugs so there’s empathy in that.

And then we also have a curriculum that we have to use and there are empathy lessons. How good I think they are... I don’t really think they’re that great. We have to use a puppet and like explore the puppet and explore their feelings and explore with everybody else. It’s not really real to me; I think it’s very scripted.

Lynne: Okay.

Madeline: It doesn’t give them much opportunity to speak for themselves. They’re just kind of like, “yes” and “no” and like you’re kind of just throwing the information at them. But the yoga calm stuff that I’ve done I feel really has been good and has helped them be more empathetic towards each other. They’re so lovely, I love my kids. They’re just so cute.

Lynne: So I guess, you’ve mentioned you’re having a tough time kind of incorporating all of the things expected of you. Do you have any specific lessons that challenge student’s ideas of race and how to improve their cultural awareness?

Madeline: Um no... that’s like a lot. Challenge their ideas of race and how to improve their cultural awareness...

They’re still kind of developing their ideas, I would say so I’m not trying to like...

Lynne: Just in like the materials that you use or the different stories that you choose?

Madeline: I would say, especially in stories that I chose, representation is really important especially in going into a different school where I wasn’t really sure what was okay or not. I’m still new to the profession so like I will find a book or someone will post a book that I’m like “Yes, I want to get that” so I piggy back little-by-little. So yeah, I’m like really aware of the characters in the story.

Even when I’m making my presentations like my Promethean presentation I’ll type in like “Child sitting,” cause you want like a picture of it and it’s always white kids and you’re like, “this isn’t my class!” So I have to like go and find specific pictures of specific types of people and specific types of children. So I think representation is the biggest thing I’ve been able to include.

Lynne: And that’s huge!

Madeline: Yeah. [Distraught face of defeat]
I don’t know, I think, yeah, I’m still struggling with the curriculum piece because it’s not straight forward and it’s not... always like you never really know what you can do and what you can’t say and it’s hard because they say things and your like, “I don’t even have an answer to that.” And I think it’s important just to have the conversations but I don’t always know how to do it.

And sometimes it’s just organic I would say. Especially with a 5-year-old, they say things and you’re like, “Alright, we have to talk about that now. We definitely need to talk about that.” And so, I think that’s where my best conversations have come about, just by them asking a really great question and you’re like, “wow yes, yes that’s profound,” you know?

Lynne: Aww

Madeline: They do! And you’re like, “Wow! Okay, yeah!” I don’t know. I don’t have a great example of that happening but...

Lynne: Oh I’m sure it happens all the time

Madeline: All the time. It does, they say things and you’re like, “yup, I’d have never thought about it that way and now I’ll think about it out loud with you right now, and we’re all going to talk about it.”

Lynne: That’s so awesome

Madeline: Yeah, they’re great.

Lynne: So, my last question for you here. I actually have two more...

Have you had experience addressing any type of harassment in your teaching career thus far?

Madeline: Mmm, student to student?

Lynne: Yes

Madeline: No, I mean harassment is a big word. I think we tackle things that I wouldn’t label as harassment in kindergarten but they’re like, if they were adults or older kids, you’d be like, “yeah no that’s not okay.” There’s like a lot of things that boys do to girls and you’re like yeah but that’s not... you can’t just slap someone in the face. And then we have to talk about that, and you don’t want to shame them because it’s like, maybe they do that at their house.

Or a lot of things like that I guess with kids hitting each other. I think at the first school I worked at, there were definitely a lot of... I guess harassment. They would
like beat each other up in the classroom. I had a student who grabbed onto another students dreads and kneed him in the face repeatedly and tried to pull out his dreads. Like that was definitely a harassment situation.

But it was honestly, that was not abnormal for the school. That was something that was like, it happened, you would write it up and you would call the parents and you would have the meeting but like it was just this thing that happened. That was like a pretty serious incident but harassment at that school, harassment is such a big word but injuring or like beating other students happened a lot.

Lynne: Where?

Madeline: At my first school, at City View.

But yeah, at the school I teach at now it is not like that.

Lynne: Going back to City View, what other racial quarrels were there?

Madeline: I wouldn't say they were racial quarrels. It was very much, I mean it was a little bit diverse but it wasn't a hugely diverse school.

Lynne: Okay

Madeline: Yeah, it was not really usually about, it was honestly never about race in my... not my opinion... but in my... experience.

Lynne: Alright, so would you say... would you say your pre-service training program prepared you for the type of diversity you met in the classroom? If yes, how so? If not, in what ways would you prefer more emphasis?

Madeline: Umm... I mean more. It was like 2 credits, the class wasn't that much. It was like one of the best classes I took here, but even still I don't think it was enough to be prepared in the classroom.

But then that's the question about every aspect about teaching. There really isn't ever... you're never "prepared enough" I don't think and that's what I hear echoed over and over. Regardless of where you went to school, or how much of this you got or how much of that, you're never prepared until you're in the classroom. It seems. Until you're like thrown in and you're like oaky, this is how I'm going to do it; this is how I'm going to manage my class.

I mean you just pull it out little by little and you get better at each thing. But yeah, I think there could just definitely be more than just one class. You know, like you delve into it and you're interested in something specifically from that class and you can take something else.
Lynne: Okay, so like additional options as well?

Madeline: Yeah, cause I definitely would have been on top of that.

Lynne: Okay

Madeline: I loved that class so so much. And then maybe too, specific clinical placements? I remember we had a terrible clinical placement for that class. I know there’s a clinical that goes along with it, but we ended up talking more about what we would not do. And it was just, I don’t know, if the clinical was more tailored towards, I don’t even know how you would do that. I don’t know.

Lynne: So what was it about the class that liked most?

Madeline: I liked all of the books that she chose for us to read. There were options for us to read too, there wasn’t always a specific book. There was like ten books we could choose from. I liked that she made us get out into the community, like you know, we’re going to go to the Hmong market or whatever and I loved doing that.

Lynne: I know it was a couple of years ago, I’m sorry.

Madeline: No no, it’s okay.

We had a really good opportunity. We went over to Hamline Elementary. We had like a small lesson to teach in small groups and she had given us examples of lessons, which, that would be a really good idea. She probably did this; she probably gave this to us.

Like ideas to incorporate into the classroom? Like if that class gave us ideas on how to incorporate into math curriculum or the science curriculum. Or if it existed where you could look things up like, “Kindergarten” [click] how to fit this into your math standards?

Like if there was a database, I just log in, it’s free, I teach kindergarten, or like K-2, here are really good activities that would help you facilitate great conversations about this specific thing or here’s really good books that represent this specific thing that you’re looking for.

Things like that where it takes the hours and hours of research out. Because you know, as much as I want and know how important it is, it’s like sometimes we’re just trying to get by. You know, you’ve been through student teaching. Sometimes you’re just trying to get them what they need to get to pass the test.

Or like in kindergarten, we don’t really have any standardized test but even still we feel a lot of pressure to make sure we’re meeting specific goals for those main subjects.
Lynne: Right, okay.

So, the last question: what has been your biggest learning since starting your teaching career?

It can be absolutely anything.

Madeline: I think, I’ve had a lot. The thing that I struggled with the most, and least prepared for was how to manage a full classroom. I think that would be the thing I would have learned the most. I had to go out and learn a strategies and I had to learn a system that I liked the best and put it into use. My first year, I didn’t know what I was doing and it didn’t go so well.

It wasn’t terrible, but it was like, nothings working and my mentor’s like, I don’t really know what to do. But that summer I reflected a lot and I was like man, that didn’t go so well, but it’s something you really like doing and it’s still really worth it to you and I figured it out. And my mom’s a teacher; she gave me Whole Brain Teaching, which is like the best thing on the planet. I cannot recommend it enough. And I used it my first year at Folwell and people were like, what are you doing? How long have you been teaching it and really recognizing that I was doing a good job and I was able since I had my management down to start doing more things.

Like I had time to actually spend on things beyond what was just handed to me. Like my first year I was trying to figure out my kids and a safe space, like just management in general. And now it’s like, okay that piece is done and I can move on to the next step. But that goes back to the thing where you just don’t know anything until you’ve started. Really, you know you can read and read and read, but until you have those 25-30 kids in front of you. You just don’t know.

Yeah, I think management has been my most non-emotional learning.

[End of Conversation]
Appendix G: Transcription of Interview with Camila

Date of Interview: 1/12/17

Lynne: For my capstone, the thesis is really around trying to understand the gap between pre-service training and the actual implementation of multicultural curriculum. So really getting at, what are we doing in providing our teachers the multicultural skills that they need going into the classroom and how are we giving them the right tools to be able to implement them.

If it’s something that is beyond, you know that you need to get some experience under your belt first? What can we do once you’re in your district to provide some of those resources as well?

Okay, so the first couple of questions really are to learn about you and your personal experience. So if you could describe your personal experience with diversity and your upbringing, and your experiences with people from other cultures?

Camila: Yeah! So I’m a Korean adoptee, which is kind of my main go-to for explaining myself.

So I was raised in a very Scandinavian family in Northern Minnesota, went to a very small school where my brother and I were really two of the only people of color. And definitely two of the only Asian students so when I started looking for different colleges, I knew I wanted to go somewhere in the Twin Cities where there was a lot more diversity. And so, I found Hamline and did my undergrad at Hamline. And was involved in the multicultural program at Hamline.

And then, I graduated and started teaching right away in the Roseville school district. So yeah, I mean at Hamline, our teacher education program was pretty white too so I was often the only person of color there too which was not exactly what I was expecting but what it shaped out to be.

I guess the main thing currently in our district; my department and our science department are undergoing NUA training, which is National Urban Alliance and focuses solely on multicultural education.

I’ve taken a See Diversity class as well that focuses again on equity and diversity in education. So those are kind of my main ones.

I’m in a masters program right now so I have a couple of classes under my belt for that too. Kind of little spots here and there.

Lynne: Cool! That is so awesome!

So can you tell me a little bit about the demographic of your classroom right now?
Camila: Yeah! So, I teach five different classes and then I have a homeroom. Our school, this is really the first year that our school has been more students of color than white students. So we’ve had, really over the last five years, we’ve been undergoing this huge shift in our student demographic. So often times, my white students will be the minority in the classroom. And then my students of color will by the majority.

We have a very large minority and refugee population. Often the refugee students are Karen, and then we also have a lot of Somali students.

And so, mainly black, African, and then Asian students... Hispanic and Latinos are our second largest groups. In terms of socioeconomics, there’s a huge divide. So we have our students who are upper-middle class, very comfortable. And then we have students who are not comfortable socio-economically at all.

So we ARE a Title One school which means that there are enough students who receive free or reduced lunch that need support from that funding.

Lynne: I remember you messaged this to me, but where exactly do you teach again?

Camila: I teach at Roseville middle school.

Lynne: Wonderful, thank you!

So in your personal opinion, how important is it to recruit a staff that is diverse whether that’s in age, race, sexuality, etc.

Camila: Yeah, it’s um, in my opinion. One of the most important things so Roseville is the only district in our state that has a teacher’s of color support system where we have PD days designated for us to gather and meet about things to happen to educators of color.

Lynne: Wow, really?

Camila: Yes, so we’re the only district in the state that has that. Our subs are paid for so they don’t get counted out of our personal days or anything. So it is, it is something that is extremely important.

I’ve had kids who have who reflected its importance not only in their writing but in conversation as well. I think now more than ever it’s super important that students have that reflection in their classroom

Lynne: Why do you say that “now more than ever”?
Camila: Because, so, not to get political, but after the election our students are afraid. And they’ve voiced their fear and I think that having a staff that looks and reflects their students, it proves to our students that our school is a place for them, and it’s a safe place for them.

Our staff is not the most diverse staff but it is the most diverse staffs that I’ve SEEN in a school. And it’s something we are continuously looking at and continuously trying to improve.

So we have three principals...

Lynne: WOW!

Camila: Yeah, we have a 7th grade, 8th grade, and like a head principal. So two of our principals are black males, and one principal is a white female. And then in my English 8 department, I teach English 8 solely, there’s myself as a person of color, and we have two other females who are also people of color so that’s really cool to see. And then we have a couple of other educators of color sprinkled throughout the building.

It’s really important because we can offer insight into curriculum and into experiences that our white educators cannot offer. And so, I think it also offers a lens into an open door with certain students where we can talk about race easily and we can talk about experiences of being discriminated against or feeling prejudiced against where our white educators can’t really empathize with that.

Lynne: So how long have you been teaching?

Camila: This is my 2 and two-thirds year. I started in December of 2014 and then yeah.

Lynne: Wow, that’s really cool. So is that where you did your student teaching?

Camila: No, I did my student teaching in Harding HS in Saint Paul. So VERY different!

Lynne: What age range did you student teach?

Camila: 11th and 12th graders. Which was cool because I had 3 classes of IB English 11, and two general American literature classes.

Lynne: And then was it for 12 weeks?

Camila: Yes, it was from January through May.

Lynne: Great! So, I know you mentioned there’s a large Karen and Somali population...
Camila: Yes

Lynne: How frequently are you able to connect in those communities and in what ways?

Camila: Yeah so in different ways. Karen New Year is extremely popular. It's a very big holiday for our students. And so, we were, myself, I also co-teach an ELL course which I probably should have said before so I apologize. So we were able to, my co-teacher and I were able to attend, not for the entire celebration, because they celebrate for DAYS.

Lynne: Oh really?

Camila: Yeah! So we were able to go and try to do our best to communicate with families.

And as far as the Somali population, I haven’t been able to reach out really a ton.

We have cultural liaisons in our building that are geared towards catering to the Karen and Somali population as well as others as well.

So I reach out in those ways. And reaching out to families and parents specifically and individually, but I haven’t been able to get out into the community as much as I would like to yet.

Lynne: Okay.

How might you describe your school culture and the norms?

Camila: Yeah, so it’s very inclusive and so our district has an equity vision that is very updated, and it’s updated frequently so when the transgender bill came into question and we saw different states and schools come up with different responses to that.

Our district right away was like NOPE; we are going to be fully supportive so we added gender identity to all of our posters and sent out new posters.

So yes, it is a place where I feel is very inclusive and safe. Of course we still have race issues but in terms of our size (1,000 7th and 8th graders) and the amount of diversity that we have, I don’t think we have as many issues that are race or diversity related than our counterparts.

So yeah, we go through CRT training (Cultural Responsibility Training) monthly and then we tackle big issues. This year, we also have freedom and flexibility in our curriculum, which is really nice. So this year, I created an 8th grade unit this year
that focused on Black Lives Matter and police brutality. And so, we got full support from our district, our school, our principals.

And we really, out of 500 8th graders, we only had 2 parents who complained and the rest gave us high-fives. I think it’s a place where teachers are respected by our hierarchy... or whatever you want to call it so I think that can just be passed down.

Lynne: Wow, that’s really amazing.

Camila: Yeah, so it’s super cool.

Lynne: So you said, this is more or less your 3rd year. What kinds of mentorship programs exist within your school for teachers who are just starting out?

Camila: Yeah, so we have New Teacher Academy, so every new teacher in the district, and every new teacher in general has to go to New Teacher Academy for year one. And if you are a brand new teacher to the profession, you go to New Teacher Academy year two and three. And so they’re with you for your full three years until you’re tenured technically.

So that’s New Teacher Academy. If you are a person of color, so you have a mentor for New Teacher Academy and you all meet once a month together as a group of new teacher to talk about new teacher things.

If you are just an educator of color but really a new teacher as well to the district or to the profession, there is the Teachers of Color Coalition that also gives you a mentor who is an educator of color. So really, if you are a teacher of color, you are going to have two mentors. More than likely right: you’ll have your New Teacher Academy mentor who is in your building and then you’ll have your teacher of color who might not necessarily be in your building, they try to do that, but it might not always happen.

Those are our two most formal... no, that’s a lie.

You’ll have a mentor within your department. So you’ll have THREE mentors really.

Lynne: Okay, so what are their roles?

Camila: Yeah so for New Teacher Academy, that’s the random one in the building, that’s your go-to person if you have any questions about to do something in the district or within your school.

Your department mentor is pretty self-explanatory so if you have any questions about your curriculum or about how to plan something or what have you, go to them. And there’s overlap there too, mine definitely overlapped so often times I would just ask whoever was closest to me and that was fine.
And then your teacher of color mentor is there to help support you because being an educator of color is different and it’s difficult, and it’s difficult because we are trying to work and make changes in a system that wasn’t set up for us. And so that mentor is there to just help you along the way and get over those weird things that happen in your first couple of years.

Lynne: So they are really making efforts for retention.

Camila: Yeah, it’s a super awesome district.

Lynne: So, one more question in regards to that... in your experience what has been the best way to learn about a student’s cultural background.

Camila: I think just having a conversation with the student and then what I have found is if you’re willing to share a piece of yourself and your culture and explaining that, students will come back with it, even if you don’t necessarily ask.

So in one of my classes, I have 7 different home languages spoken, so what I’ve done is talked to every single student and then I’m just learning random phrases, so Good morning. And so it’s good morning in Slavic today, or it’s good morning in Somali, or it’s good morning in Karen today and then I’ll teach them good morning in Korean which I might not even know it so I’ll just learn it which might be cheating but like whatever.

So it’s just finding those little in’s, but then also our cultural liaisons are definitely there to help us navigate that cultural gap often so I’ve found them to be incredibly helpful.

I’m also a member of our AVID site team...

Lynne: geez what don’t you do!

Camila: I know... *giggles* it’s like, KEEP ME AROUND!

...And so through that we get to meet with a lot of families. We have AVID family nights and we have gatherings together so there’s always that.

We do have home visits as well. That’s something we started with our ELL program and since I co-teach, I’m allowed to go. I haven’t gone on one yet, but I think the next one, I think the first one is going to be at the end of the month for me. And so, I’m kind of looking forward to that!

Lynne: What does that entail?
Camila: So instead of having, cause we found that our ELL families couldn’t necessarily make it to our school even though we provide taxis and busing to make sure they can get there. And so we, with someone else, go to their home with permission and just have the conference and conversation there.

It’s not super long and from my understanding we just go and say, “yes, this student is doing very well, or this student isn’t doing super hot…” have that conversation. So the interpreter will be with us, and most times the cultural liaison will go as well and again there is some overlap there as well. So we have, our cultural liaison is also service interpreters but for conferences there is an interpreter per family who needs one.

Lynne: So that’s one of my questions somewhere in the mess of this (flips page back and forth)... how frequently are you using those services in your own classroom?

Camila: Like weekly... so we have weekly meetings in true middle school fashion we have teams, and then we end up getting that help weekly—I end up getting that help weekly. Those cultural liaisons do groups with students, so I think it’s like a Proud Hispanic Men’s group, there’s a PRIDE group for black men, and we have a black woman’s group. So they end up developing relationships with these students so then if there is a problem, or if I am concerned, pulling our cultural liaisons. Sometimes they just come into the classroom too and they’ll help me out.

Right, so it’s something that’s always available and super helpful when I need it.

Lynne: That’s awesome!

Camila: Yeah

Lynne: So the next three questions are really on how you’re feeling on a scale of 1-10. So one being the least prepared and 10 feeling super prepared.

Camila: Great!

Lynne: I’ve found it really beneficial to self-reflect so if you were to think about how you would feel as far as preparation goes when you were leaving Hamline versus right now with your current experience.

Camila: Sure

Lynne: So how prepared do you feel to meet the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds? When you left Hamline and now.

Camila: So when I left Hamline, I would say I was probably at a 6, and now with the support that I have, probably a 9.
Lynne: Okay, great.

And then, how prepared do you feel to work with parents from diverse backgrounds?

Camila: So leaving Hamline, probably a 2, and then now probably a 7.

Lynne: Okay, and then how prepared do you feel to meet the needs of students with limited English proficiency?

Camila: Yeah, so after Hamline, probably a 0, and now because of the co-teaching with the ELL, a 9. It's great.

Lynne: Okay! So the rest of the questions are more about multicultural engagement and how comfortable you feel with confrontation.

Camila: Cool

Lynne: What are the barriers to a successful multicultural curriculum?

Camila: Support and resources.

Lynne: Okay

Camila: And not necessarily support from administrators but support from your other colleagues and support from home.

Lynne: Really?

Camila: Yeah

Lynne: The support from home of your students I'm assuming

Camila: Yeah, so when I say other colleagues, as teachers we are often on our own little island in our classroom. If you’re colleagues aren't on board with your curriculum, they aren’t going to be willing to help you sell that. And you know, it’s middle school and middle schoolers probably talk more than high schoolers or whatever but it’s having a firm belief when I’m teaching.

So like the black lives matter, social justice, very focused on police brutality unit that we did, we had colleagues who weren't would’n help students on it and or who told students they didn’t believe in any of that, or who told students that the Philando Castile case, that happened in our district, was x, y, and x and this and that it wasn’t police brutality.
And so that was really hard to be the teacher who is like, “well, my colleague actually is misinformed, or my colleague is obviously spouting off things that we are trying to work against,” right because we are talking about discrimination and racism and all of these things so when your colleagues aren’t on board and they are very open about that, it creates this weird network of feeling unsupported by the people you work with.

Cause I would always support the math curriculum. Do I use Algebra everyday? No, but like, you know what I mean? There has to be that understanding.

Lynne: Mhmm

Camila: And then, admin, or what did I say? Support and...

Lynne: Resources

Camila: Yes, support and resources. We had, we received a large sum of money to redo our literature circle carts. And both 7th and 8th grade, so basically it’s an entire unit, we have some books, students pick a book, and there’s guided reading groups, whatever.

Lynne: Okay, yeah

Camila: And so, our literature circle carts are awful, right. Just a bunch of dead/old white people usually and so last year we got a large sum of money to redo that. Which is awesome, because we had extra money, which never happens. So that’s the first resource: money.

And secondly, it was just impossible to find an easy way to get those titles and those names of those books. And so it took us a lot of time, and a lot of resources, like money, like working my network cause I know a couple of librarian, library science people who this is their job. And it was just a lot of work. So the other resources is finding community members who can come in and engage our students as well because we want to situate their learning obviously in their own lives and in their communities so if we can tie our curriculum into our community and say, “this is happening in Roseville, it’s happening in Saint Paul, it’s happening here” we have more buy-in from the students so that obviously takes more resources.

But money is always the biggest one we come across. If we had more money, we could pull off a lot more things, especially tied to multicultural teaching and curriculum.

So yeah, those are the two main things.

Lynne: Okay. Thank you!
So how frequently throughout the year would you say you allow yourself time to self-reflect, explore and dialogue with others?

Camila: Weekly, we have a planning meeting on Monday for English 8, and PLC’s on Wednesdays, and we have a monthly whole department meeting.

So, it’s not necessarily SELF reflection right? But that is reflecting... so PLC’s obviously lends itself to data reflection umm and then planning meetings allow us to look at our curriculum and how we are incorporating that curriculum. So we, at least English 8 and English 7 too, I worked with them last year, at least in the English department we are very intentional and I really appreciate that, so I’m sure the conversations sound a bit weird if you’re just passing by. Like, “Is that a black author?” you know, but it does! It needs to be intentional and the conversations need to be had, and so there’s always that.

We also as a department are given full planning days, where our sub is covered so we get to take 7:30-3:30, we don’t need to be on-campus. We often times go to Panera. And we just plug in and we plan and we look at our curriculums, and we look at who is being represented, who is being heard, and by whom. Right? Because we can have a diverse character in a book, but still have it be written by a white person. And is that really an authentic story? Not really.

And so we try to do that at least once a trimester. So we get a lot of different times to reflect as a whole group, individually, you know, it’s every day.

Lynne: And so how much of that time, and for you personally, do you get to really self-reflect about your own identity and how you kind of fit in the grand scheme of your school and you know, your social identity as a whole.

Camila: So yeah, I would say, the teacher of color meeting that happens once a month, once every month and a half or so... is a really good time for that kind of reflection.

And a lot of it doesn’t really happen during the school day. It happens when I’m at home, I’ll just write. Like I’ll just write randomly and color and then write some more. It’s been a really weird thing for me to be in a school full of Asian people because I just didn’t have that growing up and I NEVER had a teacher of color until I came to Hamline. Even then, I had Doctor Chu and I had one other teacher of color.

Yeah, right? So, I had two!

So I had literally never been anywhere where there were so many Asians, except for Korean culture camp where of course there are going to be a lot of Asians! And so for me, as an Asian person, it’s been really really interesting to see number one, how the students react, and number two, how I come across as well and how I come across to parents, especially during conferences.
So that’s also been super interesting and I haven’t been able to divest on that during the school day, it’s like when I’m watching TV or something. You’re like, oh, today one kid asked me you know… whatever… and it’s like, well I’m adopted so! Um, but yeah, but it’s cool so the social justice unit, we are looking at creating a whole curriculum that is based off of social justice next year. But it was a really cool chance for me to share my experience as a person of color and also as an educator of color. They’re awesome so it’s just honest at this point. It’s just different, and they know it’s different. And I’ll share experiences too with the micro-aggressions that parents have right away is always interesting. And no one prepares you for that. And I think the hardest part was, no one in my undergrad prepared me to be a teacher of color, they prepared me to be a teacher, but they never prepared me to be a teacher of color in a higher position then like an AE or as a para.

Lynne: You’re actually my first teacher of color that I’ve been able to interview. This is amazing! You’ve given me a lot to think about.

Okay, so since beginning your teaching career, could you describe your level of engagement in multicultural issues, hate crime, racial bullying, have you seen it happen? Do you have any examples of how you’ve addressed them or what does your school do?

Camila: Sure, so community wide, like I said the Philandro Castile case happened in our district. It was actually; he was actually one of the cousins of one of my students, so just very, very aware. Right, and from the get-go, from when this all started happening, just very aware. And these police brutality cases that started popping up in the media and everything so I followed everything pretty religiously when it comes to that, when it comes to immigration because we have so many students who are immigrants and who are refugees…that are totally freaked out now. And so I started following THAT pretty religiously once you know, once our two people were announced and one announced he was going to build a wall. Like that was on my radar.

And then politically too, following all of the bills that are being passed for schools. The bullying bill that was passed 2…3… years ago or whatever it was… there’s also a bill that is saying that schools don’t need to provide immigrant or refugee information to the government. Minneapolis just passed a Safe Haven or safe district thing so all of that stuff I follow pretty religiously cause it’s my students! It’s my student’s lives and being able to give them updates because they ASK. Which is the craziest part, because it’s like, “oh middle schoolers, they’re in their own little world,” but they are so tuned in. So being able to stay updated in that.

I know one case this year where there was racial bullying and I didn’t really, I wasn’t super invested in it because it wasn’t my students.

Lynne: Okay
Camila: So we are a restorative practice school so we have 1 person who is dedicated to solely to behavioral restorative practices and working in restorative circles with the students. And focusing on things like mindfulness and what is going on with you to make you either act this way or react this way. And so that is kind of our process. We also have a restore room so instead of getting suspended, OR coming back from a suspension, this room is here for you, and you just take a break for an entire day and you're still in school and you're still working on your stuff but you're just removed from your peers.

And so we have a pretty good system set up. And of course there's the bullying for other reasons that are just middle school reasons where it's like, oh yeah, I got bullied for that too when I was in middle school!

Lynne: You know, that normal stuff.

Camila: Yeah! Normal stuff!

Lynne: In what ways, do you kind of prompt your students, or if you're given the opportunity to prompt your students to practice empathy and perspective taking in your classroom.

Camila: Yeah, so, we moved our ELL students level 4 into mainstream so the co-taught is half ELL, our is at least ELL, and we have in our other mainstream classes we just have ELL students dispersed throughout. So THEIR experiences are extremely rich and totally different than any of our others obviously, but we practice it a lot. We do a lot of narratives, we do a lot of writing and we do a lot of reflecting.

We have a really cool spoken word unit where we invite an outside artist who comes in and they write a spoken word piece and it always ends up being personal so we practice empathy through that as well.

So yeah, the social justice unit, we went to see a play at the Guthrie called the *Parchman Hour*, and so it was all about Parchman penitentiary during the civil rights movement and so we were able to really pull in a lot of empathy where it was like here’s an experience of our black students, obviously not OUR black students, but of our country. It’s the history of our country and this is what happened. And then how can we relate this to either things that are going on today or things you have gone through.

Same with *Night*, right? So we talk about, we start with a hate triangle where stereotypes are up here with discrimination, prejudice, blah blah blah, and then it all leads down genocide. So how do we as move as humans who ALL stereotype, we are ALL prejudice against some things right, but how do we prevent that discrimination from there.
It’s all taking in, this is who I am, and this is my identity, and I can understand how other people might feel. Or how things might lead to how they are today.

We talk about news bias, and media bias. So it’s all understanding the power of rhetoric is the main theme at least in my classroom.

Lynne: Okay, would you say, so going back to your student teaching time here and your pre-service training.

Do you feel like it prepared you to meet the type of diversity you met in the classroom?

Camila: Um, so student teaching definitely did. Harding is even more diverse than my school. So I had like 2 white students out of my 5 classes at Harding so that definitely prepared me and working with 11th and 12th graders versus 7th and 8th graders really helped me see too that the difference between immaturities and then actual issues kind of. I think you know, a lot of the things that we were taught in our undergrad cannot really be put into practice.

Lynne: Okay

Camila: To be completely honest, cause you’ll never really know until you’re put in that situation. You know, it’s just one of those things where you can read all of the books and you can write all of the papers and you can do all of the research and then there’s just going to be something always that throws a wrench into your perfect TPA lesson plan.

And so, in terms of diversity, we had one class here. That was supposed to hit the entire spectrum of our diverse students and WOW you know, that’s insane to think about. So, I think that there are a lot of wake-up calls, and I’ve also had a lot of conversations with others who have gone through our undergrad who felt super prepared when leaving and all of a sudden it’s like, “oh, these parents don’t speak English.” Now what do I do. Do I talk to the interpreter or the parent? Do I talk to the student if the student is interpreting? You know? It was all of those questions that I had no idea what to do for my first parent-teacher conferences and you just kind of wing it. But it would have been really nice to have that information! Like, if there’s an interpreter you don’t talk to the interpreter, you can look at the interpreter every once in a while, but you talk to the parent or the student. You just have a normal conversation.

Yeah, I don’t know.

Lynne: So in hindsight, is there anything else you wish we could have incorporated or learned during your pre-service training?
Camila: Yeah, I mean, I think we have access to such a huge network in the twin cities. The Hmong population that we have here in our urban schools and why we never went there for a class or went to Hmong village for a class or never brought someone in to teach us on Hmong names or Karen names. The Karen population has been growing insanely but Karen names, there’s a correct way to say them. It’s a formula! So you say the first name, and the middle, and the last name. I mean, I had no idea, and in fact our entire staff didn’t know until our ELL teachers gave a presentation on it. It was like, your students aren’t just Zar, it’s Zar Nay Say, you say all three. Its just things like that where it would have been nice to say their names correctly.

Or how do you address elders in their community? So when we have parents coming in from these different cultures, is it respectful to call them by their first names or do we call them by their last names? How do we, right? Cause it is, it’s very different. And so, and then how do we as teachers make sure to portray that school is a safe and welcoming space for them and for their students because there is still a lot of fear.

And that’s a big thing.

Lynne: Yes, it’s very real.

Camila: And on the flip side, how do I as a teacher of color, how do I do that in a school? Because no one taught me and that’s weird. And that’s a weird thing to think about. But the first time I had parent-teacher conferences; I had a parent come up to me and say, ”so, you’re my students math teacher, right?” And how do you respond to that when my first instinct is to say, “Well, that’s very stereotypical…” you know what I mean? Cause that is what I would normally do in my typical life, but it’s a professional setting so it’s different.

Or when a parent is asking you really personal questions about your race or about your culture or about whatever and you’re just like, “You don’t need to know that information.” How do you have those conversations? I don’t know.

Lynne: Mhmm

Camila: But again, I was the only person of color in my teacher ed program. That would be one class, one class for Libby.

Lynne: Thankfully in my program, I had two other teachers of color.

Camila: Okay

Lynne: Yeah, so it was like the three token students of color
Camila: Right, and my professor for my diversity class was this old white guy who made us buy his book.

Lynne: Yup! I had him too.

Camila: I was like okay, this is cool.

Lynne: So, my last question for you has been, what has been your biggest learning since starting your career?

Camila: Oh my gosh... all of the things!

I think that, in order to best teach our students, and in order to best understand and reach out students, we need to have a firm understanding of who We are, and who you are as a person, and as yourself. And you need to be comfortable with that. And you need to be comfortable with having those discussions about yourself and your students, because if you can’t say that your student is Black, there is a problem.

And if you can’t say that you are a white person and with that comes privileges, that’s a problem. That is going to be a barrier. And, and I think that... do I always say things correctly about race, and class? No. But you say it, and then you have that conversation and it’s really hard. But having an understanding of yourself and just this awareness of, these are my experiences, these are my prejudices, and these are my stereotypes and constantly working to combat those are the key pieces.

But I’ve really learned a lot about myself and how I want to be as a teacher once I get to the point where I’m not just trying to stay afloat, and so that’s been really nice.

And I’ve also learned that students need teachers of color and having para’s of color is very important, having people of color in the school, extremely important. But there’s something to be said about having teacher in the front of the room that is a person of color teaching the class and with that comes problems because obviously different cultures respond differently to women, to women of color, to whatever... but it comes back to that understanding of yourself and being comfortable with that.

So I guess that’s it! I learn something new every day.

[End of Conversation]