Closing the Gap: Culturally Competent Principals and African American Students' Success

by

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Abstract

African American students are not achieving at the rate and in a manner consistent with their peers. News headlines continue to report a dismal future for the American education system as a whole and for students of color, specifically (Layton, 2014). Scholars have addressed the problem of academic achievement for students of color for decades, but the problems still exists (Delpit, 2012). Over that time, numerous approaches have been presented as possible solutions to closing the achievement gap between students of color and their White counterparts. Ideas focused on the curriculum to ideas on relationships between stakeholders within the school community have been presented (Firestone and Riehl, 2005).

One concept that is emerging in the field of education is cultural competency. Although this is a concept that has been a part of the medical training profession, it entry into the field of education holds great promise. In recent years, the conversation has moved from the cultural competency of teachers, the individuals who have the most direct interaction with students, to school leaders. However, there is still much work to be done in exploring the role that culturally competent leaders play in helping all students achieve academic success.

This paradigm is addressed in this study. Using the manuscript format, this study includes two manuscripts. The first manuscript highlights the development and psychometric properties of the survey used in this study. The second manuscript examines the relationship between principals' level of cultural competence and the achievement level of African American students.

Results indicated that principals perceive themselves to be culturally competent. Several professional and personal factors influence the development of cultural competency. But regardless of the level of cultural competence that principals perceive themselves to be, this had no impact on the academic achievement gap at the school level. The findings of this study are the beginnings of a new and potentially beneficial area of research in the field of educational leadership. While principals' cultural competency may not have a direct impact on group performance on standardized tests, the cross section of cultural competency and principal leadership create a complex dynamic that warrants further exploration.

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Background

When it comes to the idea of educating the masses, America's track record has proved embarrassing, specifically in regards to the poor, women, and people of color. A broad overview of the history of the American education system revealed numerous cases of discrimination and neglect (Anderson, 1988; Theilen, Edwards, and Moyen, 2002). In this system, the haves stand in stark contrast to the have-nots. Historically, the poor and people of color, two designations that are often not mutually exclusive, have attended schools that lacked resources for adequate and appropriate facilities, materials or staff (Anderson, 1988; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Yet this becomes less of a surprise when the fact that the American education system was not created with the needs of these individuals in mind. Education in this country was a wealthy man's luxury (Theilen, et al., 2002). From the arrival of the first settlers, education served the needs of this country's wealthiest White male citizens, specifically landowners and merchants. Together with the cash crops of the day, like tobacco and rice, colleges were produced at an impressive rate during the colonial period.

Between the arrival of the first settlers and the American Revolution, nine such institutions were created. Being that many of the early settlers were alumni from European colleges such as Cambridge and Oxford, it is no wonder that education was seen as a worthwhile investment. However, college was not an investment for all. Theilen, et al. (2002) note that, traditionally, a landowner's eldest son was the sole inheritor of his father's land. Therefore, families needed to create opportunities for younger sons to become economically and socially successful. It was the younger sons who had the privilege of continuing their educations. The earliest of colleges in this country started as seminaries, a profession that was dominated by men

and seen as socially acceptable. All other children were destined to a life of hard labor, working the land owned by their fathers as a service to the family as a whole.

Education for White women took a similar path (Theilen, et al., 2002). With growing concerns of how women would be able to support themselves outside the home or help support the family if remaining in the home, there was a boom in normal schools and female seminaries. These schools were designed to train women to be teachers, a profession that carried with it a level of social acceptability that would be difficult to achieve otherwise.

The work of Theilen, et al. (2002) reveals that change in the education system has traditionally been an arduous task, both driven and retarded by societal demands. Consider the oldest public school in this country that opened its doors during the 17th century. Boston Latin School was established in 1635. It wasn't until the 19th century that the school admitted its first female student. After her graduation, an all-girls institution was founded. It wasn't until 1972 that this school had its first co-ed class. The first Black student was admitted in 1855 after the Massachusetts Supreme Court passed a ruling to desegregate public schools (*Sarah C Roberts vs. The City of Boston, 1855*). The evolution of this one public school mirrors the realities of countless other schools in America. The disenfranchised continue to fight for the right to be educated. Legal action, moral persuasion and brute force are tactics that have been used by advocates and opponents to equal education for all (Delpit, 1995).

Yet despite the advances that have been made in the name of access, the American education system has reached another critical phase (Delpit, 1995; Kozol, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994). The demographics of the typical classroom continue to evolve. Long gone are the days where the common expectation was that classrooms contained only one racial or cultural group.

The fabric of this nation is evolving, quickly and this new reality is clearly evident in the classroom (Banks, 2008; Marx, 2004; Terrell & Lindsey, 2009).

In numerous school systems across the country, African Americans and Latino/as are the majority of students being taught in public schools (Delpit, 1995; Kozol, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994). These culturally and economically diverse students have been the majority of students in special education programs for years (Bean, 2011; Blanchett, 2006) and noticeably missing from honors, gifted and Advanced Placement classes. Additionally, Bryant (2015) discussed three main areas that hinder African American students in their pursuit of college and career readiness: access school counselors, rigorous college preparatory courses and experienced teachers.

Justifications for such actions and the policies that have allowed such actions abound. Many who have engaged in such behaviors have felt as if they were genuinely working in the best interest of Black children. But for others, stereotypes of African American children as lazy or culturally inferior have served as catalyst for these abuses (Davis, 2005).

Foster (2005) discussed the shifting demographics in schools and its impact on the achievement of Black children. Statistically speaking, the probability that an African American child will be taught by a White female is significantly high. According to her, White teachers make up 86% to 90% of the active teaching force. In discussing teacher preparation programs, Ladson-Billings (2005) noted that these programs are "filled with White, middle-class, monolingual female students who will have the responsibility of teaching in school communities serving students who are culturally, linguistically, ethnically, racially, and economically different from them" (p. 230). She followed this point by making it clear that the academic woes of students of color were not simply about race. The attitudes and ways of thinking that these teachers bring into the classroom cause the greatest difficulty in reaching these children.

Like others of the same culture, these teachers are able to communicate effectively with those whom they share a common background. Surely, White teachers will be able to find meaningful ways to engage White students. But fear mongering and a lack of knowledge have created what Delpit (1995) termed as “other people’s children” (p. 1). In Delpit’s (1995) seminal work, she details the lack of comfort some White teachers have when working with Black children. In case after case, instances where cultural misunderstanding, or a lack of cultural awareness, led to double standards in the classroom were highlighted.

These realities have caused disparities between the achievement of White students and students of color. White students are outperforming Black students as early as the first grade (Foster, 2005). Scholars have been well aware of this disparity between the races for decades.

Since then, the academic achievement gap between Black and White students has been explored by entities both in and outside of the field of education. Outside the field of education, private organizations, foundations and politicians have tackled the problem. Inside the field of education, classroom teachers, school administrators and educational researchers have written exhaustively on the subject. If not writing about the achievement gap directly, topics like culturally relevant pedagogy, critical race theory and social justice have all been used to address the issue. Sociologists, psychologists, historians and anthropologists have researched this issue from their respective fields (Ladson-Billings, 2012).

Private entities like The Wallace Foundation and The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have spent copious amounts of money on longitudinal studies to produce monographs expounding on a variety of aspects of education in this nation. Corporations like NBC Universal and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting have taken to social media and television to engage the nation in the discussion about the crises in the educational system (Delpit, 2012; Ravitch,

2010). The most notable action taken by a politician was U. S. President George W. Bush's controversial *No Child Left Behind* law, enacted in 2002, a reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of 1965. Accountability at the state level was the emphasis in this 1,100 page document. The next most notable political move was U. S. President Barack Obama's Race to the Top initiative. In what quite simply could be described as a competition for financing, states began a frantic "race" to restructure their educational departments and policies to suit the application process (Ravitch, 2010).

Yet after decades of discussion, legislation and program implementation, the problem still existed. Although the gap has narrowed, the data continues to show a clear discrepancy between the performance of White students and students of color in core academic areas, as indicated on state mandated standardized tests. During the 1970's and 1980's, when there was a concentrated effort on educational improvements for Blacks, there was a sharp decline in the achievement gap. Yet in the 1990's, while the scores of White students remained constant, Blacks students' scores fell (Lee, 2002; Raudenbush, 2009).

Considering what little success that past attempts had achieved in the concentrated effort toward the elimination of the problem, the question remained, "What is missing?" Scholars have presented many theories about the key to school improvement and, consequently, a closing of the gap. Leadership styles and pedagogy have been presented as exclusive end all, be all solutions for this problem. Yet moving from the theoretical to the practical with these ideas has not eliminated the gap either. As with any other problem that involves a variety of personalities and conflicting views, complex problems require complex solutions.

Problem Statement

The present study was conducted in an effort to address the current lack of research into the specific factors that may influence the academic success of African American students.

Significance of Problem

African American students have systematically been discriminated against in the American education system (Kozol, 1991). Over the past few decades, the demographics of students in a typical American classroom have drastically changed. Blacks are the second largest racial group of students in many schools, particularly in the southeast (Delpit, 1995; Kozol, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Yet, Black students are over-represented in special education programs and are noticeably absent from gifted and AP programs (Bean, 2011; Blanchett, 2006; Lomotey, 1989). The impact of these trends will have a lasting impact, not only on African American culture, but America as a whole. Generations of students will drop out of school. Those that choose to remain and earn a high school diploma will be ill equipped or lack the confidence to pursue advanced degrees, further exasperating the national wealth gap. Educational leaders and researchers need effective tools to address this issue.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the degree to which principals' reported cultural competence is related to academic achievement of African American students at the school level. Principals are one component of this complex problem-solution conundrum. Yet, the principalship carries with it positional power that gives them access to a myriad of stakeholders. This level of access can be a powerful influence on school culture (Riehl, 2000).

Research Questions

1. What are the psychometric properties of The Cultural Competency Self-Assessment©?

2. To what degree are principals culturally competent, according to responses on The Cultural Competency Self-Assessment©?
3. What demographics characteristics, such as years of experience, race or age, are the best predictors for identifying a principal's cultural competence?
4. To what extent is the school's achievement gap related to principal's perceived level of cultural competence?

Assumptions

1. Participants will be honest when responding to survey items.
2. The school level achievement score is an accurate reflection of academic success for students.

Limitations

1. Only principals of schools in the southeastern United States participated.
2. The sample size was small.
3. The principal's level of cultural competency was determined by self-reported measures.
4. Cultural competency is a situational paradigm.
5. Principals may engage in socially desirable responding.
6. Principals may have limited engagement with the culturally diverse members of the school and community.
7. Because the instrument was administered online, there is a possibility that questions were left to the interpretation of the reader.

Definitions of Terms

1. "*Cultural competence*: interacting with other cultural groups in ways that recognize and value their differences, motivate you to assess your own skills, expand your knowledge

and resources, and ultimately, cause you to adapt your relational behavior" (Lindsey, Roberts, Campbell Jones, 2005, p. xviii)

2. "*Cultural proficiency*: honoring the differences among cultures, viewing diversity as a benefit, and interacting knowledgeably and respectfully among a variety of cultural groups" (Lindsey, Roberts, Campbell Jones, 2005, p. xviii)
3. Achievement Gap: the deficit between Black students and their White counterparts on standardized assessments.

Overview of Methodology

This non-experimental study was conducted using quantitative research methods. The participants in the study were selected from state department of education websites' listing of principals of public and private elementary, middle and high schools throughout the southeastern United States. There were no limitation regarding the length of time that an individual had been a principal or led their current school. The principals were invited to participate on a voluntary basis.

Online surveys were used to collect data. An invitation to participate was emailed to principals. The invitation included a link to the survey. The survey included a demographic section and the *Cultural Competence Self-Assessment* (© 2003 Randall B. Lindsey, Kikanza Nuri Robins, and Raymond D. Terrell. All rights reserved).

Data were analyzed using exploratory factor analysis to address the underlying structure of the instrument. Once this was established, the data were analyzed further using regression methods to describe the relationship between principal's cultural competence and the academic success of African American students. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 22.0 was used to organize and analyze data to address the research questions.

Organization of Study

This study is divided into five chapters following a manuscript format. Chapter I introduces the study, and provides the problem statement, significance of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, assumptions and limitations of the study, definition of terms and an overview of methodology. Chapter II reviews the literature relevant to the study, as it pertains to African American students' achievement, cultural competency and principal leadership. Chapter III, Methods, discusses the research design for the study, including a description of the participants, selection and refinement of the survey instrument, and data collection, and analysis. Exploring this study's research questions in more depth, Chapters IV and V are manuscripts. For each manuscript, conclusions and recommendations are included. Chapter VI offers a summary of the entire study. A reference list and appendices are included in the final sections.

CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter, an overview of recent literature concerning the experiences of African American students in school, the national achievement gap, principal leadership and cultural competency are reviewed. The first section of this chapter explores the history of African Americans in the American education system from the 18th century to the present day. The second section of this chapter explores the history of the academic achievement gap and the impact that is has had on African American students. The third section explores the relationship of principal leadership to making meaningful changes within schools. The final section explores the definition and impact of cultural competency and cultural proficiency as it relates to secondary schools. The literature review serves to link this current study to the established knowledge base related to African American students' academic achievement.

African American Students and the American Education System

"This means that success in institutions – schools, workplaces, and so on – is predicated upon acquisition of the culture of those who are in power" (Delpit, 2006, p.25).

The American education system was not designed with the African American child in mind. Historically, as a part of the involuntary migration of Africans to this country, slave owners purposefully forbade education. Because of its liberatory nature, education was seen as a significant threat to the system of slavery. Some have argued that this historical perspective continues to have unintended consequences for African Americans today (Davis, 2005; McWhorter, 2000; Ogbu, 2003). In his review of literature on the origins of modern day African American culture, Davis (2005) highlighted the connection between the brutality of slave owners toward slaves and the reverberating unintended consequences for Black children today. He noted that the removal of the African culture and the deplorable treatment of those during the Middle

Passage that continued once on American soil supported an ideal of White superiority and engrained a disdain for learning (Davis, 2005). Although scholars like Davis (2005) saw negative consequences, other scholars (Anderson, 1988; Perry, 2003) saw enslaved individuals' dedication to acquiring education as one having a long lasting and positive impact on American education.

Before slaves of African descent were legally granted freedom, the acquisition of knowledge was a dangerous undertaking (Anderson, 1988). Not only were slaves punished if discovered trying to learn to read or write, the teachers, the Whites who were passing on this invaluable knowledge, were punished as well. The punishment for Whites was not nearly as severe as that for the enslaved individuals who were pupils or teachers. Beatings, loss of limb and worst were standard courses of action bestowed upon those caught in the act. Anderson (1988) reported that between the years of 1800 and 1835, southern states created legislation to make it a crime to teach slaves to read or write. The message became clear for the Africans and was passed on for generations to come: Education was power.

After chattel slavery came to a legal end, former southern plantation owners were vehemently opposed to the education of children (Anderson, 1988). For them, time spent in school took away from their potential profit margin. Traditionally, African Americans have lived in the South (Morris & Monroe, 2009), an area where agriculture is central to economic and cultural vitality. During the 19th century and early in the 20th century, child labor on the farms was a critical component of survival in these communities. For many years, schools in these communities operated around the schedule for harvesting crops (Anderson, 1988). When harvest time arrived, schools closed and everyone returned to the fields. When all that could be gathered had been gathered, students and teachers would return to their school. During the years after

Reconstruction, there were times when the school year was so short that many black children barely had an opportunity to learn (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

The demands of such arduous labor were not enough to keep these families from pursing an education. In fact, the battles between White plantation owners and Blacks for common schooling for all children endured for years. By 1880, Whites were faced with the reality that the educational reforms that Blacks sought were inevitable and began to look for ways to restrict public schooling (Anderson, 1988). Throughout these years, and for years to come, the firmly held belief in "the African-American philosophy of schooling: education for freedom" (Perry, 2003, p. 31) helped Blacks continue to fight for a better education for their children.

As progress was being made in the name of universal public schools for all children, the passing of the landmark Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) was another indicator of the lack of acceptance of Blacks in this country (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Although the case initially focused on accommodations while utilizing public transportation, the implications of "separate but equal" quickly became ingrained into the American way. Whites did not have to allow Blacks to attend school with their children as long as there were separate facilities available for Blacks to utilize. The equal part was unacknowledged for many years. Some would even argue that "equal" has yet to be reached for the majority of African American students in public schools today (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009).

It would take another 58 years before African Americans would be given a glimmer of hope that they would receive the quality education that was desired by many and championed for by the likes of Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, Septima Clark and Daisy Bates. *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) by ruling that separate public schools were unconstitutional. The legacy of the *Brown vs. Board* (1954) decision has had an

indelible impact on the American educational system. The question becomes whether the impact has been positive or negative and how has the decision influenced the achievement of students (Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin, 2009).

In the decades before the *Brown* decision, Blacks received less education, were taught in inferior facilities, with outdated material and, during the earlier part of the 20th century, only had access to regional high schools (Anderson, 1988; Perry, 2003; Raudenbush, 2009). The historical context of the African American child in the American education system, together with the rapid evolution of the system, placed these students in a precarious situation. Many Blacks saw *Brown* (1954) as a victory for civil rights in the country. For many, this marked the beginning of a new era, an era where many wrongs of the past could be made right.

With its passing, Black students began to attend predominately White high schools, initially with much opposition similar to that witnessed by the world in Little Rock, AR in 1957. With the passing of this landmark case, the local branch of the National Association for the Advancement for Colored People (NAACP) led the charge to integrate the schools of Little Rock. Nine students were chosen to register for classes at Central High School in fall 1957. The governor of the state opposed the idea and used his power to prevent the inevitable from occurring. Federal intervention, in the form of President Eisenhower sending Federal troops to escort these students to school, guaranteed that integration became a reality for that school year. During their tenure at Central High School, these nine students endured emotional, psychological and physical abuse at the hands of the White citizens of Little Rock (Calloway-Thomas and Garner, 1996; Kirk, 2008). Today, the perseverance of those nine students serves as a reminder of the commitment of the newly freed slaves to education and the betterment of society.

But the underhanded tactics that White plantation owners used during the 19th century reached new levels during the 1960s. The following fall, the governor of Arkansas closed all public schools to prevent integration (Kirk, 2008). Similar actions were taken in Prince Edward County, Virginia. From the years of 1959 to 1964, county public schools were closed in an effort to thwart integration (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006). Whites who opposed integration were just as committed as their predecessors who opposed universal schooling. The actions of these individuals are the reason that many schools, particularly in the south, did not fully integrate until the 1970s (Clotfelter, 2009).

As Whites slowly handed over the reins of their public schools, another interesting phenomenon was occurring. Particularly across the southeastern sections of this country, the number of private schools that opened their doors increased dramatically (Clotfelter, 2009). Private schools have been a part of education in this country for hundreds of years (Powell, 1996). However, the sudden peak in new "academies" in states like Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia during the years leading up to and after *Brown*, led many to question the motives of the individuals who typically founded these institutions (Ladson-Billings, 2004). During the years of 1954 – 1964, 38% of the schools that were founded and eventually became members of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) were located in the south. Fifty-six percent of NAIS schools founded during the next decade were also located in the South (Powell, 1996). It was clear when looking at the demographics of the leadership, teachers and students of the schools what purpose these institutions were to serve. However, today, many of these institutions deny their own histories in an effort to present a more inclusive façade (Ladson-Billings, 2004).

As education in this country evolved, so did these private institutions. In fact, since the 1960s there have been African American students who have taken advantage of these academies

(Datnow & Cooper, 1997). Often children of color are in the minority at independent schools. According to Datnow and Cooper (1997), to avoid the sense of isolation, African American students often form an informal support group. Within these support groups, African American students look to each other for affirmation and enforcement of cultural identity.

Students are aware of the predominant culture's perception of them (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004). The administration often is in denial. This administration, which belongs to the predominant culture also, seems convinced that all is well within the community. But upon further exploration, teachers often discover deeply held ideologies about race that are in contradiction with the public façade that all children are treated equally (Howard, 2003).

The students that are enrolled in these schools desire to be included and these institutions can help them in this process. The structure is there. The teachers and administration must be willing to make the needed changes to create a new reality for the students of color. This will be no small task. Due to the small number of students that are in these environments, teachers in independent schools often fail to recognize the significance of having students of different cultural background learning together. "Failure to see and acknowledge racial differences makes it difficult to recognize unconscious biases everyone has" (Scruggs, 2009, p. 46).

The history of Whites engaging in separatist activities is well documented and a lived history for older generations of Blacks. The academic success of Blacks have been in spite of the systems and practices that have been used by those in power to prevent access of Blacks to learning opportunities. For centuries, African Americans have fought for the right to an education. Yet, in spite of the gains that have been made, African American students are academically behind their White counterparts (Ladson-Billings, 2006). This gap in performance has been the basis for numerous studies over several decades (Lee, 2002).

As Black students were placed into integrated schools, disparities in learning began to emerge. As the integration movement reached its peak, there was a reduction in the achievement gap between Black and White students, but the gap has persisted (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lee, 2002). For instance, between 1971 and 1988, the gap between Black and White children's reading scores on the NAEP had been cut in half. However, by 1999, the gap for the same age group of children had increased to a level close to that of 1971 (Lee, 2002; Raudenbush, 2009).

African American Students and the Achievement Gap

> *"Unfortunately, many Americans live on the outskirts of hope – some because of their poverty, and some because of their color, and all too many because of both. Our task is to help replace their despair with opportunity."*
> *- Lyndon B. Johnson, 1964, State the Union Address*

In 1966, *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, also known as The Coleman Report (1966) brought awareness of the Black – White academic achievement gap to the public consciousness. Over the years, there has been a plethora of empirical research on the subject discussing the intricacies of the achievement gap and the long-term consequence if the gap was not properly addressed (Lee, 2002). During the years following the report, there were data that showed that the achievement gap narrowed. But since the late 1980s, that progress has not been evident. Lee (2002) explored the trends in the racial and ethnic achievement gap and factors that might contribute to these trends.

This work sought to explain why the Black-White and Hispanic-White achievement gaps narrowed in the years immediately following the Coleman Report then stabilized or widened during the 1980s and 1990s (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Lee, 2002). To analyze the trends in the achievement gap, Lee (2002) used data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and Standardized Achievement Test (SAT). The NAEP was used to analyze gaps in reading and math while the SAT was somewhat loosely used to analyze

college admissions. These data show a narrowing of the gap during the 1970s and 1980s and stabilization or slight widening of the gap from the late 1980s to the 1990s.

Lee (2002) identified several factors that affect the racial and ethnic achievement gap trends. Included in this list are three areas: (1) socioeconomic and family conditions, (2) youth culture and student behaviors, and (3) schooling condition and practices. Although these areas can explain some aspects of the achievement gap, the complexity of the issue does not let any one factor completely explain the phenomenon that has been observed in the data. For each of these areas, sub-factors were explored. Each sub-factor had periods where the gap did or did not reflect the trends of the achievement gap further elucidating the complexity of the matter.

For instance, the narrowing between Black families and White families socioeconomically during the 1980s could be seen as attributing to the narrowing of the achievement gap during that same period. However, during the 1990s as the gap began to widen, the difference socioeconomically did not change and therefore no direct correlation could be seen. This was true for each of the factors Lee (2002) discussed. During certain decades, these factors mirrored the achievement gap. But other decades, these factors stood in stark contradiction to what was happening in schools.

When discussing changes in schooling conditions and practices, the sub-factors of segregation and dropout rates seemed to correlate closely to achievement gap trends. As school officials purposefully worked to desegregate southern schools, the achievement gap narrowed. However, when desegregation was no longer at the center of national attention, the gap stabilized or widened. Lee (2002) noted that from the 1970s to the 1990s, the dropout rate for Black students had been 1.5 to 2 times higher than their White counterparts. The pattern of dropout rate closely mirrored the pattern of the Black-White achievement gap.

Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005) noted that, at the time of their writing, the achievement gap between students of color and White middle-class students had widened. The persistence of the Black-White achievement gap was one of the factors that led to the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2002 (Braun, Chapman, and Vezzu 2009; Ravitch, 2010). Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005) presented two opposing viewpoints on the trend of increased accountability brought on by NCLB. On the one hand, the new regulations brought to light the deficit thinking of school leaders that had created the situation. On the other hand, the new regulations were not a guarantee that disenfranchised students would receive the education they deserved (Cambron-McCabe & MaCarthy, 2005).

With the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 in 2002, the age of accountability began. Schools were legally mandated to meet benchmarks set by the government. The No Child Left Behind Act, enacted by Congress and signed by President George W. Bush, was the driving force behind many of the standards-based reforms that schools implemented (Banks, 2008; Ravitch, 2010). NCLB required school districts to aggregate their test data by race, ethnicity, income, disability and English language proficiency. And while some school leaders saw this approach as a positive for highlighting the academic gap, others saw the reforms as having negative impacts on daily school life and the overall curriculum (Banks, 2008; Ravitch, 2010). Although the intent of NCLB was to help students of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds attain a level of academic success comparable with their White counterparts, the process for implementation was flawed and the same population that the bill was designed to help was consistently being left behind.

The challenges surrounding educating a diverse student population are not new in this country. As Riehl (2000) noted, “American public education has served an increasingly varied

student population drawn from an increasingly pluralistic society" (p. 56). Unfortunately, the answer to these challenges has always centered on assimilation. School leaders have insisted on treating all students equally, regardless of race, gender, socio-economic background or any number of other factors. Riehl (2000) saw this trend as changing: "Thus, there is a growing literature on how schools can more effectively serve diverse student populations. This literature focuses on matters regarding education policy, school finance, the social organization of schools and classrooms, relationships between schools and students' families and communities, teacher education and professional development, curriculum, instructional methods, and assessment processes" (p. 57). American schools were acknowledged as being more diverse than any other time in history and a great deal of literature had been written addressing the issue of how to educate these students. Scholars such as Lisa Delpit, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Michele Foster and Linda Darling-Hammond have taken up this cause (Riehl, 2000).

Although the achievement gap continues to be a prominent component of education literature, the crossroad between the achievement gap and the African American student is becoming less prominent. The focus in recent years has been on "students of color," which encompasses a plethora of racial and ethnic identities. And while this work is important and informs the work done here, I argue that although there are similarities between groups, addressing the differences will be the key to help alleviate the disparities that each group has experienced in the educational system in this country.

Numerous scholars have focused their research specifically on African American students. Ladson-Billings (2012) reflected that in her early work she focused on what was working for African American students, a contrast to previous research that exclusively held a deficit point of view toward these students. When faced with the question of "Why African

American students and success?" her immediate response was "Why not?" (Ladson-Billings, 2012, p. 118). For her, helping African American students succeed by showing others that these students were as capable as others, seemed an obvious approach to improving the school experience for all students. As Perry (2003) noted, "The prevailing assumption among many educators is that the task of achievement for African Americans as a group is the same as it is for any other group" (p. 4).

Lomotey (1989) specifically addressed the realities of African American students in the American education system in his work. At the time of his research, the largest minority population of students in schools was Black students. The author saw this population as being in grave peril. He came to this conclusion by acknowledging two realities. The first reality being that racism, sexism and classism were still very much a part of American society. Secondly, true cultural diversity helped preserve the differences among cultural groups within a society. Cultural diversity should allow Black students to feel as if their culture is valued, but the prominence of the classic "-isms" of American society could prove to be the greatest obstacle to these students' academic success.

Lomotey (1989) recognized that Black students were lagging behind their White classmates academically and saw this as an indictment against the American public school system. He painted a dismal picture of school for Black children. His research showed that Blacks were more likely to be placed in special education and vocational education programs. Simultaneously, Black students were less likely to be placed in gifted and talented programs, on an academic track, or exposed to adequate math, science or social studies courses.

A number of theories have been evoked to explain this phenomenon. Lomotey (1989) noted that scholars had used social deficit and genetic deficit theory as a justification for the lack

of success for Black students. He quickly dismissed those two theories, but did find some validity in two other theories: cultural differences and structural inequality. Cultural difference theory acknowledged that there is a disconnect between the learner and the curriculum. According to the theory, students cannot relate to the curriculum. Aspects of their culture are invisible in the curriculum and therefore students cannot connect with learning in a meaningful way. Structural inequality theory acknowledged that schools were organizations that forced students into groups, much like American society does in general. This is seen as a systemic problem. American institutions support these types of inequalities. It is common for cultures to be forcibly segregated in society. This type of grouping is commonly found in schools.

To address the disconnect between the student and the curriculum, Lomotey (1989) called for schools to embrace multicultural education, textbooks that had a positive display of multicultural experiences, and more autonomy and accountability at the local school level. He noted, "Students do better academically when they see themselves in the curriculum" (p. 83). To eliminate the segregation of students, organizations that are democratic communities or that engage in social justice leadership can help create more unified schools.

Multicultural education and social justice leadership have become central to the discussion on closing the achievement gap. While Ladson-Billings (2012) contended that the success of African American students did not rely upon "tinkering with the curriculum" (p. 118), the theory behind multicultural education does provide the tools needed to build a curriculum that would aid students of color to succeed academically. Social justice leadership provides the tools that school leaders need to advocate for those whom the system has historically disenfranchised. These two ideas are often intertwined, each with the goal of creating schools were all students can reach their full academic potential.

Banks (2008) stated "A major goal of multicultural education is to create equal educational opportunities for students from different racial, ethnic, language, and social-groups" (p. 120). In order to accomplish this goal, multicultural education would provide the tools that educators needed to successfully navigate any difficulties that would arise from having diverse student populations. Like Lomotey (1989) before him, Banks (2008) saw cultural diversity as an asset. By interacting with other cultures, individuals can better appreciate their own culture. By appreciating other cultures, individuals become better global citizens helping to create a more equitable and just society (Banks, 2008).

Yet under these more lofty goals are the more pragmatic goals of giving students the basic skills, knowledge, attitudes and values needed to be successful beyond school. Operating from this framework, multicultural education is for and beneficial to all students, not just students of color or those who are in the negative end of the achievement gap. Multicultural education has been a part of the educational landscape for several decades, but the achievement gap persists. To address this gap, school leaders must realize their abilities to change school culture and utilize tools available for them to sustain those changes.

Principal as Agents of Change

> *"For administrators who argue that they "have always treated everyone equally," the realization that equality does not necessarily mean identical treatment but treatment that listens to, recognizes, and affirms unique student needs and backgrounds can be powerful" (Gardiner and Enomoto, 2006, p. 581).*

Historically, education in this country was based on a Eurocentric model. As society evolved, so did the educational opportunities for nonwhites. But as more nonwhites took advantage of these opportunities, tensions among Whites and aggression toward nonwhites rose. Many systemic practices and policies were utilized to thwart the efforts of those interested in educating Blacks (Anderson, 1988). Most notable among these efforts were the Jim Crow laws

of the south that provided "separate, but equal" accommodations for nonwhite students. In reality, these arrangements were anything but equal. Yet, ironically, it was under these conditions that African-American children felt valued and appreciated for who they were racially and culturally.

With the passing of *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954), schools across the country slowly began to integrate. With the implementation of integration, particularly in the south, many African American principals lost their jobs or were demoted as a consequence of the merging of schools (Delpit, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2004). Although it was not known by this name at the time, the administrators and teachers in these pre-*Brown* schools embraced multiculturalism in the classroom. Their willingness to celebrate African American culture and include it in every aspect of schooling is the primary reason that those children felt valued in the pre-*Brown* area. With this reduction of African Americans in the workforce to accommodate Whites, the emphasis on multiculturalism in the classroom disappeared. It wasn't until the 1970s that some researchers began to notice the lack of diversity and advocated for the inclusion of different perspectives in the classroom (McCray & Beachum, 2010), but this was not a top priority for all school administrators and therefore remains an area of deficit in schools to this day.

The demographics of American schools continue to change. America is a very diverse country and classrooms have begun to reflect this reality. The challenge for school leaders is to adjust their modus operandi to reflect the dynamics in their schools. The managerial aspects of running a school have become an art form. But within these parameters, one vital aspect is missing. The cultural diversity of the students being served is being systematically overlooked (Banks, 2008).

Making multicultural education a top priority in schools goes beyond mere structural changes to curriculum. It requires a change in school culture and buy-in from all stakeholders. Deficit thinking by school administrators and teachers adds an additional layer to this complex problem (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). If there were one individual who is central to the building of school culture and the implementation of policy it would be the school principal. As Khalifa (2012) notes, "principals who understand their students can better serve them" (p. 430). Principals are in the unique position of being able to mold school culture (Riehl, 2000). African American children, like all children, achieve academic success when working with teachers who acknowledge their culture and make their culture a part of the curriculum (Lomotey, 1989).

McCray and Beachum (2010) noted that during the height of the integration movement, schools in this country were making efforts to address the cultural deficiencies in the curriculum being taught in the classroom. The multiculturalist of the 1970s wanted to make sure that the perspectives of not only African Americans, but also other minority groups and women were included in the curriculum. Yet in the Deep South, an area marred by its historical roots in discrimination against Blacks, the administrators were resistant to change and reluctant to embrace the idea of multiculturalism.

McCray and Beachum (2010) explored multiculturalism education in theory, specifically looking at principal's theoretical understanding of multicultural education. In an earlier study on principals' perceptions of multiculturalism, McCray, Wright and Beachum (2004) explored how demographic factors such as school size, racial make-up of school and socioeconomic status of the school, influenced principals. While these studies focused on the principal's perceptions and understandings of multicultural education, Riehl (2000) looked specifically at the role that principals play in supporting multicultural education. The author's goal was to use theoretical

and empirical research to add to the discourse on school administrators' role in promoting the embracing of diversity in schools. She chose principals because of the unique positional power that they hold as building level administrators. McCray, Wright and Beachum (2004) noted that it was the principal who "sets the tone of the school culture and provides the proper vision as to the direction of the institution" (p. 111).

Riehl (2000) posited that it was the activities of principals that went the farthest to build inclusive schools for diverse students. In great detail, she explored three primary tasks that principals engaged in during the course of their work in schools. These tasks were fostering new meanings about diversity, promoting inclusive practices within schools and building connections between schools and communities.

Looking at schools from an organizational theory perspective, the beliefs and values that are upheld in schools go a long way toward building the culture and practices of schools. But those cultures and practices will only remain in schools as long as individuals continue to value and believe in them. As Riehl (2000) noted,

> "Schools are, in effect, constructed around the meanings that people hold about them. Real organizational change occurs not simply when technical changes in structure and process are undertaken, but when persons inside and outside of the school construct new understandings about what the change means" (p. 60).

The principals can lead meaningful change in schools by engaging in specific tasks like "day-to-day management of meanings," "mediation of conflict" and "the cognitive task of resolving contradictions within one's own ideological perspective" (Riehl, 2000, p. 60).

Riehl (2000) noted that changing culture was a direct matter while promoting inclusive instructional practices was more indirect. She pointed out that there was very little research connecting instructional leadership and diversity and learning directly. So using literature with a

much broader scope, she discussed two key subtasks related to promoting inclusive instructional practices: promoting inclusive teaching and learning and molding inclusive school cultures.

The focus on the role of school administrators as instructional leaders evolved out of the "effective school movement" of the 1970s. Although a great deal of the research that emerged during this time was questioned, the conclusions presented held merit for many scholars. Using instructional leadership as a methodology to improve schools was one such conclusion. Riehl (2000) noted that effective principals would carefully hire and socialize new teachers, keep teachers away from interruptions in their classrooms, give meaningful feedback on their teaching and help make continuous improvement the norm; with the goal being to increase teacher satisfaction (Rosenholtz, 1985). Professional learning communities, culturally relevant teaching and "the sociology of education" (Riehl, 2000, p. 64) were also presented as avenues that principals could incorporate into a plan to promote inclusive teaching and learning.

Riehl (2000) did not find much literature written on the topic of molding inclusive school cultures. What had been written focused on multicultural and culturally relevant teaching. Changing the school culture to be more inclusive of different types of diversity was the goal for principals in this area. Riehl (2000) presented a detailed list of themes that recurred throughout the literature. Items such as: "embracing interethnic conflict," "holding high expectations for all students," and "encouraging teachers to examine their practices for possible race, class or gender biases" (p. 65).

The final task that Riehl (2000) explored was that of "building connections between schools and communities" (p. 66). Schools do not operate in a vacuum. Therefore, the goal of an effective school leader is to build relationships with organizations that add to the school in a positive manner and avoid relationships with organizations that will have a negative impact on

the school. These organizations will serve a variety of purposes and fill a variety of needs for diverse students and their families. School leaders must be able to negotiate these complex relationships without losing sight of their own goals and missions.

Expanding on this idea, Khalifa (2012) explored the impact of the principal as community leader on student academic and social success. His focus was exclusively on Black schools and Black school leaders. As a part of his exploration, he incorporated cultural and historical aspects of school-community relationships in African American communities. He posited that Black leaders of segregated schools before the *Brown vs. Board* (1954) decision serve as models of how best to build school-community relations. In the pre-*Brown* era, Black schools and the communities that they served held a symbiotic relationship.

Khalifa (2012) chose an alternative high school that had proven successful in dealing with its marginalized student population. His findings echoed the findings of others by positioning the principal as an essential component in building a school culture that respects and celebrates the culture of the students in the school. There were three leadership behaviors that the principal engaged in that helped advocate for positive school-community overlap: personal exchanges with students and parents, unannounced home visits and mentoring or confronting exclusionary teachers.

The school was an extension of the community. All felt welcome and the community was involved on many levels. Home visits were very much a part of the normal operation of the school, being conducted by the principal and a community liaison. The school visits went beyond academics and most often centered on personal aspects of students' and parents' lives. In the school, it was of the utmost importance to the principal that students not only felt included, but, indeed, were included in the learning process. This principal did not hesitate to confront

those teachers that did not embrace inclusivity in their classrooms. Confrontation was balanced by the offer of support in helping teachers understand the value of a school culture based on inclusion (Khalifa, 2012).

This principal was also willing to engage in advocacy for community causes. By being willing to advocate for causes that were deemed important to the community, the principal established trust. The principal in this study showed unwavering commitment to student and community advocacy. The principal saw his role as a school and community leader, as well as an advocate for his students. Khalifa (2012) posited that it is the fostering of these school-community relationships that gives school leaders the wherewithal to use their positional power to influence a positive change in the way students behave and perform academically.

Also focusing on urban settings, Gardiner and Enomoto (2006) looked into the practices of principals who led culturally diverse schools. The study followed six principals in an effort to explore the idea of multicultural leadership. The work of Riehl (2000) provided the theoretical framework by which the authors defined multicultural leadership and discussed the process for achieving it.

Gardiner and Enomoto (2006) used in-depth interview with principals to learn more about their daily work as it specifically related to dealing with issues surrounding the increasing diversity in their respective schools, their views on the subject of multicultural education, and their preparation to do such work. District administrators were interviewed to learn more about the ways in which they supported principals.

None of the principals were explicitly prepared for leading a culturally diverse school and had not received any training from their work in an administration preparation program. Each principal dealt with students and issues on an individual basis. Multicultural leadership was not

a primary focus for some of the school leaders, while it was for others. Some principals did not see the diversity in their school as an issue while others saw it as a critical component to the education of all students.

These principals fostered new meanings for diversity in their schools by having high expectations for each child, changing the perspective on cultural deficiency, using communication to develop understanding and helping new immigrants socialize to their new school communities (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006). The principals that were more in line with multicultural leadership celebrated their low-income and English Language Learners (ELL) students and went so far as to place these students in advanced classes. These principals help change their teachers' acknowledged and unacknowledged biases toward students. In one school, the principal, as instructional leader, helped teachers develop new approaches to teaching these students. In another school, the principal focused on the basic needs of the students. And in yet another school, the principal relied on the few teachers in the building that were from a different cultural background to peer-educate teachers. One principal became a learner, listening to his students and community leaders in order to foster meaningful change in the school. Principals sought to learn about their new students' cultures as a part of the process to better help students and families transition to the U.S. system.

Also, these principals promoted inclusive instructional practices in their schools by being mindful during hiring, effectively using multicultural displays, peer tutoring and inclusive educational practices and using multi-culturally proficient instruction (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006). Principals were unhappy with the fact that they had to fire teachers that were from other cultural and ethnic backgrounds. These schools lacked diversity among the teaching staff, but diversity was found in one school's kitchen staff. At three of the four elementary schools,

multiculturalism was evident in displays around the school, but was not the primary focus of the displays. The same three elementary schools saw a positive result with the pairing of ELLs with English speaking students. But at the secondary level, there was tension between ELLs and the general population. Unfortunately, Gardiner and Enomoto (2006) found that principals reported that they left multi-culturally proficient instruction to the teachers or did not fully understand the concept of cultural proficiency.

For the principals in Gardiner and Enomoto's (2006) study, building positive connections between the school and the surrounding community focused on early education opportunities and intervention, parental involvement, community involvement, and partnering with social service agencies. Some principals utilized pre-schools and all-day kindergarten programs to offer a valuable service to parents and help strengthen the parent-school relationship. Multicultural leaders got parents involved with the school. These leaders encouraged parental pride and involvement. Many principals opened the school doors for use to a variety of groups. And finally, some principals, realizing that their students had needs beyond their own capabilities, sought out the agencies that these families were using and partnered with them to help families that were in need.

Becoming a multicultural leader for many of these principals was an evolving process. At the onset of this study, the different principals were in different places in their understanding of and approach to multicultural leadership. Participants noted the need for professional development in this area. And while these principals worked toward being an effective leader by trying to embrace the diversity in their schools, there were clear indicators that some principals still held on to ideas about education that were predicated on a monocultural educational system.

One indicator of this was some principals' profession to be colorblind. Gardiner and Enomoto (2006) referred to several studies that outlined the negative effects of such a position. It is when teachers and principals embrace, acknowledge and celebrate the cultural diversity that students bring to the classroom that students achieve academic success as indicated by test scores. By having an inclusive attitude and approach to teaching, multiculturalism will be reflected in pedagogy and curriculum. The authors summarize the importance of this best with the following: "All students, including Caucasians, are better educated when they are able to communicate cross-culturally and are prepared for the pluralistic societal and work environments that characterize our nation and world" (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006, p. 579).

As Katz (1999) looked into the specific role that the principal has in creating positive school culture, she reminded her readers that, "Knowing who one's students are, then, is a precursor to developing the kinds of beliefs and expectations that will create the change needed to accommodate diversity" (p. 497). In this qualitative case study, two schools from the Leading for Diversity Project were chosen. The project focused on finding "proactive leadership approaches that reduce interethnic tensions and conflicts and create more positive interethnic relationships (Henze, 2001)" (p. 498). The two schools were elementary schools, located in large metropolitan areas with students from low-income and immigrant households. Interethnic conflict abounded at both schools and the principals were charged with turning around these school environments. Both principals succeeded in this task by engaging in a multitude of tasks that centered on creating a sense of community by having all stakeholders involved in the evolution of the school.

Katz (1999) also reminded us that a re-imagining of the curricula would not bring about the necessary changes needed for children of diverse backgrounds to succeed. There needed to

be a transformation in the way that administrators and teachers viewed these students. It was unfair to ask students from a myriad of cultural backgrounds to conform to school norms that were established without their needs in mind. Instead, it was imperative that schools adjust to meet the needs of these students.

As Katz (1999) discussed the findings of her two schools, she noted that it was building relationships from "respect and knowledge" (p. 510) that helped change these schools into more accepting environments. Like the principals discussed earlier, these two principals engaged in the leadership behaviors that placed the needs of their diverse students at the forefront of their daily work. Having high expectations for all students and building bridges between the school and community helped students feel valued and helped parents and students be motivated to engage in school in a positive manner.

All of these principals have moved away from the idea of assimilation, an idea that many scholars have acknowledged as a primary goal of the American education system (Banks, 2008; Delpit, 2012; Riehl, 2000). Resistance to the idea of assimilation led to the marginalization of students. These students did not fit into the mold that had worked for so many years before. These students were different. They learned differently. They were from different cultures. They were "the other." In working with marginalized students two areas of research seem to dominate the field: social justice and cultural competence.

Social Justice Leadership

Social justice is an emerging area of research in the field of educational leadership. With decades of theoretical or conceptual and empirical writings available, there are still some glaring omissions in the field. One of the main reasons for this is the mere complexity of the subject. In discussing the complexity of studying social justice, Furman (2012) discussed "three major

facets of social justice – distributive, cultural and associational" justice (p. 193). Within these facets, researchers have produced valuable, yet sometimes contradictory ideas about how to move the social justice agenda forward. The goal for Furman (2012) was to move the conversation on social justice from the theoretical and empirical research that had been done toward the practical aspects of social justice leadership, specifically in regards to leadership preparation programs.

As the body of work on social justice grows, so does a wide array of meanings and focuses. Different stakeholders shape social justice to meet their own agenda. Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005) worked to bring clarity and focus to this emerging area of educational leadership. With these different meanings and agendas, school leaders find themselves trapped under well meaning, but misguided policies set by others, policies that hinder the creation of just schools. So with this in mind, their goals were to examine the current conversation around social justice in the field of educational administration and discuss the implication of revamping preparation programs. Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005) noted that enough had been written on the topic of social justice to provide a solid foundation for scholars to begin moving from theory to practice.

Although schools have changed drastically over the years, school leaders are still being prepared in the same manner. Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005) identified four issues that were affecting social justice leadership: the standards movement, the selection of leaders, the achievement gap and the privatization of education. They posited that if reform does not occur in these areas, the inequities that plague schools will continue to exist.

The Culturally Proficient Leader

> *"The culturally proficient leader seeks to add to the knowledge base of culturally proficient practices by conducting research, developing new culturally appropriate approaches, and taking advantage of opportunities to increase his or her awareness and knowledge of others. Culturally*

proficient leaders unabashedly advocate for culturally proficient practices in all arenas" (Lindsey, Nuri-Robins, and Terrell, 2003, p. 91).

Each year, the United States of America celebrates independence from British rule. The first settlers represented many different cultural groups with various hopes and dreams for their new lives in a new land. This was the hallmark of the founding of this country. This is still true for every family that decides to make the United States of America their new home. However, for many of the children in these families, as they become students in the American education system, the American dream quickly evolves into a nightmare.

According to the 2010 census, some 43% of school-aged children are English language learners. They represent a 51% increase in ELL students since the 1997-98 school year (Batalova & McHugh, 2010). These students are increasingly making our schools more diverse. But diversity is not merely about language, it goes much deeper than that. These students are individuals from individual households that bring with them a world of cultural experiences. As Lindsey, Robins and Terrell (2003) noted, the educator who is culturally proficient demonstrates "an understanding of the cacophony of diverse cultures each person may experience in the school setting" (p. 14).

The question then remains: How are the school leaders of these diverse schools preparing the teachers and staff to best support these and all students? One potential answer is the idea of cultural competence. The cultural competence of those who work with culturally diverse groups has gained interest among many scholars across several disciplines.

Medical research has been a pioneer on the topic of cultural competence. Medical training programs offer class on cultural competence as a part of their studies (Crandall, George, Marion & Davis, 2003). Nurses, counselors and doctors around the globe are being challenged to take cultural differences into consideration when interacting with patients. In the field of

education, initially, researchers focused on the development of cultural competence for pre-service teachers (Taylor, 2010). In recent years, researchers, such as Lindsey and Terrell (2009), have begun to broaden the scope of cultural competence to leadership.

Early pioneers in the field of cultural competence were Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs (1989). Their work with Child and Adolescent Service System Program (CASSP) delved deeply into the development of the idea of cultural competence and its role in the mental health field. In their work, they identified five elements of cultural competence. They proposed that an organization that is culturally competent is one that displayed five essential elements of cultural competence at all levels.

One of the goals of the CASSP was to work with children and youth of color that had severe emotional issues. This goal was in response to cultural and racial bias that people of color were dealing with in the mental health system in this country. In their monograph, *Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care: A Monograph of Effective Services for Minority Children Who Are Severely Emotionally Disturbed*, Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs (1989) sought to provide a theoretical framework to make the mental health services that these adolescents and their families received culturally relevant.

By empowering these families, Cross, et al. (1989) realized that meaningful change could occur within the mental health system. Different cultures have different needs. The authors desired to provide an alternative perspective for practitioners and policy makers, a perspective that valued cultural diversity. For the authors, the key to this shift was cultural competence. It was noted that, historically, children of color had received different, even detrimental, treatment by the care system as compared to their White counterparts simply because cultural factors were

ignored. The authors identified five issues that affected the mental health care delivery system: policy, training, resources, practice and research.

Cross, et al. (1989) defined cultural competences as "a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (p. 13). They noted that becoming culturally competent was a process and a goal that organizations worked toward achieving. A continuum was presented for cultural competence (Fig. 1). It was suggested that organizations first assess where they are on the continuum to determine the needed steps for moving toward the goal of cultural competence.

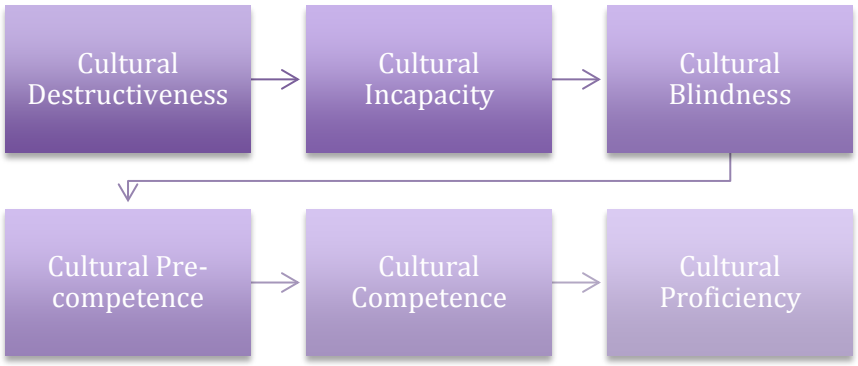

Figure 1. The Cultural Competency Scale (Adapted from Cross, et al., 1989)

Changes in attitudes, policies, and practices were presented as being essential for agencies to move toward cultural competence. For the authors, a culturally competent system of care consisted of culturally competent organizations and people. Five elements were given as being essential to a system becoming culturally competent. These elements were valuing diversity, having the capacity for cultural self-assessment, consciousness of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact, having institutionalized cultural knowledge, and adaptation to diversity.

Bustamante, Nelson, and Onwuegbuzie (2009) offered an operational definition of cultural competence specific to schools: schoolwide cultural competence was defined in terms of "how well a school's policies, programs, practices, artifacts, and rituals reflect the needs and experiences of diverse groups" (p. 798) who interact with the school in a variety of capacities. Although the study of culture is not a new phenomenon, it has not been a subject that has historically been a part of the educational leadership lexicon. Anthropology and sociology have been pioneers in this regard (Ladson-Billings, 2012), but, as previously stated, it was the work of others in psychology, health care and organizational theory that provided the groundwork for the field of education in general and educational leadership specifically. The changing demographics of society were the driving force behind this past research. Diverse demographics are nowhere more evident than in the American classroom.

Bustamante, et al. (2009) goals were to present school leaders with a tool to assess the cultural competence at the school level. The School-Wide Cultural Competence Observation Checklist (SCCOC) was one such tool. The checklist was designed for use with other assessment or data collection tools such as surveys and interviews. Educational leadership scholars have established that a clear understanding of school culture leads to effective school leadership, that social justice leadership ensures academic success for all students and that cultural responsiveness has a positive influence on academic success and student engagement (Bustamante, et al., 2009). Yet even with the plethora of literature and empirical research on the subject, school leaders remain at a loss as to how to go about identifying aspects of culture that hinder students from diverse backgrounds with diverse needs.

Hansuvadha and Slater (2012) found that there was a paucity of empirical research that highlighted principals' roles in enacting inclusive education for diverse student populations, but

noted that the principal was the one individual who had the greatest influence on the development and sustainability of a successful program. If culturally diverse students are to receive a viable education, it is up to school leaders to embody attitudes that celebrate cultural diversity.

Yet, when studying two principals in culturally diverse settings, Hansuvadha and Slater (2012) found that although these principals demonstrated attitudes and beliefs that could be placed at the highest levels of the cultural competence continuum, organizational and cultural norms that were established long before they assumed their leadership role hindered the work that they were attempting to engage in: creating a welcoming environment for culturally diverse students. These obstacles caused these principals to consider leaving the field. For these administrators, it was a challenge to support an institution that they no longer saw as valid, an institution that was not willing to change. Change at the organizational level is a daunting task. As Schein (2006) noted, "If we understand the dynamics of culture, we will be less likely to be puzzled, irritated and anxious when we encounter the unfamiliar and seemingly irrational behavior of people in organizations, and we will have a deeper understanding not only of why various groups of people or organizations can be so different but also why it is so hard to change them" (p. 10).

Lindsey, et al. (2003) continued the work of Cross, et al. (1989) by focusing exclusively on schools and school leaders. Motivated by their personal experiences, their work is a reflection of their time as students during the pre-*Brown* era and their careers as teachers, administrators, and educational leadership professors during the post-*Brown* era. Their first-hand knowledge of the changes that the American education system has endured over the past

few decades gives them a perspective that, together with their passion to see all students reach their full potential, makes their work relevant to the work done here.

Lindsey, et al. (2009) discussed cultural proficiency as a "mindset for how we interact with all people, irrespective of their cultural membership" (p. 21). Being a culturally proficient educational leader impacts interactions not only with students, but also with communities, educators and staff members. For Lindsey, et al. (2003), "If teachers and administrators have not been prepared to teach, lead, or work with people who differ from them, then the educational leader must take the initiative and create a learning community so they can master these skills on the job" (p. 16). Culturally proficient leaders have four tools at their disposal to lead their schools to becoming more culturally competent organizations: The Continuum, The Essential Elements, The Guiding Principles, and The Barriers.

The Continuum gives individuals a common language to discuss policies, practices and behaviors that could be helpful or harmful to schools. The Essential Elements provide guiding standards for behaviors and practices. The Guiding Principles serve as core values and The Barriers help address obstacles to change.

The Continuum contains six phases: cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, cultural precompetence, cultural competence and cultural proficiency. Individuals who identify with the first three points on the continuum hold a deficit point of view towards those outside of their own culture (Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell, 2003). A culturally destructive leader attempts to remove the culture of others. Cultural incapacity is marked by the leader's attempts to discredit other cultures or prove that other cultures are wrong. A culturally blind leader does not acknowledge the culture of others.

Individuals who identify with the last three points on the continuum hold the cultures of others in a higher regard (Lindsey, Robins and Terrell, 2003). At the level of cultural precompetence, a leader acknowledges that there are things that they do not know when it comes to working with diverse groups. A culturally competent leader is guided by personal values and works to ensure that school has inclusive policies. The culturally proficient leader is an advocate for life-long learning and sees the school as a gateway to creating a more socially just community.

Lindsey, et al. (2009) identified five Essential Elements as standards for interacting with other cultural groups. The use of these essential elements reflects an organization or individual reaching the point of cultural competence on the Continuum. Before reaching this point, an organization or individual is not prepared to engage in the work needed to bring about meaningful change (Lindsey, et al., 2009). At the core, the Essential Elements are about differences. The five Essential Elements are given as assess culture, value diversity, manage the dynamics of difference, adapt to diversity and institutionalize cultural knowledge.

There are five Guiding Principles to cultural competency (Table 1). The first principle acknowledges that culture is everywhere and everyone participates. Identifying with the dominant culture often means that you are unaware of the privilege that is associated with membership to this group. The second principle requires an honest look at how well policies align with practices. Are members of the non-dominant group forced to conform to the dominant group's cultural expectations in order to succeed? The third principle requires that the individual as well as the group identity of individuals be acknowledged and celebrated, not degraded. The fourth principle acknowledges that individuals identify with multiple cultures. The fifth

principle requires members of the dominant cultural group to not impose expectations on members of the non-dominant group. Different perspectives do not equate to wrong perspectives.

Table 1
Guiding Principles of Cultural Competency

Culture is everywhere
Aligning policies with practices
Individual as well as the group identity of individuals is acknowledge, not degraded
Individuals identify with multiple cultures
Dominant group does not impose expectation on non-dominant group

Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell (2003) explored two barriers to cultural competency: systemic privilege and resistance to change. Members of the dominant group don't feel a need for societal or organizational change. Change is an uncomfortable process. In order to achieve cultural competence, all stakeholders must be willing to relinquish old mental models and embrace the diversity of perspectives that emerge when multiple cultures are gathered together.

As Lindsey, et al. (2009) noted, "The tools of cultural proficiency provide a framework for individual educators and school communities to address disparities in access and achievement. Educators engaged in the journey to cultural proficiency learn of the impact their expectations have on all students" (p. 72). Again, it is the educators who have the greatest impact on students' experiences in school. Formal and informal school leaders who embrace the tools of cultural proficiency are more likely to have positive influences on these students. Using a framework of cultural competency, the goal of the work done here is to further explore the dynamic between the cultural competence of the school principals and the academic achievement of students.

Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed previous literature that explored the history of the African American experience in American education, the impact that the achievement gap has

had on African American students, the principal's role in helping students achieve academic success and the impact that a culturally competent principal can have on reaching this goal.

The next chapter, Methods, details the methodology used in this study. A detailed description of participants is included. The instrument used in this study is also described as well as the reliability and validity of the survey. The methods used to collect data and the analyses used on the data are also explained.

CHAPTER III. METHODS

Introduction

Since the 1980s, cultural competency has become an essential part of the educational researcher's lexicon. With the initial work of Cross, et al. (1989), scholars have increasingly explored the definition and impact of cultural competency on those who work in culturally diverse settings. Simultaneously, educational researchers have worked to better understand the achievement gap and the impact it has on culturally diverse learners. This study finds itself at the crossroads of these two conundrums: What impact, if any, could cultural competency have on the closing of the achievement gap?

The purpose of this study was to explore the degree to which principals' reported cultural competence is related to academic achievement of African American students at the school level. Principals are one component of this complex problem-solution conundrum. Yet, the principalship carries with it positional power that gives them access to a myriad of stakeholders. This level of access can be a powerful influence on school culture (Riehl, 2000).

The research methodology used in this study is outlined in detail in this chapter. The first section states the research questions. The next section discusses the participants in this study. The research instrument used in this study is described. Data collection and analysis procedures as well as limitations to the study are detailed in the final sections of this chapter.

Research Questions

The following research questions frame this study:

1. What are the psychometric properties of The Cultural Competency Self-Assessment©?
2. To what degree are principals culturally competent according to The Cultural Competency Self-Assessment©?

3. What demographics characteristics, such as years of experience, race or age, are the best predictors for identifying a principal's cultural competence?
4. To what extent is the school's achievement gap related to principal's perceived level of cultural competence?

Participants

The population for this study was principals of elementary, middle and high schools in several states in the southeastern United States. Using state department of education websites, email addresses for principals were collected. Both male and female principals participated in this study. There was no limitation on the numbers of years of leadership experience. Therefore, there were some principals in the first year, while others had over10 years of experience leading schools. The participants self-identified as either White or Black and represented both male and female genders. Each grade level of school was represented in the sample. Participation in this study was voluntary.

Instrument Development

Description of the Instrument

Several instruments were considered for use in this study. This study is focused on the role that principals' cultural competence plays in the academic achievement of African American students. Therefore, finding a survey that was specific to schools was a top priority. The work of Lindsey, Nuri-Robins and Terrell (2003), which focused on researching cultural proficiency, aligned well with the criteria that had been set for a survey.

The Cultural Competency Self-Assessment© is a tool that Lindsey, et al. (2003) developed for use in their work with schools. This self-assessment served as Section I of the final survey instrument that was emailed to participants. Section I of the survey consisted of five

sections with a total of 30 Likert-type questions with a five point Likert type scale. The ordinal scale consisted of the following: (i) Not at all like me, (ii) Not much like me, (iii) Somewhat like me, (iv) Quite a lot like me, and (v) Just like me. The five sections aligned with the five Essential Elements as discussed previously: assess culture, value diversity, manage the dynamics of difference, adapt to diversity and institutionalize cultural knowledge.

Section II of the survey collected demographic information about the principals. For these questions, factors that were thought to possibly have an influence on the development of cultural competency were included. Participants were asked questions regarding their age, gender, race, and length of time as principal. There were also asked questions regarding cultural competency training and cross-cultural experience. This demographical information was utilized to address the one of the research question of this study: to see if any demographic factors influenced the development of cultural competency in principals.

The questions in Section I of the survey addressed the five essential elements of cultural proficiency as outlined in Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders (Lindsey, Nuri-Robins, and Terrell, 2003). The first seven questions were designed to assess how principals assess culture within their schools. The next seven questions were designed to assess how principals valued diversity in their schools. Six questions were designed to assess how principals managed the dynamics of difference at school. Five questions were designed to assess how principals adapt to diversity within schools. The final five questions were designed to assess how cultural knowledge was institutionalized in the schools.

Using Qualtrics, a secure online assessment tool that Auburn University is licensed to use, I distributed the survey to participants. In decided the best methodology for issuing the

survey to participants, an electronic version of the survey seemed the most time efficient and economical option.

Content Validity

To establish content validity, three current and former school principals were asked to provide feedback on survey items. Three principals were sent electronic versions of the survey via email. On an individual basis, each principal was invited to share their insights on the validity of survey items. These principals had on average over thirty years of experience in the K-12 public school setting. These individuals reviewed items for content appropriateness of content and readability. Suggestions for minor changes for clarity were added to the final instrument.

Reliability

Cornbach's alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of items on the instrument. Since in this study there was only one survey administered to one group, internal consistency was the most appropriate method of determining reliability (Ross and Shannon, 2008).

Data Collection Procedures

An information letter (Appendix A) was sent via email to the principals of the selected schools. This letter informed the principals about the purpose of the study, their role in the study, and let them know that a link to the survey would be sent within the next few days. Dillman, Smyth and Christian (2009) noted that advance notices of this type aid in increasing response rates. After a few days, the cover letter (Appendix B) was emailed along with the link to the survey. This letter re-emphasized the purpose of the study and the importance of their role in the study. This letter also reassured participants that their responses would remain confidential. A final email (Appendix C) was sent to participants, thanking them if they had

completed the survey and reminding them to complete the survey, if they had not done so (Dillman, Smyth & Christian, 2009). After this final email, the link to the online survey remained open for a few additional weeks.

Data Analysis

Data were organized and analyzed to address the research questions that guided this study. The computer program, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 22.0 was used to accomplish this.

Question 1: What are the psychometric properties of The Cultural Competency Self-Assessment©? To address this question, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted using the questions from Section I. The outcome of the EFA was used to determine the underlying structure of the survey.

Question 2: To what degree are principals culturally competent? To address this question, the questions from Section I were analyzed for each principal. For each construct, each principal was assigned a value. The five final values were used to assign each principal to one of the six levels of cultural competency.

Question 3: What demographics characteristics, such as years of experience, race or age, are the best predictors for identifying a principal's cultural competence? To address this question, the questions from Section II were analyzed for each principal. The level of cultural competency assigned to individual principals will be compared to the reported background information.

Question 4: To what extent is the school's achievement gap related to the principal's perceived level cultural competence? To address this question, publicly available achievement

data from each school was analyzed and then compared to individual principal's level of cultural competence. This achievement data was aggregated by race.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, the generalizability of this study is limited to the southeastern part of the United States. Secondly, the sample size was small. Thirdly, principals were self-reporting their level of cultural competency. Because of the potentially polarize nature of a concept like cultural competence, participants may engage in social desirability will completing the survey. With many of the participating schools being located in rural and suburban areas, there is the possibility that not much cultural diversity will be present among the students within the school. Since the survey was administered online, there was no opportunity for participants to clear up any misunderstanding regarding any survey questions. And lastly, cultural competency is not a static dynamic.

Because only a few schools in a few states within the southeastern chose to participate in this study, at best the results of this study can be generalized to this region. Nationally, there are over 100,000 principals. In this study, only a fraction of that group was surveyed. Social desirability can potentially prevent participants from answering questions honestly. Although several mentions of the confidential nature of the research were made in the literature and in the actual survey, there may still have been hesitancy on the part of participants to answer truthfully.

Being in the southeast, there are still many culturally segregated neighborhoods and schools. It would not be uncommon for a principal to lead schools that lack cultural diversity in any meaningful way. In these cases, participants a limited worldview could potential influence their ability to fully comprehend the importance of research of this nature. Specifically, as participants are completing the online survey, misunderstandings could arise that the research

could quickly explain. But because of the distance, it is up to the participants to clear up any misunderstanding and their interpretation will color their responses. Lastly, cultural competency is a situational paradigm. That is, one is only as culturally competent as their last interaction with someone who is culturally different. Cultural interactions influence the level of cultural competency for individuals.

Summary

In this study, the main objective was to determine the extent to which principal's cultural competence impacts the academic performance of African American students. Using the survey instrument developed by Lindsey, Nuri-Robins and Terrell (2003) to measure cultural proficiency, data were collected from participants. As a part of this study, the validity and reliability was explored for the instrument. An electronic version of the survey was sent to principals. Through Qualtrics, the participants completed the survey. Data were analyzed using SPSS.

CHAPTER IV. MANUSCRIPT 1: THE PSYCHOMETRIC PROPERTIES OF THE CULTURAL COMPETENCY SELF-ASSESSMENT©

Abstract

This present study examines the psychometrics of the Cultural Competency Self-Assessment© which was designed to assess the self-perceived level of cultural competency of individuals. The questionnaire was created by Dr. Kikanza Nuri-Robins as a tool to be utilized in her consulting work with organizations that were engaging in the work of becoming more culturally competent. With her permission, the instrument was sent to public and private school principals in five states located in the southeastern region of the United States. Over 200 surveys were completed. Analysis suggests three factors comprise the instrument. Those factors were subsequently labeled Lead for Change, Embrace Other Cultures, and Aware of Own Culture. For all factors, the reliability coefficients were above .70. This initial investigation yielded promising results. Further research is needed to determine if these results are generalizable to principals outside of the southeast.

Introduction

The focus of schooling is children. With each year, the American classroom becomes more and more diverse (Delpit, 2012). With the numbers of cultures represented in schools growing, it is up to school leaders, both formal and informal, to be as culturally competent as possible when dealing with the various stakeholders involved with the education of American children. As noted by Lindsey, Robins and Terrell (2003), culturally proficient leaders demonstrate "an understanding of the cacophony of diverse cultures each person may experience in the school setting" (p. 14).

Although the idea of cultural competency is not new, as a part of the educational leadership lexicon, it is a nascent field of study. The genesis of cultural competence is credited to the work of Cross, Bazron, Dennis and Isaacs (1989). Their work in the field of mental health refocused the training of medical professionals across numerous disciplines. To this day, medical schools offer students some level of training on cultural competence (Crandall, George, Marion & Davis, 2003).

Cross, et al. (1989) defined cultural competence as "a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (p. 13). As they noted, becoming culturally competent is a process and a goal that organizations or individuals work toward achieving. Five Essential Elements were presented as being critical to the development of cultural competence. Those elements are assessing culture, valuing diversity, managing the dynamic of diversity, adapting to diversity and institutionalizing cultural knowledge.

It is the work of Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell (2003) that broadens the idea of cultural competency beyond the counselors and the doctor's office. Through their work, they introduced cultural competency, or more specifically, cultural proficiency to the field of education. Lindsey, et al. (2009) referred to the Essential Elements as standards for interacting with other cultural groups. Utilizing the Elements is an indicator of organizations and individuals working toward becoming more culturally competent. For schools, it will take leadership to implement behaviors and practices to move the entire school community in that direction.

Principals are in a unique position. As school leaders, they play a critical role in the development and sustainability of the school milieu. As McCray, Wright and Beachum (2004) noted, a principal "sets the tone of the school culture and provides the proper vision as to the direction of the institution" (p. 111). A principal's understanding of the cultures that are represented among the student body is the first step. The activities of principals go the farthest toward building inclusive schools (Riehl, 2000).

America continues to be a melting pot. The reality of this dynamic is no more evident than in the American classroom. Students representing various cultures from around the world have chosen the United States as their home. As these students come together with the common goal of learning, the cultural norms that they bring with them cause them to approach the goal in a variety of ways (Tatum, 1997). The school leader plays a critical role in creating a welcoming environment for all of these students so that each one can reach their full potential. In response to this new paradigm, assessment tools must be developed and validated so that valid and reliable conclusions can be drawn about the relationship between student success and the level of cultural competency for school leaders. This paper discusses the development and psychometric properties of the survey used in a study of principals in the Southeast.

Characteristics of a Culturally Competent Leader

Culture is a complex paradigm. It is a set of behaviors that individuals acquire through their lived experience. For children and adults alike, there are several factors that influence the development of these behaviors (Tatum, 1997). Our culture determines how we interact with those around us. Within the same cultural groups, interactions are often positive. It is when we interact with those outside our own cultural group that a challenge is presented. These are the interactions where the level of cultural competence a leader has becomes paramount.

It is a process to become culturally competent and the Cultural Competence Continuum gives us a common language to discuss just how culturally competent an individual is at any given moment. There are six distinct points on the continuum: destructiveness, incapacity, blindness, precompetence, competence and proficiency. Destructiveness, incapacity and blindness reflect those individuals who hold a deficit point of view towards those who belong to a different culture. Precomptence, competence and proficiency reflect those individuals who hold others in the highest regard. In short, the three former levels of competency reflect an "us versus them" framework for interaction while the latter encompasses a "we" framework. It is the latter that leads to inclusive work and learning environments (Lindsey, et al., 2003).

In order to operate within the positive end of the Continuum, Lindsey, et al. (2003) identified five Essential Elements as standards for interacting with other cultural groups. The use of these essential elements reflects an organization or individual reaching the point of cultural competence on the Continuum. Before reaching this point, an organization or individual is not prepared to engage in the work needed to bring about meaningful change (Lindsey, et al., 2009). At the core, the essential elements are about differences. The five Essential Elements are

given as assess culture, value diversity, manage the dynamics of difference, adapt to diversity and institutionalize cultural knowledge.

Assess Culture

Lindsey, Roberts and CampbellJones (2005) stated that the "culturally proficient leader is introspective and is interested to know the effect that his or her culture has on others" (p. 89). As the culturally competent leaders assess their own culture, they are embracing the characteristics, thought patterns, or mental models, which make them culturally different from others. To assess one's own culture is a critical step to building schools where all students can be successful. The culturally competent leaders can articulate distinguishing characteristics of their own culture and the culture of the school. They are aware of how their culture impacts the lives of those around them and they are in tune to the fact that the culture of the school may affect those in the school with different cultures. This is accomplished by the leader becoming a student of the culture of the school at all levels and using their new found knowledge to lead the school community through the transformation of becoming more culturally competent as a whole.

Value Diversity

The culturally competent school leader honors the cultural diversity in the school not by merely tolerating it, but by celebrating it with those individuals who represent the various cultures found in the school. The school serves as a place of learning not only for students, but faculty, parents and other stakeholders in the community. Lindsey, et al. (2005) emphasized that it is the leaders who "have the moral responsibility to set a positive tone for valuing diversity in schools" (p. 91).

Manage the Dynamics of Difference

Schools have many moving parts. There are numerous technical aspects of the daily operations of the school that need to be managed. To manage the dynamics created by difference, the school leader must utilize conflict as a means to garner deeper understanding of the cultures within the school (Lindsey, et al., 2005). Traditionally, controversy has been avoided. Difference is seen as something to be feared and can lead to division within a community. However, the culturally competent leader sees cultural conflicts as learning opportunities and looks to engage in open and respectful dialogue with the hope of building understanding and policies and practices that will be beneficial to all.

Institutionalizes Cultural Knowledge

The transformation to a culturally competent school requires a systematic approach to continuous learning for students, parents, faculty, and community members. Competent leaders are life-long learners and they provide the professional development opportunities for members of their team. These professional development opportunities focus on the traditional areas such as curriculum and instruction but within these sessions participants focus on how those of a different culture view these concepts. For instance, leaders encourage teachers to incorporate numerous perspectives on various topics into the curriculum. As managers of cultural knowledge, school leaders have the power to decide what is and what is not included (Lindsey, et al., 2005).

Adapt to Diversity

Adapting to diversity is simultaneous with embracing change. Schools are in constant state of flux. Faculty and staff retire or get promoted. Students transfer. New faculty and students take the place of those who move on to new adventures. With these changes, changes in the school culture occur. The culturally competent leader is aware of the changing dynamics

within the school and leads the way of merging the old and the new. As chief learner of the school, culturally competent leaders lead the way during the adoption process. A culturally proficient leader "uses his or her knowledge about the new members of the community, in combination with skills in managing the dynamics of difference, to educate the staff" (Lindsey, et al., 2005, p. 99).

Purpose

The goal of this present study was to assess the level of validity of conclusions drawn from the instrument, The Cultural Competency Self-Assessment©. It was designed to help educators and education professionals engage in meaningful conversations in regards to the development of personal and school-level cultural competency. To be more precise, the purposes of the present study were as follows: (a) assess psychometric characteristics of scores from The Cultural Competency Self-Assessment©, and (b) conduct an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to determine the number and composition of factors comprising The Cultural Competency Self-Assessment©. Given the theoretical foundation of The Cultural Competency Self-Assessment©, an a priori hypothesis was developed:

Consistent with the theoretical development of the instrument, EFA will result in a five-factor solution (assess culture, value diversity, manage the dynamics of difference, adapt to diversity and institutionalize cultural knowledge).

Method

Instrument Construction

The Cultural Competency Self-Assessment© is a handout included in *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders* (Lindsey, Nuri-Robins, & Terrell, 2003). It was developed for use during professional development workshops held in schools and school

systems. As a tool for professional development, the authors encourage users of the book to incorporate the included activities and discussion prompts that are included in the book. Specifically, Dr. Kikanza Nuri-Robins developed the Cultural Competency Self-Assessment© as a specific request while working with an organization that was engaging in the work of becoming a more culturally competent company. The chief executive officer (CEO) of the company wanted something that employees could use to assess their current level of competence (K. Nuri-Robins, personal communication, November 29, 2014).

As an educational leadership professor and researcher who has dedicated her career to the field of cultural competency, the validity of the content of the Cultural Competency Self-Assessment© has been established as Dr. Nuri-Robins is a content expert. To establish content validity for the survey as it would be used in this study, current and former school principals were asked to provide feedback on survey items. Three principals were sent electronic versions of the survey via email. On an individual basis, each principal was invited to share their insights about the relevance of survey items. These principals had on average over thirty years of experience in the K-12 public school setting. These individuals reviewed items for content appropriateness and readability. Suggestions for minor changes for clarity were added to the final instrument.

The Final Version of the Instrument

The questions in Section I of the survey addressed the five Essential Elements of cultural proficiency as outlined in *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders* (Lindsey, Nuri-Robins, & Terrell, 2003). The first seven questions were designed to assess how principals assess culture within their schools. The next seven questions were designed to assess the level of value principals placed on diversity in their schools. Six questions were designed to assess ways

in which principals managed the dynamics of difference at school. Five questions were designed to assess ways in which principals adapt to diversity within schools. The final five questions were designed to assess in what ways cultural knowledge was institutionalized in the schools.

The first part of the survey consisted of five sections with a total of 30 Likert-type questions. Study participants were given five answer choices for each question. The ordinal scale consisted of the following response options: (i) Not at all like me, (ii) Not much like me, (iii) Somewhat like me, (iv) Quite a lot like me, and (v) Just like me. There is no clear consensus about the optimal number of response options on surveys. In choosing the number of responses for participants, Dillman, Smyth and Christian (2009) recommend choosing between four and five options. Since a bipolar scale was used and participants were given the option of being neutral on items, it was decided that five responses was ideal. This was the format used on the original self-assessment. The final survey can be found in Appendix A.

Data Collection Procedures

An information letter (Appendix B) was sent via email to the principals of the selected schools. This letter informed the principals about the purpose of the study, their role in the study, and informed them that a link to the survey would be sent within the next few days. Dillman, et al. (2009) suggested that advance notices of this type aid in increasing response rates. After five days, the cover letter (Appendix C) was emailed along with the link to the survey. This letter re-emphasized the purpose of the study and the importance of their role in the study. This letter also reassured participants that their responses would remain confidential. A final email (Appendix D) was sent to participants, thanking them if they had completed the survey and reminding them to complete the survey, if they had not done so (Dillman, et al. 2009). After this final email, the link to the online survey remained open for an additional month.

Participants

The sample for this study was principals of elementary, middle and high schools in several states in the southeastern United States. Using state department of education websites, email addresses for principals were collected. Both male and female principals participated in this study. There was no limitation on the numbers of years of leadership experience. Therefore, there were some principals in the first year, while others had over10 years of experience leading schools. The participants self-identified as either White or Black and represented both male and female genders. Each grade level of school was represented in the sample. Participation in this study was voluntary.

Email invitations were delivered to 2250 email addresses. In total, 230 responses were received. Not all surveys were included in the final analysis. After pre-screening data, incomplete surveys and surveys that contained outliers were removed. The response rate for this study was 10%. Determining an acceptable response rate for research that use surveys as a part of the methodology has been considered a controversial point within the research community for years (Baruch, 1999). As response rates have continued to fall in recent decades, researchers must contend with the issue of nonresponse in addition to low response rates. And while several factors play into this decline, in this study a few key issues that researchers have uncovered should be noted, namely, individuals being overwhelmed by requests to participate in survey research, invalid email addresses, too busy to respond and viewing the survey as irrelevant (Baruch, 1999; Sheehan, 2006). And while internet surveys have historically had lower response rates than mail surveys, there are factors have been shown to increase response rate (Cook, Heath, & Thompson, 2000). Among these suggestions, pre-contacts and semi-personalized contacts and increasing the number of contacts were utilized in this study.

Of those school principals who chose to participate, 108 self-identified as female and 86 as male. Eleven respondents chose not to respond to this specific question. Eighty-five respondents identified as African-American, and 105 as White. One respondent identified as Asian-American, one identified as Latino(a) and two identified as Native American. One respondent indicated that they were of mixed French and Irish descent. Ten respondents chose to not answer this particular question. The oldest participant reported an age of 66, while the youngest was 32 years old. Of the over 200 respondents, all held at least a Master's degree, while 53 reported having a PhD or EdD. Of those who chose to answer, 51 participants had more than 10 years of experience as a school principal.

Recommendations in regards to what constitutes an appropriate sample size for a factor analysis vary across the literature. Typically, researchers have used a subject to item ratio to determine the sample size for their studies. As a general rule, historically, a ratio of 10:1 is used most often. However, this practice is not based upon empirical knowledge, but is based in tradition (Arrindell & van der Ende, 1985). In fact, many have argued that the most efficient manner of determine the size of a sample is based upon the nature of the data (Costello & Osborne, 2005). Considerations such as factors without cross-loadings, but high communalities or factors with variables loading strongly can serve as indicators of strong data. Additionally, there are indicators which can help a researcher determine if more data are needed. If communalities are low (less than .40), factors have several items with weak cross loads or there are fewer than three items that load onto a single factor, a researcher is advised to consider reviewing problematic items or collect more data (Costello & Osborne, 2005).

Data Analysis Procedures

Rationale. Considering the theoretical framework that was used to create the assessment, it was expected that survey items within each of the five areas of cultural competency would be positively correlated with one another, forming five factors. For instance, in the Assess Culture section, there were seven survey questions. It was expected that the scores from these seven questions would all have positive and strong correlations with each other. However, statistical analyses were needed to determine if data would separate into the five hypothesized factors. To determine the factor structure, exploratory factor analyses were completed.

To explore shared variance among a set of variables, factor analysis is the appropriate procedure to use (Mertler & Vannatta, 2010). Using a principal component analysis, the research aims "to extract the maximum variance from a data set" (Mertler & Vannatta, 2010, p. 234). The results will produce the least number of uncorrelated factors.

Step 1: Exploratory factor analysis. Before conducting the EFA, data were pre-screened. Any survey that was not at least 75% complete was removed from the data set. Averages for each case for each of the hypothesized five factors were calculated to identify outliers. Any outliers were removed from the data set also. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .928 which indicated that data were appropriate size for factor analysis, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(435) = 4961.581$, $p<.001$, indicating that the correlation matrix is not the identity matrix and also suitable for analysis. To examine the factor structure of the instrument, principal components analysis (PCA) procedures were followed. The extraction method of principal components was used together with a Varimax rotation, because it was anticipated that the factors would not be highly correlated with each other (Mertler & Vannatta, 2010). To account for any missing data, the option to exclude cases pairwise was

chosen. Because of the size of the sample, this choice allowed for the optimal amount of cases to be used in the analysis (Mertler & Vannatta, 2010).

In order to determine the number of factors to retain, several methods were utilized: Kaiser's rule, the scree plot, the percent of variance accounted for and the initial factor loadings. For Kaiser's rule, the number of components to retain is determined by eigenvalues greater than one. The scree plot is a visual representation of Kaiser's rule. It is a plot of eigenvalues from the survey items. In most studies, the number of components retained is determined by the number of eigenvalues that account for a certain percentage of variance. As a general rule, researchers use 70% of the total variability as a preferred baseline (Mertler and Vannatta, 2010). As a part of the extraction process, a component matrix was generated. This matrix was examined to determine if any items were loading across components. Three to eight factors were explored.

Step 2: Reliability measures. To assess internal reliability of scores based on the final factors, Cornbach's alpha for each component was calculated. This calculation can range from 0 to 1. Higher values for Cornbach's alphas indicate more reliable components.

Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis

During the first run of the PCA, while considering the a priori hypothesis that there were five components, five factors were extracted. In examining this initial output, Kaiser's rule indicated seven components with an eigenvalues greater than one (Table 2). The scree plot (Fig. 2) suggested a three-factor solution, with three eigenvalues to the left of the "knee" (Mertler & Vannatta, 2010). It took eight components to account for at least 70% of the variance and the rotated component matrix indicated that four items cross-loaded onto multiple components.

Table 2

Total Variance Explained

	Initial Eigenvalues		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	11.473	38.244	38.244
2	2.196	7.321	45.565
3	1.684	5.612	51.176
4	1.421	4.736	55.912
5	1.284	4.280	60.192
6	1.193	3.976	64.168
7	1.057	3.523	67.691
8	.940	3.134	70.825

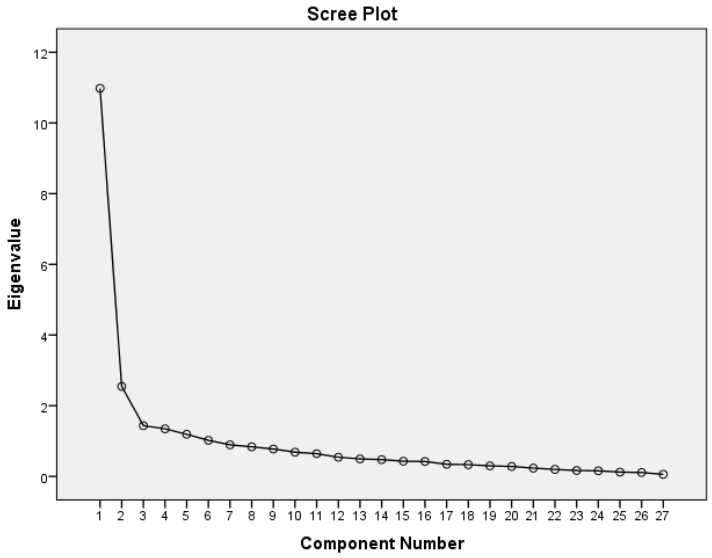

Figure 2. EFA Scree Plot

Because of the lack of consensus regarding the number of factors to retain when following these guidelines, the analysis was done again. This time the PCA was setup to extract four factors. Examining the rotated component matrix for this analysis, three components cross-loaded and one factor did not meet the factor loading requirement of greater than .40 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1998).

For a third attempt, another PCA was performed, this time with three factors extracted. Although these factors account for only 51.2% of the variance, a three-factor solution was supported by the scree plot and no items cross-loaded in the rotated component matrix. Although the percent of variance accounted for is less than optimal, a three-factor solution seemed like the most appropriate choice. Because this is a contradiction to the a priori hypothesis, further exploration of items was warranted.

In the final attempt, it was discovered that the first factor comprised of 15 items. These items were drawn from four of the five Essential Elements: assessing culture, valuing diversity, managing the dynamic of diversity, adapting to diversity and institutionalizing cultural knowledge. Four out of the five items assigned to "Train about Difference" (adapting to diversity) loaded onto this factor. All five items that were initially assigned to "Change for Differences" (institutionalizing cultural knowledge) were included. Four of the six items from "Reframe the Differences" (managing the dynamics of diversity) loaded onto this factor, as did one item from "Claim the Difference" (valuing diversity). Upon further examination of the essence of the questions that were included in this first factor, the items all addressed the central tendency of leading from a culturally competent framework.

The items that loaded onto the second factor aligned with leaders who were capable of recognizing and appreciating the diversity of others, specifically in a school setting. Items that

loaded onto this factor represented three of the four Essential Elements. Items from the scales "Name the Difference" (assessing diversity), "Claim the Difference" and "Reframe the Difference" populated this scale. There were six items from "Claim the Difference," four items from "Name the Difference" and two items from "Reframe the Difference," for a total of twelve items.

For the final factor, three of the "Name the Difference" items were included. Each of the items that were included in this scale was of a personal nature. These items focused on an individual's ability to reflect upon their own culture and the impact that culture had in their personal lives. The table in Appendix E displays the clustering of items.

Internal Consistency Reliability and Scale Properties

Table 3 displays the alpha coefficients for the three factors that were extracted. The means and standard deviations for the three components are included also. The alpha coefficients for the three factors were above .80. The high alpha coefficients further support a three-factor solution.

Table 3

Factor Reliabilities and Scale Properties

Factor	*n*	α	M	SD
Factor 1: Lead for Change	15	.902	65.23	6.590
Factor 2: Embrace Other Culture	12	.907	53.86	5.096
Factor 3: Aware of Own Culture	3	.863	13.84	1.457

Implications

The purpose of the present study was to provide an initial examination of The Cultural Competency Self-Assessment©. Dr. Nuri-Robins designed the self-assessment to be used as an exercise during professional development workshops. After a review of relevant literature and examination of the survey by experts, I sent the survey to principals from several states in the southeastern United States with over 200 school principals completing the survey.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed revealing three factors. These factors corresponded to a combination of the five Essential Elements of Cultural Competency as identified in the literature. These finding will be summarized. Also, possibilities for future research and implications of these finding will be discussed.

The research found in the literature posits that there are five elements that influence the development of cultural competency in individuals. In this study, it was predicted that EFA would support the prevailing theory. However, it was found that the items on the Cultural Competency Self-Assessment©, a survey instrument developed by content experts using the established theoretical framework, is comprised of three factors: aware of own culture, embrace other cultures, and lead for change. Internal reliability for each factor was strong. The Cornbach's alphas for the three factors were .863, .907, and .902, respectively.

The results from the EFA were not entirely anticipated. The majority, if not all of the literature (Bustamante, et al., 2009; Cross, et al., 1989; Lindsey, et al., 2003), supports the idea of a five-factor solution. However, a three-factor solution does not discredit the work of those who have gone before. Every item distinctly loaded onto a single component and the item groupings revealed clear themes.

Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) theorized three characteristics of a culturally competent counselor. According to their research, this individual is someone "who is actively in

the process of becoming aware of his or her own assumptions about human behavior, values, biases, preconceived notions, personal limitations, and so forth" (Sue, et al., 1992, p. 481). This is in line with the factor Aware of Own Culture. Being aware of one's own culture is a first step in the process of becoming more culturally competent (Lindsey, et al. 2003). Additionally, a culturally competent counselor is someone "who actively attempts to understand the worldview of his or her culturally different client without negative judgment" (Sue, et al., 1992, p. 481). This behavior aligns with the factor Embrace Other Cultures. The Essential Elements adapt to diversity and valuing diversity are a part this factor. Lastly, culturally competent counselors utilize strategies and techniques that incorporate the awareness of the influence of their own and their clients' cultures when working with clients. This approach reflects the third factor, Lead for Change. Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge and Manage the Dynamic of Difference were the two Essential Elements that formed this factor. These two elements focus on the policies and practices that are created and used to form more culturally competent organizations.

Our understanding of principal leadership continues to evolve. For years researchers have categorized principal leadership into distinct styles, such as transformational or instructional (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Leithwood, Leonard, & Sharratt, 1998). Yet new research is emerging that elucidates the complex nature of principal leadership and the role that principal perception plays in the development of leadership styles (Urick & Bowers, 2014). Leadership can be defined in broad terms. In this study, the focus is principal perceptions regarding leadership in the context of culture. Because of this specific focus, it is not entirely unexpected that the survey items regarding preparation for training (Reframe about Difference) and actual training (Train about Difference) would cluster together as a single factor.

The findings of this study highlight the theoretical and empirical domains of cultural competency. Where the theoretical encompasses broad understandings of constructs, the empirical operationalizes the construct (Benson, 1998). The three characteristics that were presented by Sue, et al (1992) encompass a broad understanding of what it means to be culturally competent. The five Essential Elements of Lindsey, et al. (2003) and others represent observable variables of cultural competency.

The Cultural Competency Self-Assessment© holds promise as a valuable instrument for district and school leaders who are looking to build more culturally competent and inclusive learning environments for students, faculty and staff and community stakeholders. In order to become more culturally competent, an individual or organization must be able to assess where they are currently. This is the first step in process.

Because of the small sample size together with the specific geographical location of participants, there are significant limitations on the generalizability of this study. Further research is needed to assess principals across the United States, in both public and private schools. A significant amount of research on cultural competency in the field of education has focused on teachers and teacher preparation programs. It may also be beneficial to expand this study to include district superintendents and other influential community members, such as board members. These populations could serve to further validate the findings discussed in this study.

CHAPTER V. MANUSCRIPT 2: THE CULTURALLY COMPETENT PRINCIPAL AND THE ACADEMICALLY SUCCESSFUL AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENT

Abstract

This present study examines the relationship between principals' perceived level of cultural competence and the achievement gap between Black and White students. Based on responses from the Cultural Competency Self-Assessment©, principals were given a cultural competency score. This score was then compared to school level achievement data retrieved from state education departments. Additionally, analyses were conducted to determine what personal or professional factors, if any, predicted principals' cultural competence score. While there was no correlation between principal's level of cultural competence and the achievement gap, there were several factors that statistically significantly predicted cultural competency scores.

Introduction

The American school system becomes more and more diverse each year (Delpit, 2012; Kozol, 1991; Stepick, A & Stepick, C, 2002). While the U.S. media focuses on the exodus of U.S. companies to foreign soil for tax benefits, international companies are also immigrating to this country for similar reasons (Maynard, 2009; McKinnon & Thurm, 2012). In recent years, the airwaves have been filled with stories of child refugees from desolate South American countries risking their lives to reach American borders (Park, 2014). In both cases, individuals and organizations are motivated by one common goal, the promise of the American dream of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Whether as the result of an international company looking to break into the American market place or a mother wanting to provide an escape from a war torn country, children from around the world are joining the ranks in the educational system (Maxwell, 2014; Suarez-Orozco, et al., 2010).

Studies continue to show that children from culturally diverse backgrounds are not faring well in this system (Layton, 2014). Like the African American children of the 1950s and 1960s before them, a significant number of these children have not been able to gain a solid footing academically. In the case of the African American students of the 1950s and 1960s, there were academic gains during the 1970s and 1980s, but since then those gains have slowed or reversed (Lee, 2002). For the most recent influx of immigrant youth, this is an emergent field for researchers.

Because of the disparities, both old and new, researchers continue the search for evidence based solutions to this decades old dilemma. The research that has been done has led to promising options to help close the achievement gap between cultural groups. The concept of multicultural education grew out of the struggles of the Civil Rights Movement of the1960s

(Banks, 1974). In recent years, concepts like social justice leadership and democratic learning communities have gained traction as scholars and practitioners search for theories that can be easily converted into practice. Firestone and Riehl (2005) further expound upon ideas aimed to help improve practices at the school level.

A more recent development is the study of cultural proficient leadership. The concept of cultural competency emerged from the medical field in the late 1980s. To this day, the work of Cross, Brazon, Dennis and Isaacs (1989) serves as the foundation for this research. Initially applied to the field of mental health, Cross, et al. (1989) explored the systems and practices that were detrimental to the care of patients of culturally diverse backgrounds, specifically non-White racial and ethnic cultures. Their work provided a "philosophical framework and practical ideas for improving service delivery to children of color who are seriously emotionally handicapped" (Cross, et al., 1989, p. 1). Since the early 2000s, cultural competency has become a part of the educational leadership lexicon. Researchers began to explore culturally competent leadership in light of the ever-changing demographics that was becoming the norm in most schools (Delpit, 2012; Howard, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ravitch, 2010).

The Culturally Competent Principal

When individuals think of culture, the social construct of race tends to dominate the conversation. And while race does have a powerful influence in society, it is not the only aspect of culture or cultural identity (Tatum, 2003). At its core, culture is about belonging. Sharing common beliefs and values determines to which culture an individual belongs (Cross, et al., 1989). Considering this basic definition, it becomes clear that one can belong to several cultural groups simultaneously. Awareness of this truth is a critical step in the process of becoming a culturally competent principal (Lindsey, Nuri-Robins & Terrell, 2003).

Schools are host to a community of cultures. The diversity of cultures within the school creates its own culture. A culturally competent principal is capable of recognizing this cacophony of influences and leading students and faculty accordingly. To be culturally competent, a principal must have a high awareness of the cultural influence upon her life at a personal level. She must be capable of embracing those who belong to cultures different from her own. And finally, she must be able to implement systems and practices that will help those whom she leads to move toward a way of being more culturally competent (Lindsey, et al. 2003).

As pioneers in the field of culturally proficient leadership, Lindsey, et al. (2003) have led the way in giving school leaders the tools necessary to create school environments that are welcoming for all students. Adapting the work of Cross, et al. (1989), Lindsey, et al. (2003) reintroduced the conceptual framework from an educational leadership point of view. The concept of cultural competency revolves around four tools: The Guiding Principles, The Continuum, The Essential Elements and The Barriers.

The five guiding principles serve as the underlying values of cultural proficiency. The first principle acknowledges that "culture is a predominant force" (p. 159, Lindsey, et al., 2003). Culture is everywhere. It is not possible for an individual to not belong to a cultural group. The second principle highlights the role that the dominant cultural group plays in the lives of those who do not belong. There are enumerable consequences when the non-dominant group is required to conform to the dominant group's cultural expectations in order to succeed in a diverse environment. An example of this would be the forcing of an individual to abandon his own cultures in order to successfully participate in society. Even within cultural groups there will be diversity. Individuals are unique and as previously stated can belong to several cultures, simultaneously.

The third principle illuminates the importance of in-group differences. Belonging to multiple cultural groups does not mean that one cultural group is better or more influential than any other. All identities should be celebrated, according to the forth principle. And lastly, the cultural expectations of the dominant group should not be imposed on the non-dominant group. Having a diversity of perspectives is beneficial to all. Educational leaders will not know all there is to know about every cultural group within schools. Guided by the school leader, teachers and students who are provided the guidance to embrace cultures outside of their own are an essential aspect of building culturally inclusive schools (Lindsey, et al. 2005).

Nuri-Robins, Lindsey, Terrell, and Lindsey (2007) referred to the continuum as "a conceptual framework for assessing personal and organizational progress and providing common language to describe both healthy and dysfunctional events and policies" (p. 19). This common language is essential. It helps identify the current place on the continuum and gives guidance on next steps to become more culturally proficient. Six stages create the cultural competence continuum: destructives, incapacity, blindness, precompetence, competence and proficiency. The first three stages represent a deficit view. It is only when an organization or individual moves toward the later three stages that meaningful change can occur. A leader who holds a culturally destructive world view eliminates other's culture. When a leader who holds a world view framed by cultural incapacity, that individual believes that their own culture is superior to others. A world view that is marked by cultural blindness devalues difference.

Cultural precompetence marks the beginning of a major shift in thinking. At the precompetence stage, an individual or organization is aware of their limited knowledge and understanding of other cultures. Once a leader becomes culturally competent, that leader uses the five essential elements as the standard for interacting with others. Culturally proficiency, the

epitome, represents the individual who is committed to continuous and team learning, holds culture to the highest esteem and is capable of positive interactions with any number of cultural groups.

Yet, change is often met with resistance. There are three categories into which barriers to cultural proficiency fall. The first barrier is quite simply resistance to change or being unaware that there is a need for change. The second barrier is systemic. Oppression and privilege are systems that overwhelming disadvantage the non-dominant group. Lastly, entitlement is a presumption. Entitlement, as defined by Lindsey, et al. (2003) "is the systemic privilege that accrues to members of the dominant culture in such a way that (a) they don't realize they have additional privileges, and (b) they become resentful and angry when invited to relinquish them" (p. 245).

The essential elements "set the standards for deep structural change at the positive end of the continuum" (Lindsey, et al., 2003, p. vii). These standards can be applied to organizations and individuals. The five elements are adapt to diversity, institutionalize cultural knowledge, value diversity, assess culture and manage the dynamics of difference.

Adapt to Diversity

The cultural diversity inherent in schools could be a source of contention for some school leaders. It can be a source of division and create an "us versus them" paradigm (Lindsey, et al., 2003). Yet, a culturally competent principal will be able to adapt to the diversity found with the school community. In this way, all community members have equitable footing to thrive.

Institutionalizes Cultural Knowledge

As a part of this process of adapting to the diversity within community, a culturally competent principal focuses on creating a learning community that is committed to promoting

life-long learning. Creating a community where all are truly welcomed is not relegated to a small group of key individuals. The work of organizational change is no longer a side project or after thought, but a part of the culture of the school community (Lindsey, et al., 2003).

Value Diversity

A culturally competent leader is one who provides "leadership in developing policy statements on diversity and ensuring that the school and district's mission and goal statements address the issues that emerge in diverse environments" (Lindsey, et al., 2003, p.115). Yet creating policies is not enough. These policies must serve as a catalyst for change in how marginalized groups are treated.

Assess Culture

The previously discussed elements cannot be utilized effectively if the culturally competent leader is not aware of her own culture. In addition to her own culture, she must also be aware of the cultures of her faculty, students and their families, her school and the school district. Once an individual is aware of the cultural groups to which they belong, their ability to assess the cultures of those with whom they interact on a daily basis is improved. In this way, the culturally competent leader can "analyze themselves and their environments so that they have a palpable sense of their own culture and the culture of their schools" (Lindsey, et al., 2003, p. 115).

Manage the Dynamic of Difference

Conflict is a part of human interaction. Humans are individuals with unique world views. As the leader of a culturally diverse school, being able to provide the school community with the skills needed to be successful is critical. How well a school leader manages the inevitable

conflicts that arise when different cultures mix will determine the difference between success and failure for members of the school community (Lindsey, et al., 2003).

Purpose of the Study

Limited research exists on the direct relationship between the school leaders' level of cultural competence and the academic success of African American students. The culturally competent principal is an emerging phenomenon in the field of educational research. Theoretically, it is posited that a culturally competent individual operates within the framework of the five essential elements previously discussed.

African American students continue lag behind their Asian American and White classmates on key standardized assessments. The mismatch between African American and school culture is one contributing factor (Delpit, 2005). The principal is in a unique position to influence school culture (Riehl, 2000). The positional power of the principalship is felt beyond the school building. The principal interacts with various stakeholders at any given time in regards to any number of issues from student learning to teacher preparation and beyond.

The goal of this present study was to explore the principal's perceived level of cultural competence and the interplay between this perception and student achievement at the school level. The specific research questions for this study were:

1. To what degree are principals culturally competent?
2. What demographic characteristics, such as years of experience, race or age, are the best predictors for identifying a principal's level of cultural competence?
3. To what extent is the principal's level of cultural competence correlated to the school's achievement gap?

Methods

Participants

Two hundred and five elementary, middle and high school principals completed the survey, which was distributed electronically. The individuals were principals of schools across the southeastern United States. Forty-four percent of respondents were male (n=86) and 56% were female (n=108). Principals' years of experience varied widely. The majority of principals identified as either Black or White. Fifty-four percent of respondents identified as White (n=105) and 44% as African American (n=85) . Of the remaining respondents, 5% chose to not respond and 2.5% percent represented a variety of racial backgrounds. On average, principals had 9 years of experience. Thirty-nine percent of principals were within their first five years of leading a school. Twenty-four percent of principals had over 10 years of school leadership experience. All respondents held a Master's degree while 27% held terminal degrees.

Measures

Published in the book, *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders* (Lindsey, Nuri-Robins, and Terrell, 2003), the Cultural Competency Self-Assessment© is a professional development tool created by Dr. Kikanza Nuri-Robins. Individuals and organizations that use the book are encouraged to incorporate the included activities in their work to become more culturally competent. However, considering the intended use of the survey in this study was different that its original purpose, three former and current principals were asked to provide feedback on the instrument.

The final instrument consisted of two sections: The Cultural Competency Self-Assessment© and a demographics section. The first section of the survey assessed the five Essential Elements of cultural proficiency as defined by Cross, et al. (1989). The five sections were divided into the following categories: Name the Difference, Claim the Difference, Reframe

the Difference, Train about Difference, and Change for Difference. These categories were designed to correspond to the Essential Elements, assess diversity, valuing diversity, managing the dynamics of diversity, adapting to diversity, and institutionalizing cultural knowledge, respectively.

Section I consists of 30 Likert-type questions. The five-point Likert-type scale consists of the following prompts: (i) Not at all like me, (ii) Not much like me, (iii) Somewhat like me, (iv) Quite a lot like me, and (v) Just like me. The literature has not presented a clear consensus about the optimal number of response options for surveys. Dillman, Smyth and Christian (2009) recommend choosing between four and five options for respondents. Since a bipolar scale was used and participants were given the option of being neutral on items, it was decided that five responses was ideal.

In section II of the survey, the respondents were ask to provide demographic information about their work experience, experience in culturally diverse environments, age and education. The responses in this section were used to explore the relationship between perceived level of cultural competence and student level achievement.

To establish the appropriateness of items, a validation study of the Cultural Competence Self-Assessment© was done (Cole, unpublished, 2015). In this study, the psychometric properties of the survey were examined. Exploratory factor analysis procedures suggested the survey consisted of three factors: lead for change, embrace other cultures, and aware of own culture. Reliability coefficients for each factor were .902, .907 and .863, respectively.

Data Analysis Procedures

Three research questions guided the data analysis in the study. To answer these questions, analyses using factor scores and descriptive statistics were undertaken. The results of

analyses were used to explore the influences upon the personal development of cultural competency, as well as compare the student academic achievement to perceived levels of cultural competency.

Results

Principals' Level of Cultural Competence

The results indicated that the principals who participated in this study consider themselves culturally competent. To determine a participants level of cultural competence, the scores for each principal on the three factors of the Cultural Competence Self-Assessment© were averaged to determine an overall score. Means and standard deviations for factors are included in the table below. The data were negatively skewed, confirming that respondents scored themselves highly.

Table 4

Cultural Competence Self-Assessment© Factor Descriptive Statistics

	All Participants (n = 172)			
	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Factor 1: Lead for Change	4.277	.4482	-.285	-.152
Factor 2: Embrace Other Cultures	4.506	.4153	-.998	2.009
Factor 3: Aware of Own Culture	4.651	.4513	-.835	-.829
Cultural Competence Score	4.478	.3670	-.535	-.457

Note: *M=mean; SD=standard deviation*

Cultural Competence and the Achievement Gap

A forward regression model was used to determine the relationship between demographic factors and the principals' perceived level of cultural competence, the total years of experience as a principal, race, age, education level, gender, and the number of multicultural classes or workshops. The perceived level of cultural competence was determined by averaging the scores for the three factors of The Cultural Competency Self-Assessment©. Because the majority of respondents identified as Black or White, those were the two factors that were a part of the regression. Principals indicated three educational levels: Masters, Educational Specialist and PhD or EdD. Male and female were the only genders reported. Principals approximated the number of cross-cultural workshops or classes that they had attended.

Regression results indicate an overall model of seven predictors that significantly predicts cultural competency, $R^2 = .182$, $R^2_{adj} = .132$, $F(7, 113) = 3.596$, $p<.05$. This model accounted for 18.2% of the variance in cultural competence. Of the seven factors, only race was significantly significant. Model coefficients are included in the Table 4.

Table 5

Coefficients for Final Model

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
Model	b	Std. Error	Beta	Sig.
(Constant)	4.032	.231		.000
Education Specialist Degree	.006	.084	.008	.942
Master's Degree	.030	.081	.038	.714
Race	.276	.063	.385	.000
Gender	.059	.069	.077	.395

Multicultural Classes/Workshops	-.008	.008	-.089	.315
Years as Principal	-.002	.003	-.073	.435
Age	.007	.005	.139	.160

The Culturally Competent Principal and African-American Student Success

Several of the schools that participated in the study lacked racial diversity in the school population (66%). In total there were 58 schools with significant population of both White and Black students. Using data reported to state departments of education, the achievement gap for reading and mathematics was calculated for each school. The relationship between principals cultural competence and the achievement gap in reading was not statistically significant ($r = -.123$, $p = .357$). The relationship between principals' cultural competence and math was not statistically significant, either ($r = -.024$, $p = .860$). Yet, the achievement gap in reading was significantly correlated to the gap in math, $r = .538$, 95% BCa CI [.144, .824], $p < .000$.

Conclusions

The present study was conducted to address this need and was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what degree are principals culturally competent, according to responses on The Cultural Competency Self-Assessment©?
2. What demographic characteristics, such as years of experience, race or age, are the best predictors for identifying a principal's level of cultural competence?
3. To what extent is the principal's level of cultural competence correlated to the school's achievement gap?

This section will discuss these questions in light of the findings of this study, will suggest future research directions in teacher professional learning, and will examine the implication of this study.

Research Question One

Findings of this study indicate that principals perceive themselves to be culturally competent. Principals rated themselves highly on each of the three factors. Although a social desirability scale was not included in this study, the journey to become culturally competent involves self-reflection (Lindsey, et al., 2005). It would not be unexpected that principals' responses reflected an element of social desirability. As Furnham (1985) noted, "self-report studies cannot adequately disentangle the issue of whether social desirability is a response style or trait" (p. 394). Since social desirability is a reflection of an individual's desire to be favorably viewed (Constantine and Ladany, 2000), a principal, who interacts with a variety of stakeholders, would want to be seen positively by the school community.

Research Question Two

Findings of this study indicate that there are aspects which influence cultural competency. The predictors that were analyzed reflected professional and personal aspects of principals' lives. For instance, professional tasks such as the number of multicultural workshops or classes that an individual attends can increase exposure to other cultures. Lindsey, et al. (2003) emphasize the importance of having interactions outside of one's own culture as a way of assessing one's own culture. It should be noted that this was not an exclusive list of demographic factors. However, it must be mentioned that race was a statistically significant predictor. Race is an important aspect of cultural identity development and deeply interwoven into American society (Ladson-Billings, 2010; Tatum, 2003).

Research Question Three

Findings of this study indicate that there is no correlation between a principal's cultural competence and the achievement gap at the school level. The achievement gap is a complex issue. The fact that the achievement gap is a reflection of state mandated test must be taken into consideration. Research has shown that standardized tests are racially biased (Freedle, 2003). Interpretation of items on standardized tests is influenced by culture. Although principals have great positional power and be an essential component to building inclusive schools (Riehl, 2000), the power they possess may not have a direct influence on test performance and, therefore, the achievement gap.

Implications

Overall, African American students are performing at lower rates than almost any other racial group on standardized assessments (Layton, 2014). As a group, African American students, males in particular, most overcome negative perceptions about them both inside and outside of school. These are not new phenomenon. However, the question that educational researchers must ask and answer is: Why do the problems that a significant number of Black students face continue to persist?

The work presented in this study holds promise for the future of this area of research. In this study, the role of principal as school leader and cultural developer was explored. Specifically, it was of interest if principals' cultural competence could play a role in reducing the academic achievement gap between Black students and others. And although the findings of this study do not indicate a direct or causal relationship, the research that has been done in regards to the influence that principals have on school milieu warrant further investigation into the

relationship (Gardiner and Enomoto, 2006; Hansuvadha and Slater, 2012; Khalifa, 2012; Lomotey, 1989; McCray and Beachum, 2010).

As John Dewey (1944) stated, “If we teach today’s students as we taught yesterday’s, we rob them of tomorrow” (p. 167). African American students are being robbed of their tomorrows. Scholars have issued the clarion call for not just theoretical, but practical applications that will help all children, regardless of background, achieve (Delpit, 2012; Kozol, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Research indicates that the school leaders are the best candidates to lead the charge (Lindsey, et al. 2003).

CHAPTER VI. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose of the Study

From the inception of the common school movement, administrators have struggled to educate diverse student populations. As Riehl (2000) asserted, "American public schools arguably serve a more heterogeneous population now than ever before and are under increasing pressure to effectively educate a student body that is diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, social class, gender, national origin and native language, sexual orientation and physical disability" (p. 56). A common strategy to overcome the challenges that school leaders face has been assimilation. Unfortunately, assimilation has created more problems for students of color. Specifically for Black students, the problems seem to be exasperated. While assimilation is no longer the clarion call, students of color continue to struggle to find their place in the American education system.

Many scholars have engaged in the work of finding a solution to the struggles of various student populations (Riehl, 2000). A great deal of this literature focuses on a wide variety of aspects. Educational policy, teacher training and professional development, curriculum development and assessment, to name a few, have been examined as possible solutions. Within these areas of research, an array of stakeholders in the school community have been interviewed and surveyed to gather a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the situation. Of the many key stakeholders, it is the principal who hold a unique position within schools, but the research for this population is nascent.

Much research has focused on teachers and teacher-leaders, the cross-section of principals, Black students' academic success and cultural competence is missing. The purpose of this study is threefold. In addition to filling the research void, the study aims to specifically

explore principals' levels of cultural competence and the relationship between cultural competence and academic success.

Theoretical Framework

The Nation's Report Card (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013) is clear: African American students continue to lag behind their counterparts on key standardized assessments. In the latest report, Black twelfth graders scored the lowest in reading and math of all racial groupings. The gap persists in spite of gains made in other areas such as graduation rates and college enrollment. In fact, the high school graduation rate is it highest level (Layton, 2014). In 2012, eighty percent of students received a high school diploma. But even within this seemingly positive outcome, disparities exist. Black students had the lowest graduation rate of 69 percent.

The 2005 and 2009 national reports indicated that Black and Hispanic students made significant academic gains, but these gains did little to close the gap with White students (Layton, 2014). While elementary and middle school Black and Hispanic students have made gains, the issues in American high schools further exasperate the problem. The Department of Education reported that Black and Hispanic students are disproportionally negatively impacted by zero-tolerance school discipline polies, are not enrolled in high-level courses and are students at schools where 20 percent or more of the teachers are not certified (Department of Education, 2013).

Research has offered insight into the complex dilemma. Ladson-Billings (1995) posited culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) as one component. The role of teacher in helping Black students achieve academic success is central to the idea behind CRP. Three criteria form the foundation of CRP: "(a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop

and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (p. 160). The demographics of the American education are changing. Within the next few years, the majority of students found in the classroom will be children who identify with a non-White cultural identity (Delpit, 1995; Kozol, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994). A national call to find solutions to the achievement gap has been issued. Black and Hispanic students are lot receiving the proper tools to have success beyond high school. With the decades of focus on teachers, teacher leaders and teacher education programs, the gap has persisted. Researchers are again focused on the role of the principal in building and maintaining inclusive learning environments for culturally diverse students (Riehl, 2000).

Lindsey, Nuri-Robins, and Terrell (2003) have further expounded upon the principals role as a culturally proficient leader in their research. They presented the Essential Elements of cultural competency as standards by which culturally proficient school leaders lead within their school communities. These elements, an evolution of the ideas first introduced to the medical field by Cross, Bazron, Dennis and Isaacs (1989), consist of five behaviors. These elements were valuing diversity, having the capacity for cultural self-assessment, consciousness of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact, having institutionalized cultural knowledge, and adaptation to diversity. These standards provide a blueprint for interactions between cultural groups.

It is up to the individual to follow this blueprint. Those individuals who choose to utilize the Essential Elements position themselves to lead the way in developing culturally inclusive schools. As Lindsey, et al. (2009) posited, "The tools of cultural proficiency provide a framework for individual educators and school communities to address disparities in access and

achievement. Educators engaged in the journey to cultural proficiency learn of the impact their expectations have on all students" (p. 72).

Research Questions

The following research questions frame this study:

1. What are the psychometric properties of The Cultural Competency Self-Assessment©?
2. To what degree are principals culturally competent, according to responses on The Cultural Competency Self-Assessment©?
3. What demographics characteristics, such as years of experience, race or age, are the best predictors for identifying a principal's cultural competence?
4. To what extent is the school's achievement gap related to principal's perceived level of cultural competence?

Methods

The Cultural Competency Self-Assessment© was developed by Dr. Kikanza Nuri-Robins as a professional development tool to help individuals in their efforts to become more culturally competent. Dr. Nuri-Robins is an educational leadership professor who has dedicated her professional career to researching cultural proficiency within schools and school communities. The items on the survey were based on the theoretical framework presented by Cross, et al. (1989). The literature identifies five behaviors of a culturally competent person. These behaviors are referred to as the Essential Elements: adapt to diversity, institutionalize cultural knowledge, value diversity, assess culture and manage the dynamics of difference

The final version of the survey consisted of 30 items. These Participants answered questions using a five-point Likert-type scale with the following prompts: (i)Like me Not like me at all (ii) Somewhat Like me (iii) Neither (iv) Somewhat Like me, and (v) Very much like me.

The survey was sent electronically to principals in several states in the southeastern portion of the United States. Over 200 participants completed the survey. Of those participants, 108 were female and 86 were male. One-hundred five respondents self-identified as White, while 85 reported being Black. The ages of respondents ranged from 32 years old up to 66 years old. Each respondent held a Master's degree, while 53 held a PhD or EdD.

Exploratory factor analysis provided answer to the first research question which explored the psychometric properties of the survey instrument. Given the exploratory nature of his study, EFA was the most appropriate approach. EFA is designed to determine the underlying structure of survey instruments.

The second research question, which focuses on the perceived level of cultural competence of principals, was addressed using factor scores from the survey and individual item scores using descriptive statistics such as percentages, means, and standard deviations. Using these data, I was able to determine the extent to which principals perceived themselves to be culturally competent.

To determine if any factors influenced the development of cultural competence, the third research question was addressed using factor scores and individual item scores from the survey for race, age, gender, level of education, years of experience, and number of multicultural experiences. Additionally, descriptive statistics such as percentages, means, and standard deviations were utilized. Regression analysis was used to determine if there was statistically significant relationship between the demographic factors and the principal's level of cultural competence.

The fourth research question as addressed using factor scores and data retrieved from state department of education websites. For this question, the relationship between the

principal's perceived level of cultural competence and the achievement gap were the focus. For each school, achievement gap data between Black and White students in reading and math was gathered. These data were used to determine if there were a statistically significant correlation between the achievement gap and principal's level of cultural competence.

Findings

For the first research question, exploratory factor analysis revealed that the Cultural Competence Self-Assessment© was comprised of three factors: Lead for Change, Embrace Other Cultures, and Aware of Own Culture. This was not an unexpected find. Literature in both the medical and education fields support the idea that five behaviors identify a culturally competent individual, while some researchers in the field of psychological counseling have identified the three characteristics of cultural competence. The work done here hypothesized that these two bodies of work are in fact two domains of the same construct. Items comprising the Name the Difference and Claim the Difference formed the Embrace Other Cultures factor. Items comprising the Reframe the Difference and Train about Difference formed the Lead for Change factor.

Results addressing the second research question indicated that principals thought of themselves as culturally competent. The scores were negatively skewed. With cultural competence being a self-reported scale in this study a number of factors could account for the skewness. It is our theory that social desirability was a contributing factor.

Results addressing the third research question indicated that professional and personal aspects of principals' careers and lives influence a principal's level of cultural competence. A statistically significant model with seven predictors was found to predict cultural competence. Of those seven predictors, only race was found to be statistically significant.

Results addressing the final research question indicated that there is no correlation between the school level achievement gaps in reading or math and principal cultural competence. Several factors could potentially influence performance on tests. Therefore, it was not unexpected that there would be no statistically significant correlation. From bias in standardized testing, to personal factors in the test taker's life, a direct relationship between principals and test results is highly unlikely.

Implications

African American students are still dropping out of school, being placed in special education, suspended and expelled, excluded from honors and advanced classes, and failing at an alarming rate 50 years after the passing of *Brown vs. the Board of Education* (1954) (Ladson-Billings, 2009). The current state of education for the African American child continues to garner attention from practitioners and researchers alike. The 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results reported that the gap between Black and Latina/o and White fourth graders exceeded 26 points (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Though gains have been made, the problem continues to persist (Lee, 2002). Therefore, it begs the question: "What more can be done?" The historical inequalities that African American students have experienced in the American education system is well documented (Anderson, 1988). In this study, the findings further elucidate the need for more research into this conundrum. Ideas like, multicultural education, social justice leadership, and culturally proficient leadership provide a starting point. Yet, no one concept has provided a clear direction to closing the achievement gap and, therefore, helping African American students reach academic success.

Cornbach (1989) offered two methods for construct validation research. One method, known as the weak program, is characterized by exploratory empirical research. The other

method, the strong program if validation, is characterized by the role that theory plays in the validation process. Benson (1998) reviewed three facet of a strong program of construct validation. In the first facet, substantive, the theoretical construct is established and operationalized in terms of observed variables. During the next facet, structural, items are related to the underlying structure by exploring the relationship among variables and the relationship of those variables to the construct. For the final facet, external, meaning behind test scores is established by comparing those scores to other constructs. The work done in this study falls in the structural aspect of a strong program of construct validation. This study serves as a phase in the cycle of developing validation. More research is needed to further the work that has been done.

Future Research

While some of the findings in the study hold promise, others are in need of deeper exploration. The validation study of the Cultural Competence Self-Assessment© yielded results that warrant a study that samples a larger population. In this study, a small ample of principals from a specific region of the country participated. Broadening the sample to include a diverse group of principals and schools could potential yield statistically significant yet different results. In this study, principals regarded themselves as being culturally competent. Because the survey was designed to explore multiple research questions, it is possible that respondents responded in ways that would reflect positively. By revising the survey and methodology to further reassure participants of the anonymous nature of study may result in more variance in responses. An individual's level of cultural competence is reflective of their most recent interaction with an individual who identifies with a different culture (Lindsey, et al., 2003). Considering this, incorporating survey items to help assess the current frame of mind of participants would give

cultural competence scores a meaningful context. Given the complex nature of achievement gap, this study indicates that the principal's level of cultural competency is not a sole contributing factor. Further exploration is needed to determine if there are factors together with cultural competency that have a positive impact on closing the achievement gap between Black and White students.

Concluding Remarks

For centuries, African American students have faced and overcome numerous obstacles in the American education system (Anderson, 1988). There are many complex factors that play into how successful an individual student will be academically. The cultural diversity within the classroom presents new challenges and opportunities for school leaders. Statistically speaking, the average school principal will be middle-class, male and White, but the students in a typical classroom do not reflect these demographics. In fact, it is anticipated that within the next few years, the majority of students in public school will be students of color.

These students need school leaders who not only believe that all students can learn, but engage in behaviors that demonstrate as much. With Black students continuing to perform poorly academically, scholars are demanding change (Delpit, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2012). These students have been and continue to be left behind. And while there are others who can aid in helping bring about meaningful change, the culturally competent principal is the individual best positioned and trained to serve as a catalyst for creating culturally inclusive and academically successful schools.

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AUBURN UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

INFORMATION LETTER
for a Research Study entitled
"Closing the Gap: Culturally Competent Principals and African American Students' Academic Success"

You are invited to participate in a research study to determine in what ways principals contribute to African American student achievement. The study is being conducted by Latryce Cole, graduate student, under the direction of Dr. Margaret Ross, professor in the Auburn University Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a school principal and are age 19 or older.

What will be involved if you participate? If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to complete a brief survey. Your total time commitment will be approximately 15 minutes.

Are there any risks or discomforts? The proposed study investigates principal's leadership practices and attitudes. Minimal risk is foreseen. Loss of confidentiality remains a risk. To guard against, such risk, all identifiable information will be replaced with a code number. All data presented from analysis will include just the code number so that individuals cannot be identified. The code list will be kept separate from the data.

Are there any benefits to yourself or others? If you participate in this study, you can expect to be exposed to the idea of cultural competency. You will be asked to think about your own understanding of cultural competency as it relates to your leadership role as a principal. I cannot promise you that you will receive any or all of the benefits described.

Will you receive compensation for participating? Are there any costs? No compensation or costs are associated with this study.

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time during the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University or the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology.

Participant's Initials _____

4036 Haley Center, Auburn, AL 36849-5221; Telephone: 334-844-4460; Fax: 334-844-3072

www.auburn.edu

Your privacy will be protected. Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. Information obtained through your participation may be used to fulfill an educational requirement, published in a professional journal and/or presented at a professional meeting.

If you have questions about this study, *please ask them now* or contact Latryce Cole at lzc0009@auburn.edu, (334) 844 – 8503 or Dr. Margaret Ross at rossma1@auburn.edu, (334) 844 – 3084. A copy of this document will be given to you to keep.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Human Subjects Research or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334) 844 – 5966 or email at hsubjec@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION ABOVE, YOU MUST DECIDE IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, PLEASE CLICK ON THE LINK BELOW. YOU MAY PRINT A COPY OF THIS LETTER TO KEEP.

http://tinyurl.com/PrincipalSE

Latryce Cole 1/27/2015

Investigator Date

_____

Co-Investigator Date

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from January 27, 2015 to January 26, 2015. Protocol # 13-388 EP 1401

Latryce Cole

From: Latryce Cole
Sent: Friday, March 13, 2015 11:04 AM
To: Latryce Cole
Subject: The Culturally Competent Principal: A Dissertation Study
Attachments: Information 2 12 2015.pdf

Good morning,

I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology at Auburn University pursing my PhD in Educational Leadership. Currently, I am collecting data for my dissertation examining principals' cultural competence and the potential impact it has on students' academic success. I would like to invite the principals of the schools in your district to participate in this study.

I simply request that you complete a short survey that will take approximately 15 minutes of your time. This quick survey can be found by following this link http://tinyurl.com/AlabamaPrincipal .

Confidentiality and Anonymity: The information that you will share will remain anonymous. The only people who will have access to the research data are the immediate researcher. Anonymity is assured since all identifiable information will be replaced with a code. Additionally, your email address will be dissociated from the data generated by completing the questionnaire. Personally identifiable information in your responses is not required.

If you would like to know more information about this study, an information letter is attached to this email.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (334) 844 - 8503 or my advisor, Dr. Margaret Ross, at (334) 844 - 3084.

Thank you for your consideration,

Latryce Cole
Doctoral Candidate, Educational Leadership
Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology
4th Floor Haley Center
Auburn University
Auburn, AL 36849

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from January 27, 2015 to January 26, 2016. Protocol # 13-388 EP 1401

From: Latryce Cole
To: Latryce Cole
Subject: The Culturally Competent Principal
Date: Wednesday, April 08, 2015 3:33:02 PM

Good afternoon,

I wanted to take a moment and thank you for your willingness to participate in the research study that I am conducting. I want to make sure that everyone who is willing to participate has the opportunity. Therefore, I wanted to send you the correct link to the survey that I am using one more time.

If you have already completed the survey, you have my sincere appreciation. If you have not done so, I ask that you please take a few moments to complete the survey found at the link below. It should take 15 minutes.

Your Anonymous Survey Link:
https://auburn.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_8xhTXY8k5bdahvf

Again, this is an essential component for the completion of my studies in the Educational Leadership program at Auburn University. Your responses are very critical to the success of this study. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at (334) 844 – 8503 or my advisor, Dr. Margaret Ross, at (334) 844 – 3084.

You have until **Friday, April 17, 2015** to complete the survey.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Latryce Cole
Doctoral Candidate, Educational Leadership
Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology
4th Floor Haley Center
Auburn University
Auburn, AL 36849

Graduate Research Assistant
Project Manager, NanoBio Evaluation Team
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Auburn University, AL 36849
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INFORMATION LETTER
for a Research Study entitled
"Closing the Gap: Culturally Competent Principals and African American Students' Academic Success"

You are invited to participate in a research study to determine in what ways principals contribute to African American student achievement. The study is being conducted by Latryce Cole, graduate student, under the direction of Dr. Margaret Ross, professor in the Auburn University Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a school principal and are age 19 or older.

If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to complete a brief survey that will be approximately 15 minutes.

The proposed study investigates principal's leadership practices and attitudes. Minimal risk is foreseen. Loss of confidentiality remains a risk. To guard against, such risk, all identifiable information will be replaced with a numerical code. All data presented from analysis will include just the code so that individuals cannot be identified. The code list will be kept separate from the data.

If you participate in this study, you can expect to be exposed to the idea of cultural competency. You will be asked to think about your own understanding of cultural competency as it relates to your leadership role as a principal. I cannot promise you that you will receive any or all of the benefits described.

No compensation or costs are associated with this study.

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time during the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University or the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology. Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. Information obtained through your participation may be used to fulfill an educational requirement, published in a professional journal and/or presented at a professional meeting.

If you have questions about this study, please ask them now by contacting Latryce Cole at lzc0009@auburn.edu, (334) 844 – 8503 or Dr. Margaret Ross at rossma1@auburn.edu, (334) 844 – 3084.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Human Subjects Research or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334) 844 – 5966 or email at hsubjec@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from January 27, 2015 to January 26, 2016. Protocol # 13-388 EP 1401.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION ABOVE, YOU MUST DECIDE IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. ARE YOU WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

Lindsey, Roberts, Campbell-Jones (2005) define cultural competence as “interacting with other cultural groups in ways that recognize and value their differences, motivate you to assess your own skills, expand your knowledge and resources, and ultimately, cause you to adapt your relational behavior” (p. xviii). Merrian-Webster.com defines culture as "a particular society that has its own beliefs, ways of life, art, etc." And while race and ethnics are categories that are socially constructed, in this study, the racial and ethnic cultural diversity of the students within your school is the focus here. As you answer the questions that follow, I ask that you think of the cultural make-up of the students in your current school, as well as your own. This survey consists of six sections. The first five sections will be used to determine your level of cultural competence as it relates to the cultural diversity represented in the school that you lead. The last section is designed to collect information about you, specifically. This information will be used to assign you a code and will not be used in any publications. Your participation will make this study a success. I appreciate you taking the time to complete the questions below.

SECTION I: NAME THE DIFFERENCES

Think about how you interact with faculty, staff and students in regards to their ethnic culture and the culture of the school that you lead. For each sentence, please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am aware of my own culture and ethnicity.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I am comfortable talking about my culture and ethnicity.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I know the effect that my culture and ethnicity may have on the people in my work setting.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I seek to learn about the culture of this school.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I seek to learn about the cultures of my school's employees.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I seek to learn about the cultures of my school's students.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I anticipate how my school's students and employees will interact with, conflict with, and enhance one another.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

SECTION II: CLAIM THE DIFFERENCES

Think about how you interact with faculty, staff and students in regards to their ethnic culture and the culture of the school that you lead. For each statement, please indicate to what extent you agree.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I welcome a diverse group of students and colleagues into the school setting.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I appreciate both the challenges and opportunities that diversity brings.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I share my appreciation of diversity with my coworkers.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I share my appreciation of diversity with others I work with.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I work to develop a learning community with the students I serve.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I make a conscious effort to teach the cultural expectations of my school to those who are new or who may be unfamiliar with the school's culture.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I proactively seek to interact with people from diverse backgrounds in my personal and professional life.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

SECTION III: REFRAME THE DIFFERENCES

Think about how you interact with faculty, staff and students in regards to their ethnic culture and the culture of the school that you lead. For each statements, please indicate to what extent you agree.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I recognize that conflict is a part of life.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I work to develop skills to manage conflict in a positive way.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I help my colleagues to understand that what appear to be clashes in personalities may in fact be conflicts in personal or school culture.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I help the students I serve to understand that what appear to be clashes in personalities may in fact be conflicts in personal or school culture.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I check myself to see if an assumption I am making about a person is based on facts or upon stereotypes about a group.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I accept that the more diverse our group becomes, the more we will change and grow.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

SECTION IV: TRAIN ABOUT DIFFERENCES

Think about how you interact with faculty, staff and students in regards to their ethnic culture and the culture of the school that you lead. For each statement, please indicate to what extent you agree.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I realize that once I embrace the principles of cultural proficiency, I, too, must change.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I am committed to the continuous learning that is necessary to deal with the issues caused by differences.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I seek to enhance the substance and structure of the work I do so that it is informed by the guiding principles of cultural proficiency.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I recognize the unsolicited privileges I might enjoy because of my title, gender, age, sexual orientation, physical ability, or ethnicity.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I know how to learn about people and cultures unfamiliar to me without giving offense.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

SECTION V: CHANGE FOR DIFFERENCES

Think about how you interact with faculty, staff and students in regards to their ethnic culture and the culture of the school that you lead. For each statement, please indicate to what extent you agree.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I work to influence the culture of my school so that its policies and practices are based on the guiding principles of cultural proficiency.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I speak up if I notice that a policy or practice unintentionally discriminates against or causes an unnecessary hardship for a particular group in my school.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I take advantage of teachable moments to share cultural knowledge or to learn from my colleagues.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I take advantage of teachable moments to share cultural knowledge with my school's students.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I seek to create opportunities for my colleagues, students, and communities we serve to learn about one another.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

SECTION VI: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

How many years have you been principal in your current school? _____

What grade levels attend your current school? Check all that apply.

- ❑ K
- ❑ 1
- ❑ 2
- ❑ 3
- ❑ 4
- ❑ 5
- ❑ 6
- ❑ 7
- ❑ 8
- ❑ 9
- ❑ 10
- ❑ 11
- ❑ 12

What is the name of the school where you are currently the principal? Please type out the full name of the school.

_____

Of the following, which best describes your current school?

- ❑ Public
- ❑ Charter
- ❑ Private
- ❑ Other _____

In total, how many years have you been a principal? _____

How many years have you been principal of a predominately African American school? _____

Are you fluent in a language other than English?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

Have you had classes or workshops in multicultural education or cultural competence?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

If yes, how many? _____

How many cultural or cross-cultural experiences have you participated in? _____

What is your highest level of educational attainment?

- ❍ BS
- ❍ MS
- ❍ MS +
- ❍ EDS
- ❍ Ph.D/Ed.D

What is your age? _____

What is your gender?

- ❍ Male
- ❍ Female
- ❍ Other

Which of the following best represents your ethnic (racial) heritage?

- ❍ White/Caucasian
- ❍ African American
- ❍ Hispanic/ Latino(a)
- ❍ East Asian
- ❍ Native American
- ❍ Pacific Islander
- ❍ Other _____

Thank you for your time. This is the end of the survey. If you chose to participate, I greatly appreciate it.

If you are willing to discuss your answers in more detail, please enter your contact information below.

Name _____

Telephone (please include area code) or Email address _____

Rotated Component Matrix

I share my appreciation of diversity with others I work with.	.773
I welcome a diverse group of students and colleagues into the school setting.	.766
I seek to learn about the cultures of my school's students.	.760
I share my appreciation of diversity with my coworkers.	.758
I seek to learn about the cultures of my school's employees	.750
I seek to learn about the culture of this school.	.742
I appreciate both the challenges and opportunities that diversity brings.	.730
I anticipate how my school's students and employees will interact with, conflict with, and enhance one another.	.621
I work to develop a learning community with the students I serve.	.597
I proactively seek to interact with people from diverse backgrounds in my personal and professional life.	.574
I recognize that conflict is a part of life.	.497
I seek to enhance the substance and structure of the work I do so that it is informed by the guiding principles of cultural proficiency.	.725
I work to influence the culture of my school so that its policies and practices are based on the guiding principle of cultural proficiency.	.706
I take advantage of teachable moments to share cultural knowledge or to learn from my colleagues.	.697
I check myself to see if an assumption I am making about a person is based on facts or upon stereotypes about a group.	.637
I take advantage of teachable moment to share cultural knowledge with my school's students.	.635
I realize that once I embrace the principles of cultural proficiency, I too must change.	.630

I accept that the more diverse our group becomes, the more we will change and grow.	.607	
I speak up if I notice that a policy or practice unintentionally discriminates against or causes an unnecessary hardship for a particular group in my school.	.607	
I help my colleagues to understand that what appear to be clashes in personalities may in fact be conflicts in personal or school culture.	.601	
I help the students I serve to understand that what appear to be clashes in personalities may in fact be conflicts in personal or school culture.	.596	
I seek to create opportunities for my colleagues, students, and communities we serve to learn about one another.	.585	
I recognize the unsolicited privilege I might enjoy because of my title, gender, age, sexual orientation, physical ability, or ethnicity.	.458	
I know how to learn about people and cultures unfamiliar to me without giving offense.	.457	
I am comfortable talking about my culture and ethnicity.		.844
I am aware of my own culture and ethnicity.		.835
I know the effect that my culture and ethnicity may have on the people in my work setting.		.690

From:	IRB Administration
To:	Latryce Cole
Cc:	Margaret Ross; Sheri Downer
Subject:	Renewal request - approved, Protocol #13-388 EP 1401
Date:	Monday, February 09, 2015 12:57:13 PM
Attachments:	Investigators Responsibilities rev 1-2011.docx 1079_001.pdf

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Use IRBsubmit@auburn.edu for protocol-related submissions and IRBadmin@auburn.edu for questions and information.
The IRB only accepts forms posted at https://cws.auburn.edu/vpr/compliance/humansubjects/?Forms and submitted electronically.

Dear Ms. Cole,

Your request for renewal of your protocol entitled " Closing the Gap: Culturally Competent Principals and African American Student Success " has been approved, continuing as "Expedited" under federal regulation 45 CFR 46.110 (7).

Official notice:
This e-mail serves as official notice that your protocol has been renewed. A formal approval letter will not be sent unless you notify us that you need one. By accepting this approval, you also acknowledge your responsibilities associated with this approval. Details of your responsibilities are attached. Please print and retain.

Consent:
Your stamped consent/information letter will soon be sent. Until then, attached is a scan of the consent that you may use to make copies. You may not continue your research after your current expiration date unless you use your new consent document with an IRB approval stamp applied. You must provide a copy for each participant to keep.

Information Letter:
Please add the following IRB approval information to your electronic information letter:
"The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from January 27, 2015 to January 26, 2016. Protocol # 13-388 EP 1401 ."

Use of Information Letter:
You must use that edited version of your electronic info letter when you consent participants. Once you have made the correction you may continue your study. *Please forward the updated electronic letter with a live link so that we may print a final copy for our files.*

Expiration:
Your protocol **will now expire on January 26, 2016**. Put that date on your calendar now. About three weeks before that time you will need to submit a final report or renewal request.

If you have any questions or concerns, please let us know.

Best wishes for success with your research!
Susan

IRB / Office of Research Compliance
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