

Spring 2015

## Raising Teachers' Cultural Knowledge of Middle Eastern Students in The Classroom

Hassan J. Alnawar  
*California State University, Monterey Bay*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps\\_thes](https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes)

---

### Recommended Citation

Alnawar, Hassan J., "Raising Teachers' Cultural Knowledge of Middle Eastern Students in The Classroom" (2015). *Capstone Projects and Master's Theses*. 504.  
[https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps\\_thes/504](https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes/504)

This Master's Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Capstone Projects and Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. Unless otherwise indicated, this project was conducted as practicum not subject to IRB review but conducted in keeping with applicable regulatory guidance for training purposes. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@csumb.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@csumb.edu).

Running head: RAISING CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

Raising Teachers' Cultural Knowledge of Middle Eastern Students in The Classroom

Hassan J. Alnawar

Action Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in Education

California State University Monterey Bay

© 2015 by Hassan J. Alnawar. All Rights Reserved

RAISING CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

Raising Teachers' Cultural Knowledge of Middle Eastern Students in The Classroom

By: Hassan J. Alnawar

APPROVED BY THE GRADUATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Dr. Carolina Serna, Thesis Advisor, Master of Arts in Education

Dr. Lou Denti, Coordinator, Master of Arts in Education

---

Dr. Kris Roney, Ph.D. Associate Vice President

For Academic Programs and Dean of Undergraduate & Graduate Studies

## RAISING CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

### Abstract

A large number of researchers have investigated the impact culturally aware and conscious teachers have in creating a better learning environment for students, especially those who are from different academic and ethnic backgrounds. However, limited studies have been conducted to inspect how teachers' attitudes toward the cultural background of their students from the Middle East, and how they perceive and interact with them. Using qualitative research methods this study will examine elementary teachers' conceptions and attitudes toward their Middle-Eastern students. In comparison to other immigrant groups, Middle Eastern students, the focus of this study, face additional challenges as a result of cultural, racial and religious misunderstanding (Fuller, 1991; Mahrous & Ahmed, 2010 Jackson, 1995). Findings from the study will help create a professional development unit and identify specific resources to raise elementary school teachers' awareness of Middle-Eastern culture.

## RAISING CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

### Acknowledgement

I would like to express my deep gratitude to all my family and friends for believing in me and helping me stay grounded and survive the stress of these past two years. Most of all to my parents, my mother Sabria H. Almatin and my father Jaber H. Alnawar for their unconditional love and support. I am forever grateful for all the sacrifices you made to raise me up, not letting me give up, and lifting me up to pursue my dreams where: the Middle East, Europe, or the United States.

I am also indebted to three remarkable individuals at the School of Education: Dr. Carolina Serna my thesis advisor, Dr. Lou Denti, and Dr. Jason Levine. The completion of this project would not have been possible without your continued support, guidance, and astute advice.

**Table of Contents**

Abstract.....iii

Acknowledgement ..... iv

**Chapter 1: Problem Statement..... 1**

**Introduction..... 1**

**Problem Statement.....2**

**Purpose of the Study .....3**

**Research Questions .....4**

**Theoretical Model.....4**

**Researcher Background .....5**

**Chapter 2: Literature Review ..... 9**

**How would culturally conscious teachers implement cultural responsive practices?**  
    ..... 10

**How can culturally diverse student bodies create more active learning**  
    **environment? ..... 13**

**Why Middle Eastern Students?..... 14**

**Conclusion ..... 15**

**Chapter 3: Research Methods..... 17**

**Introduction..... 17**

**Overall Research Design..... 17**

**Setting ..... 18**

**Participants..... 20**

**Data Sources ..... 21**

## RAISING CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

<b>Data Collection and Procedures</b> .....	22
<b>Data Analysis</b> .....	23
<b>Summary</b> .....	24
<b>Chapter 4: Findings</b> .....	26
<b>Introduction</b> .....	26
Table 1.....	27
Table 2.....	29
<b>Misunderstanding of the Students Cultural Backgrounds</b> .....	29
Figure 1. Registration and count of teachers’ responses to question three. ....	30
Table 1 Data Analysis Overview 1 .....	31
Figure 2. Display of teachers’ knowledge of the Middle Eastern culture.....	31
<b>Teachers’ Interest</b> .....	31
Table 3.....	33
Figure 3. Visual Display of teachers interested in attending the training session.....	33
<b>What Teachers Want to Know?</b> .....	33
<b>Communication</b> .....	36
Table 4.....	37
Figure 4. Teachers’ responses to question number seven. ....	39
Table 5.....	41
<b>Summary</b> .....	42
<b>Chapter 5: Discussion</b> .....	43
<b>Introduction</b> .....	43
<b>Study Overview</b> .....	43
<b>Discussion of Findings and Implications</b> .....	44

RAISING CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

<b>Limitations</b> .....	<b>48</b>
<b>Action Plan</b> .....	<b>49</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>51</b>
References .....	<b>52</b>
Appendix A .....	<b>56</b>
Appendix B .....	<b>57</b>
Appendix C .....	<b>59</b>
Appendix D .....	<b>60</b>



## Chapter 1: Problem Statement

### Introduction

The majority of students from diverse cultural backgrounds, especially immigrant newcomers, have long been deprived access to learning opportunities equal to their peers who belong to the dominant school culture. Thus, these students, especially those that are Middle Eastern, would perform poorly and face challenges and difficulties in learning that can affect their academic advancement and growth. Although students from immigrant and refugee families might struggle with English learning and adapting to the school culture, that does not necessarily mean they are less intelligent than their peers. What those students need to thrive is ways of instruction that foster cross-cultural interaction by reflecting their diverse cultures, and teachers who are well aware of their students' backgrounds and experiences to help improve their learning outcomes (Nykil-Herbert, 2010). Therefore, teachers need to be more culturally aware of the diverse cultures in the classroom to help them create a more engaging learning environment. Moreover, culturally-informed teachers could be more successful when incorporating culturally sensitive teaching practices, also known as Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), (Ladson-Billings, 1995) thus providing more positive outcomes of its applications. According to Lee (2010), CRP is a set of educational practices that respond to all students from diverse cultural backgrounds, and should be incorporated in all grade levels. The use of effectively implemented CRP would minimize the cultural discontinuity for students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. By utilizing CRP, students will be more responsive, passionate, and engaged in a curriculum that mirrors their own identities and experiences. Thus, it helps them transform successfully

from their home to the school culture, which traditional instructional approaches fail to facilitate (Lee, 2010).

### **Problem Statement**

Several studies have been conducted to examine the effect of adopting and employing culturally responsive teaching on improving the learning environment for students, especially those who are from different academic and ethnic backgrounds such as Asian, Hispanic and European students; however, it appears to be that there is limited research involving Middle Eastern students and the ways in which teachers respond to them. Although Middle Eastern students, especially Arab students, might be one of the smallest minorities in schools, this culture has long been misunderstood and misrepresented in most media coverage of political events and Hollywood films which have created stereotyping clichés (Batal, 1988; Shaheen, 2003). Therefore, students who belong to this culture, especially immigrants and newcomers, might be victims of negative stereotypes (whether intentional or unintentional) and prejudices in the school, resulting in a negative effect on their academic achievement (Suleiman, 1996).

Educators need to be trained in order to further raise their awareness about this culture, and correct any inaccurate information they might have, such as popular myths and clichés (Farquharson, 1988). Teachers' knowledge and attitudes toward diverse students, especially Middle Eastern students, could be a key factor in achieving culturally-inclusive teaching practices and to establish a more effective classroom climate. Teachers who are knowledgeable about their students' cultural backgrounds and experiences could be effective facilitators of learning. As cited in several studies (Dixon & Rousseau, 2006; Gay, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995), teachers need to be cognizant of

the cultural backgrounds of their students to create effective teaching strategies. In addition, culturally diverse teaching practices create a more active educational environment that better serves the educational outcomes. Students will benefit more from a learning environment that reflects social and cultural diversity and that would positively affect the content of what is learned in the classroom (Gurin, et al, 2002).

### **Purpose of the Study**

Students from culturally diverse backgrounds in the United States, especially Middle Eastern students, might experience difficulties engaging in their classes or lose motivation due to cultural gaps between themselves and their teachers. Many teachers have insufficient cultural awareness and training of the Middle Eastern cultures, which could negatively reflect on their abilities to communicate and engage students from this area. Therefore, the principal goal of this study is to gain a clear understanding of teachers' conceptions and attitudes toward their Middle-Eastern students in the field of multicultural education. And how teachers effectively implement culturally relevant teaching practices while maintaining unbiased attitudes of the cultural background of their students. Ultimately, based on data that will be gathered through surveying teachers, this study will discuss the rationale for improving educators' awareness of the Middle-Eastern culture. Through identifying some authentic and accurate resource materials about the Middle East for teachers, and creating a professional development unit designed for teachers focused on promoting cross-cultural understandings to create more interactive classroom climates. By raising cultural awareness of often misunderstood cultures, the Middle-Eastern students' engagement in the schools may increase, resulting in an improvement in their academic achievement.

### **Research Questions**

This study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

- What information do teachers know about their Middle-Eastern students, and how can they effectively reflect that knowledge in their pedagogical approaches?
- How can teachers of culturally relevant pedagogy utilize the culture of their diverse students as a resource for classroom learning to improve the students' cognitive development?

### **Theoretical Model**

The theoretical model that provides support to form the basis of this study consists of two main theories in the multicultural education field: Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP). Among a large number of researchers who have studied and investigated how race and culture interact in the educational system, two scholars are prominent: Gloria Ladson-Billings and Geneva Gay, who have provided the groundwork on which most of the research on CRT and CRP are based.

Several scholars (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Milner, 2008) have written about the relationship between race and power in their effort to understand educational inequity. Ladson-Billings and Tate argue that Critical Race Theory (CRT) focuses on racism as a significant factor of inequality in the field of education. One of the main foundations of the CRT is acknowledging and recognizing the voices and knowledge of diverse ethnic groups (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). CRT also addresses how teachers should be interested in what is culturally appropriate or relevant for the culturally-diverse students in their classrooms to ensure equality in delivering quality learning opportunities for

students. Experiencing racism and bias, whether intentional or unintentional, in school may lead students of diverse cultural backgrounds to a pessimistic relationship with the educational process as a whole (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

Cultural Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) theory focuses on the importance of culture in schooling through assisting teachers in raising awareness about diversity as well as reflecting the diversity of multicultural students in the class in various pedagogical approaches (Gay, 2004). Ladson-Billings laid the groundwork for the culturally relevant pedagogy in 1995. CRP theory stresses that teachers need to be cognizant of the cultural backgrounds of their students in order to create an effective teaching style in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This theory also focuses on the importance of the teacher as a bridge between student's home and school cultures.

Both CRT and CRP theories will be adopted by this study as a foundation to further investigate the effective implementation of CRP in the field of multicultural education. The main focus of the study will be teachers' knowledge and attitudes of the cultural backgrounds of their Middle-Eastern students as a means of creating effective facilitators of learning in a culturally diverse classroom.

### **Researcher Background**

Having been born, raised, schooled in the Middle East, and then immigrating to the United States in my early twenties to continue my education gave me the first hand awareness of the vast difference in cultural values between the Middle-Eastern and American cultures and how that plays a significant role in the classroom environment. Additionally, prior to my current position as an Assistant Professor of the Arabic language and culture at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, CA, I worked in

multiple positions with various international education programs between the U.S. and the Middle East. In my previous experiences over the years and current job, I observed how the cross-cultural communication, especially between Americans and Middle Eastern, could be challenging due to the vast cultural gap between the two cultures.

Unfortunately, this cultural gap grew larger over the last decade, especially after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, when the media coverage focus shifted to reporting mainly news and stories on terrorism, insurgency, political conflicts, religious conflicts, and violence (Kamalipour, 2004). Middle Eastern students in the U.S. schools represent more than 15 countries and share many similarities with other immigrant groups seeking to establish an ethnic identity in a heterogeneous country, but they also face additional challenges due to negative stereotyping, intentional or unintentional racism, and widespread misinformation about their history and culture (Jackson, 1995).

From my own experience as an Iraqi in U.S. classrooms there seemed to be some teachers that chose to communicate with me differently than my peers, even at a college level. “You must be very happy to be safe and alive here” was the response from one teacher after I introduced myself to the whole class. I still remember how that statement made me feel like I was in a refugee camp rather than in a classroom where I am supposed to be challenged to increase my knowledge base and improve my skills in an equitable learning environment. This uninformed cultural remark negatively affected my motivation, engagement, and participation in that class. In addition, my friends from the Middle East have also shared some similar experiences in different U.S classrooms at different levels of education, which have adversely influenced their academic

performance in the past. These stories led me to wonder what my teachers really knew about my country, the means by which they learn about it, and their main sources of information about not only Iraq, but also the Middle East.

It is my belief that educators need to be better prepared and have access to accurate and authentic sources to learn about the various cultures of this region so they would know how to respond to possible prejudice toward these students resulting from negative news reporting (Suleiman, 1996). Therefore, in this study I will survey a group of teachers who have or have had Middle Eastern students in their classrooms. My aim is to learn more about how teachers perceive Middle-Eastern students, specifically what sources of information they are using to learn about the culture of their students and what they perceive as a challenge in responding to students from this region.

### **Definition of Terms**

- **Academic Achievement:** The outcome of education, the performance of student, teacher or institution to meet their educational goals (Rivkin, 2005).
- **Critical Race Theory (CRT):** Academic discipline focused upon the application of critical theory, a critical examination of society and culture, to the intersection of race, law, and power. Critical race theory is often associated with many of the controversial issues involved in the pursuit of equality issues related to race and ethnicity.
- **Cross Cultural Training:** Training in communicative, behavioral, and attitudinal skills required for successful interaction with individuals of other cultures (Moodley, 1995).

- **Cultural Responsive Practices (CRP):** According to Lee (2010), CRP is a set of educational practices that respond to all students from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- **Culture Gap:** Any systematic difference between two cultures, which hinders mutual understanding or relations.
- **Intercultural Communication:** Verbal and nonverbal communication among people of different cultures.
- **Middle East:** Simply refers to the area between Libya to Afghanistan, usually including Egypt, Sudan, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the other countries of the Arabian Peninsula. Formerly the area included Afghanistan, India, Tibet, and Burma (Lewis, 1968).
- **Motivation:** A hypothetical construct to explain the initiation, direction, intensity, and persistence of goal-directed behavior (Good & Brophy, 1977, p. 328).
- **Multicultural Education:** Teaching methods that are inclusive of more than one ethnic group and designed to help participants clarify their own ethnic identity and appreciate that of others, promote cultural awareness, and reduce prejudice and stereotyping (Nieto, 1992).
- **Teaching Methods:** Ways of presenting instructional materials or conducting instructional activities.



## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Teachers' knowledge, conception, and awareness of their students' diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences, in this case Middle eastern, facilitate their tasks in getting those students motivated to learn and engaged in the class. However, limited or insufficient cultural awareness might negatively affect the teachers' abilities to communicate and engage students who belong to culture.

This literature review will present the findings of several studies that have addressed the importance of educational practices and policies that mirror students' diverse cultures, and why the Middle Eastern culture is highlighted in this study. The findings will be organized in response to three correlated critical questions that approached the issue from correlated angles. First, focusing on the importance of teacher knowledge and attitudes toward their multicultural students to effectively implement and incorporate a culturally relevant pedagogy in U.S classrooms. Next, analyzing the issue through the lens of diversity to understand how diverse student bodies can positively contribute in creating a better educational environment for all students. Finally, why this study is focused on exploring teachers' conception toward their current or prospective Middle Eastern students in the U.S. classroom.

Before reviewing the two questions and their answers, it would be beneficial to have a clear explanation of the term culture. In a traditional sense, culture refers to the collective knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving (Li & Karakowsky, 2001). However and for the main

purpose of this paper the definition of culture in an intercultural communication context will be emphasized.

In an article by Agar (1994), culture is defined as knowledge that fills in the spaces and gaps between people; it is not a term that highlights differences and creates discord. As an anthropologist, Agar explains that the effort to develop cross-cultural communication is a noble yet challenging one and can be due to the use of the old concept of the word culture. He proposes a contemporary concept of culture in intercultural communication, defined as solving the problem among people who are engaged in a common task to perform it properly. Thus the second definition of the term culture seems to be a more suitable approach to promote cross-cultural understanding in a classroom or campus where native-born and immigrant students seek equal learning opportunities.

### **How would culturally conscious teachers implement cultural responsive practices?**

A large number of researchers have investigated the impact of culturally responsive teaching or pedagogy in creating a better learning environment for students, especially those who are from different academic and ethnic backgrounds. Scholars have referred to the culturally responsive ways of instructions using different terms, such as cultural responsive pedagogy (Villegas, 1991), culturally sensitive (Boyer, 1993), culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000), and culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) (Ladson-Billings, 1995). According to Ladson-Billings, CRP stresses that teachers need to be knowledgeable and inclusive of the cultural backgrounds of their students in order to create an effective teaching style in the classroom.

Unfortunately, some literature suggests that students of diverse cultural

backgrounds are often being viewed as less capable learners by many teachers due to their limited knowledge about the students' cultural backgrounds (Nieto, 1996). Teachers need to know more about their students' lives, such as students' immigration history, family makeup, and favorite activities, to be able to teach CRP in a meaningful engaging way. However, teachers should be careful to avoid generic information about a specific culture that might lead to negative stereotypes (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Lee (2010) defined CRP as a set of educational practices that respond to all students from diverse cultural backgrounds, and should be incorporated in all grade levels teaching. CRP would minimize the cultural discontinuity for students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Thus, it helps them transition successfully from their country to the school culture, which demonstrate the inadequate traditional instructional approaches that failed to provide. Lee references Cummins' (1986) argument that "students can be disabled by instructions that denies, devalues, or ignores students' language and culture" (as cited in Lee, p.461). By implementing CRP, students will be more responsive, passionate and engaged in a curriculum that mirrors their identities and experiences. Lee referenced a review of empirical studies that documented the implementation of CRP to immigrant students. In one example provided by Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti (2005), Latino students from Mexico reported being more engaged and communicative to a curriculum unit that was developed to achieve relevance between the subjects taught in the classroom and real-life experiences. The teacher designed this curriculum unit after observing those students practicing selling candies upon their return from Mexico. In this curriculum unit, students learned about the economics of marketing and conducted analysis based on their skills in selling candies.

Another study by Moll and Diaz (1987) shows that students are more engaged when they are interested in the topic and materials learned. A teacher, who knew his community interest in speaking two languages, formed a task requiring students to do a survey of the community members' opinion about mono--lingualism. Implementing this task gave opportunity to students to increase their awareness about issues of importance to their community as well as developing purposeful writing and social skills. When immigrant students are given learning opportunities and tasks that are of interest to them, it reflects positively on their performance and academic achievements.

Similarly, the following study by Nykiel-Herbert (2012), confirms the impact of culturally relevant pedagogy and teacher's cultural awareness on improving academic performance for immigrant students. Nykiel-Herbert, who is an immigrant from Eastern Europe, stresses on the important role of teachers to implement culturally relevant teaching practices, as well as classroom activities suitable to their students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Her article presented findings and data as result of the application of an intervention program for 12 Iraqi refugee students in grade 3 through 5, age 8 through 11 in urban school in the state of New York. The intervention program was specifically designed for low-performing Iraqi students as an alternative to sending them to special education. The curriculum and the teaching methods in this one-year program were planned to match the Iraqi children's cultural norms and values. The main focus was on helping Iraqi students acquire English language skills. As a result, students who participated in this program performed better in the end of year test of English literacy. Moreover, the teachers in the intervention program initially utilized alternative reading materials that were generated by the students themselves based on their stories and

experiences. The familiar content of the materials taught encouraged the Iraqi children to become more engaged in the classroom discussions. Finding the connection between their own life experiences and the curricula motivated them to break through their cultural shyness and becoming more interactive in the classroom and improved their learning.

**How can culturally diverse student bodies create more active learning environment?**

Students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds can contribute positively in enhancing the educational experience for Caucasian and minority students by creating a better learning environment and fostering untraditional intellectual engagement.

Researchers have long argued this hypothesis with no empirical evidence up until a group of professors tested the theory and presented the results in an article published in the Harvard Educational Review by Gurin, et al, (2002). The authors argue that culturally diverse student bodies create a more active learning environment that better serves the educational outcomes in schools and universities through harnessing the power of peer group interaction for student learning and development. Moreover, students benefit more from a learning environment that reflects social and cultural diversity and would positively affect the content of what is learned “intended to break down the narrow certainties and provincial vision with which we are born” (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 1985, as cited in Gurin et. al, 2002, p. 336).

The text presented individual and multi-institutional data underlining the educational importance of informal interaction among students from different ethnic and racial backgrounds. They conducted two studies using two databases; one from the University of Michigan and one from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program. Similar strategies were followed in both studies; for example, students were surveyed

upon entering the University of Michigan in 1990 and again four years later. The participants in the surveys were African American, Asian, Latinos, and White students, most of whom came from segregated communities that did not provide them with opportunities to interact with peers from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds up until they entered college. The data collected were useful in measuring educational benefits that a diverse classroom or campus environment provides for students by creating an engaging atmosphere through encouraging active thinking, intellectual experimentation, and variety of academic skills. The study draws a direct link between diversity in learning environment and its effects on educational outcomes. However, one limitation to this study is that only students were surveyed but teachers and faculty members were not included. Surveying teachers might help in confirming the students' enhanced academic growth and development as a result of interaction with their multicultural peers.

### **Why Middle Eastern Students?**

Although Middle Eastern students share many similarities with other immigrant groups adjusting and adapting to the school culture and the education system in the U.S. but the number of Middle Eastern students in the U.S. public schools is increasing; and they also face additional challenges due to culture, race and religion negative stereotypes (Jackson, 1995; Mahrous & Ahmed, 2010).

First, according to the UNHCR statistics, for roughly the last two decades large areas of the Middle East have been afflicted by more continuous and overlapping crises, political conflict and arbitrary violence. Therefore, the number of Middle Eastern refugees seeking resettlement has noticeably increased in United States (UNHCR, 2015). In addition, based on an analysis report to examine the demographic characteristics of

Middle Eastern immigrants conducted by the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) released data from the Census Bureau. The report indicates that Middle Easterners are one of the fastest growing immigrant groups in America, and since 1970 the number of immigrants from the Middle East “has grown more than seven-fold” (p.2). As the number of Middle Eastern students in U.S. public schools has increased, so has the need to understand the strategies for successfully integrating them.

Fuller (1991) addressed some of the challenges that Middle Eastern students face in American schools due to negative stereotypes. In her study “Taking Terrorism into the Classroom,” Fuller, as an educator, aims to help her students understand the relationship between international terrorism, media and learning. Fuller presents her observations after adopting role-playing in her classroom in order to explore the new stereotypes of Middle Eastern people, especially after the increasing shift in media coverage to focus on terrorism. She reported that after a number of exercises, students became more open with each other, and were able to see how the media had influenced their past assumptions about students from other cultures (Fuller, 1991).

### **Conclusion**

The results of the studies cited above highlighted critical key issues and correlated strategies to help students from different ethnic and cultural background excel in their academic growth. This could have a powerful and positive impact in building a better cross-cultural understanding that benefit not only immigrant students, but native born students too. However, it appears there has been little research done on how teachers communicate and interact with their Middle Eastern students while maintaining unbiased attitudes. Therefore, this study will focus on understanding teachers’ conceptions toward

their Middle-Eastern students and what challenges they may face in communication with them in the field of multicultural education. Ultimately, and based on the data gathered through surveying teachers, this study will discuss the rationale for improving awareness of Middle-Eastern culture in the U.S. classrooms.



### **Chapter 3: Research Methods**

#### **Introduction**

As stated in chapter one, the main goal of this study was to gather data in order to gain a clear understanding of the level of teachers' knowledge of their Middle Eastern students. The study also focused on learning how elementary school teachers utilize the information about the cultures and experiences of their Middle-Eastern students as a resource to improve students' engagement and motivation. This chapter will provide details of the study's setting, description of the participants, and description of data collection and analysis to answer the following research questions:

- 1- What information do teachers know about their Middle-Eastern students, and how can they effectively reflect that knowledge in their pedagogical approaches?
- 2- How can teachers of culturally relevant pedagogy utilize the culture of their diverse students as a resource for classroom learning to improve the students' cognitive development?

#### **Overall Research Design**

This study focused on elementary school teachers because they play a significant role at this stage in their students' lives. According to Hill and Brown (1998), early and middle childhood "is a period when children and the other key players in their lives negotiate an increasingly complex and fast-changing world" (p.137). Children at this stage need more attention to make them feel like they belong in the classroom, and engage them intellectually.

Twenty elementary school teachers were surveyed who previously had, currently have, or will have students from the Middle East in their classrooms at two local elementary schools. An online survey was created as an assessment to gain insight into the teachers' knowledge and perceptions about their Middle Eastern students; and to identify what kind of information they need to know about this culture in order to help them interact and communicate more effectively with these students. Teachers were asked to report on their own experiences working with Middle Eastern students. The survey data was analyzed for common themes and used as a foundation to create the professional development session for teachers about the Middle East culture, and identify specific resource materials for teachers to access accurate information about this culture. The cultural training and recommended recourses provide an opportunity for teachers to increase their knowledge of some key cultural values of Middle Eastern students to increase the engagement and motivation of those students in the classroom.

### **Setting**

The educators who agreed to participate in my study work at three different local schools on the California Central Coast:

***School 1.*** Romeo Elementary School (pseudonym) is located at the central coast and is one of five schools in Unified School District. Many Middle Eastern parents send their children to this elementary school because it is close to a local international language school where they are currently working. As stated in the school website, Romeo Elementary School is a public school that serves approximately 491 students consisting of 66.8% White, 13.4% Hispanic, 9% Asian-Pacific Islander, and 2% African-American. The remaining 8.6% consist of ethnic categories including two or more races.

Since the percentage of Middle Eastern students is considered high in this school compared to other elementary schools in the area, fourteen teachers who teach across grades K-5 were selected to participate in my survey.

***School 2.*** Novus Elementary School (pseudonym) is a public school located in rural area; it's one of four elementary schools in the local school district. Novus Elementary School operates from August 6 to May 29, and serves approximately 535 students from kindergarten through fifth grade, and has an overall student-to-teacher ratio of 27:1. The students demographics consist of 68% Hispanic, 17% Asian, 0.22% Pacific Islander, 1.57% Native American, and 3.37% African-American. In addition to standard statewide class curriculum, Novus Elementary School offers special education programs. Since the percentage of Middle Eastern students in this school is low compared to other races, only six schoolteachers participated in the survey.

***School 3.*** Agnosco educational organization (pseudonym) for undergraduate education houses a number of schools that teach basic courses of several international languages including Middle Eastern; Asian, and European. The Middle Eastern languages include: Persian Farsi, Turkish, and Arabic with a focus on three dialects: Iraqi, Levantine, and Egyptian. The student population consists of all four branches of the U.S. Military, and members sponsored by the Department of Defense and Department of State. The Middle Eastern language schools are responsible for 48-64 weeks of instruction in the targeted languages. In addition to languages, instructors at Agnosco teach culture, customs, religion, and geography of the countries students are learning about.

## **Participants**

Two groups of educators participated in the study. The first group consisted of 20 elementary school teachers from Schools 1 and 2. The second group involves two foreign language professors working at one of the Middle Eastern Schools at Agnosco for international languages. Involving these two groups of participants, who have had various experiences in education, helped to ensure that the final products of my study fulfilled the needed requirements for the main goal of the study, which aimed to improve the intercultural understanding and communication between teachers and their Middle Eastern students in the classroom.

***Participant Group 1.*** Participants of the first group were selected based on the following criteria: they had, have or will have Middle Eastern students in the classroom; they are working with elementary school aged students; they are either novice or experienced teachers, and they were willing to take the survey and respond to any follow-up questions for the purposes of this study. The teachers were Caucasian women and their ages ranged from mid-twenties to mid-forties. The participants had positions in elementary schools across the county. Fourteen of the teachers were at Romeo Elementary School and the other six at Novus Elementary School.

***Participant Group 2.*** The second group of participants was selected based on the following criteria: they are currently working at Agnosco in the Monterey County area and are native to the Middle East region; the professors must have had at least five years of experience teaching culturally-infused language classes to non-native speakers; the participants were willing to review the professional development about the Middle East culture and provide feedback to confirm accuracy and usefulness of the training content.

In addition, they were encouraged to recommend additional authentic materials that might better serve the main goal of this training for teachers.

Individuals in both participating groups are ideal for this study because they contributed to two essential components for this study. The elementary school teachers provided feedback to inform the content of the professional development session and the website that will be developed. In addition, the professors will help to confirm that the content is appropriate and is focused to promote mutual understanding between the teachers and their Middle Eastern students to improve students' academic achievements. A brief outline of the professional development session is provided in appendix B.

### **Data Sources**

I completed this research by utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods; the data sources included an electronic survey. The survey was designed to identify teachers' knowledge of their Middle Eastern students, and to allow local elementary schools teachers to share some general and specific information about their experiences with these students in the classroom. For example, questions three and four in the survey were specifically designed to gauge teachers' cultural knowledge of the region. Question three is a closed question asking the participants if they have ever been to the Middle East? The reason I included this type of question is due to the stereotypes and clichés about the Middle East and the limited accessibility of accurate recourse materials to learn about this region, as presented in chapter two, sometimes visiting one or more countries in that region might be very significant to improve cultural awareness. In addition, the teachers are asked open-ended questions such as; what kind of information they know

and need to know about students who come from this particular culture to be incorporated in their instructional approaches in the classroom.

### **Data Collection and Procedures**

The first step in starting my project was constructing the online survey. As a teacher myself, I know that teachers, especially in elementary schools, are always busy planning lessons, grading papers, and dealing with children and their problems. I anticipated that it would be easier for them to respond to my questions on their own free time rather than taking the time to be interviewed. Further, electronic questionnaires are more practical than interviews, not only due time constrictions, but also considering the sensitivity of the topic investigated. Participants know the purpose of the questions being asked for this study and are able to answer on a personal level but are not stressed by the face-to-face pressure of an interview.

I designed the survey to consist of closed, multiple choice, and open-ended questions. The main reason for using these different types of questions is that participants aren't limited to a predetermined set of possible answer choices, which leads to collect a rich pool of genuine opinions from teachers. While the closed and multiple choice questions help gather the quantitative data for my research; the open-ended questions will allow teachers to elaborate on their personal concerns, perspectives, and experiences. The answers to the open-ended questions will provide the qualitative data to complete the foundation on which my final analysis will be based. Knowing that, these questions will be more in depth and are developed after the completion of the literature review on mainly improving the engagement of the Middle-Eastern students in the classroom, and bridging the cultural gap between them and their teachers (see Appendix A).

I contacted the two groups of participants at the targeted local schools through my point of contacts. After making the initial contact with the teachers and gaining the initial consent for their participation, I e-mailed the survey to them so that they would complete it. I allowed three to four weeks time to wait for responses from teachers. The survey was administered electronically via attaching a link to the e-mail for easy access.

### **Data Analysis**

In the second phase of the study I analyzed the data after receiving the survey responses from all the twenty teachers. I analyzed the data collected for common themes and used that as a foundation to create the professional development session. The responses were coded under a combination of preset categories and new categories that came about as a result of reviewing the responses to the open-ended questions. The preset categories included: the kind of information participants need to know about the Middle-Eastern students, what is perceived as a challenge in their communication with those students, and what classroom practices and approaches were found to be successful in creating a more engaging learning environment for them. Then, the data was examined for any common preferred type of information needed to be included in the final product of this research. Analyzing the data this way helped in identifying useful resource materials about the Middle East, and creating a professional development for elementary schoolteachers to promote a better understanding of this culture. Doing so ensured that the cultural training would meet the teachers' needs and suggestions to increase awareness about their Middle Eastern culture in the classroom. In addition, I will create a website to gather a number of reliable resources of both books and websites to assist teachers in accessing more specific information about the Middle-Eastern culture and

traditions.

After analyzing the data and creating the professional development, I sent it to the second group of participants who are currently working at Agnosco as language and culture instructors. The two participants were asked to evaluate and assess the professional development session to check for credibility, validity and accuracy of the content. They were also asked to respond to four questions after completing their review (see Appendix C). The purpose of these questions was mainly focused on suggestions about what cultural information would be most helpful to bridge the cultural gap between teachers and their Middle-Eastern students in the classroom. In addition, they may provide recommendations for more ways to improve this training based on their established academic experiences in teaching languages and culture of that region.

Finally, the schoolteachers, who completed my survey and expressed an interest in participating my professional development session, were contacted through the school principal to arrange a suitable time and place for them to attend the training. After delivering the training, I will ask the teachers to evaluate the training and recourses delivered (see Appendix D) in order to provide constructive feedback that will help me improve the content of the session in the future.

### **Summary**

By completing the research in this way, I ensured that the final product of this research is neither based on a small number of teachers who work at one school nor on my own experience and research about this topic. Instead, the product is a result of a sufficient number of educators with diverse experiences and backgrounds.



Additionally surveying participants electronically not only allowed them enough time to think and digest the questions asked; but also provided a detailed picture of what their opinions are in their own words, and also to know how many people felt that way.

## Chapter 4: Findings

### Introduction

This chapter will provided analysis of the data collected by surveying the two groups of elementary schoolteachers from both schools to answer my research questions:

- 1- What information do teachers know about their Middle-Eastern students, and how can they effectively reflect that knowledge in their pedagogical approaches?
- 2- How can teachers of culturally relevant pedagogy utilize the culture of their diverse students as a resource for classroom learning to improve the students' cognitive development?

As stated in chapter three, the data and the findings were classified into four main preset-categories derived from my aforementioned research questions; and subordinate categories that emerged after analyzing the data or to confirm data sources. All categories were established to review, analyze, and cross validate the collected data in a manner that is relevant to the research questions to mainly identify if the surveyed teachers have:

- Any misunderstanding or misconception about the culture of their Middle Eastern students.
- Have a need or interest to learn more about the Middle Eastern culture.
- What type of information about the Middle East culture that are most helpful to improve their awareness.
- Any preferred communication style with their Middle Eastern Students, or have communication issue.

Secondarily, sub-categories were added based on the findings that emerged after conducting the research such as:

- Confirming the targeted audience
- Significant findings included within the main four categories.

Table 1 provides an overview illustration of how the main data analysis categories were organized in corresponding to the most relevant survey questions, which were created based on the two research questions. The data analyzed in each category is of both types: quantitative gathered from responses to multiple choice and closed questions; and qualitative data that represent the answers to the open-ended questions and the additional comments added by the participants.

*Table 1*

Data Analysis Overview

Research Questions	Corresponding Survey questions	Categories
1. What information do teachers know about their Middle-Eastern students, and how can they effectively reflect that knowledge in their pedagogical approaches?	1-What grade level do you teach?	Confirming data sources
	2-Do you currently have or have you had Middle Eastern students in your classroom?	
	3- Have you ever visited the Middle East?	Misconception/Limited Knowledge
	4-Rate your knowledge of the Middle East on a scale from 1 to 10? 1 = Minimal Knowledge & 10 = Extensive Knowledge	
	8-Would professional development training enhances your knowledge of the Middle East and subsequently facilitates interaction with current and potential Middle Eastern students in your classroom?	Interest
10-Do you have any other comments, questions, or concerns?		
2. How can teachers of culturally relevant pedagogy utilize the culture of	5-What do you wish to know about your Middle-Eastern students? Please explain.	Information Type
	6- What do you think is the most effective way to communicate with students from the Middle East in the	

their diverse students as a resource for classroom learning to improve the students' cognitive development?	classroom? Please explain.	Communication
	7- Have you ever had any miscommunication issues with your students from the Middle East?	

**Teachers.** I administrated an electronic survey to gather both the qualitative and quantitative data while maintaining the participants' identity strictly confidential. Question one's purpose is to ensure the participants are elementary schoolteachers and work at either of the two schools included in my study. All the twenty respondents identified as Elementary School teachers who currently teach at the two-targeted schools.

**Middle eastern students.** Question two aimed to verify that the teachers have or had students from the Middle East in their classroom; and asked them to state which country in the Middle East their students are from. Eighty percent of teachers responded that they currently have Middle Eastern students, 5% were uncertain, and only 15% indicated that they have no students from the Middle East. It is possible that teachers who said they did not have Middle Eastern students may have them in the future because question two only specified the past and present and didn't include the future. As for the nationality of the Middle Eastern students who are enrolled in my participants classes, the responses indicated the following countries based on the number each was listed in the Table 2.

The data shows the students come from different countries in the Middle East who belong to different cultures within the region. Although there are similarities in some cultural values, there are apparent differences as well in the language and culture. For example, in Iran the language spoken is Farsi but in Turkey it is Turkish; and while

Yemen and Jordan both are considered Arabic speaking countries, the colloquial languages are different. This finding shows that despite the small number of Middle Eastern students in these two schools, they are very diverse in terms of their country of origin. This fact must be taken into consideration when learning about these students by teachers and that it must be highlighted in the professional development unit.

*Table 2*

*Middle Eastern countries listed based on teachers' responses*

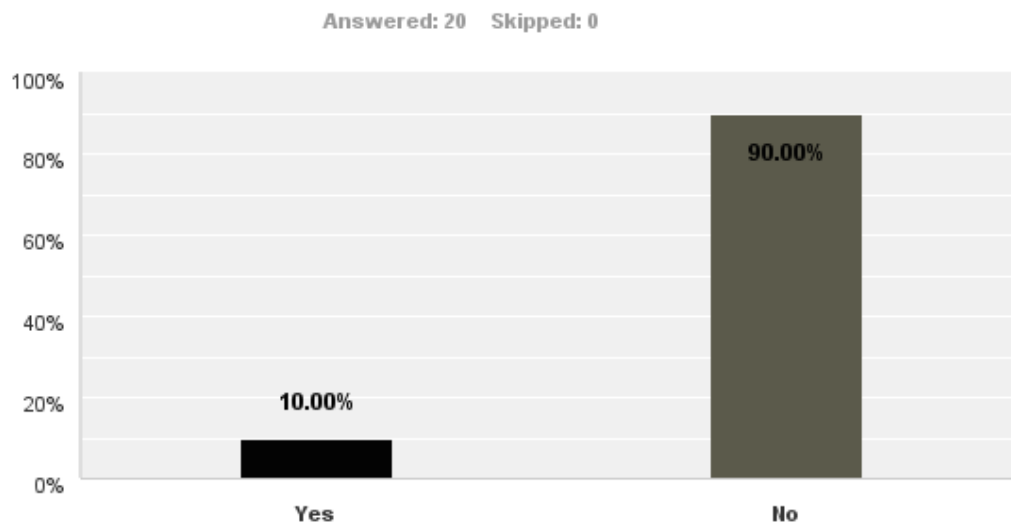
Country/Territory	Number of Times
Egypt	6
Saudi Arabia	3
Turkey	2
Yemen	2
Iran	1
Jordan	1
West Bank	1

*Note. West Bank is not a country; it is a territory.*

### **Misunderstanding of the Students Cultural Backgrounds**

**Misconception.** The First part of this significant finding suggests that most of the surveyed teachers have erroneous or inaccurate information regarding the Middle Eastern culture. Analysis of the survey data indicated that the majority was not familiar with the Middle East. One of the survey questions asked participants have you visited the Middle East and if so to indicate the name of the country visited. The graph below provides a visual representation of the response to this question. Of the 20 teachers 18 answered stating that they had never visited this region and only two participants indicated that they had visited the Middle East. However, one of the teacher's responded, "Pakistan, India, Born in Afghanistan." When analyzing this response it's clear to see that none of the three countries is considered part of the Middle East. Furthermore, in responding to the

last question in the survey regarding any additional comments participants want to add? One teacher straightforwardly stated, “There are some misconceptions about middle eastern children and their parents.” The data revealed that most of the teachers had little to no information about the Middle Eastern culture.



*Figure 1. Registration and count of teachers' responses to question three.*

**Limited knowledge.** The second part of the finding is demonstrated through viewing and analyzing the responses to question four, which asked teachers to rate their knowledge of the Middle East on a scale from one to ten. (1= Minimal Knowledge & 10 = Extensive Knowledge). The Likert scale was purposefully adopted in this question to allow teachers the liberty in rating their knowledge on a scale from 1 minimal to 10 maximum. When analyzing the data gathered by this question, the weighted average of the teachers' responses to was only 4.20. The highest percentage of participants selected number 3 in the knowledge scale as shown in the graph below. Number three is below number five, which represents the moderate or average knowledge about the Middle East culture according to the scale. Only two out of the twenty teachers selected number

seven, which is an indication of a higher knowledge scale than the other major responses. However, and by comparing the responses to ones analyzed in response to questions three, there is a high possibility that one of the two teachers who picked this answer was referring to knowledge about Afghanistan or Pakistan rather than the Middle Eastern. When analyzing and comparing the data gathered in this question, it's apparent that most teachers' responses have conveyed that they have a limited knowledge about their Middle Eastern students. As one teacher commented, "I do not want to accidentally offend someone with my lack of knowledge about their culture." Some of those teachers also realize that this limited knowledge might create a misunderstanding or miscommunication in the classroom.

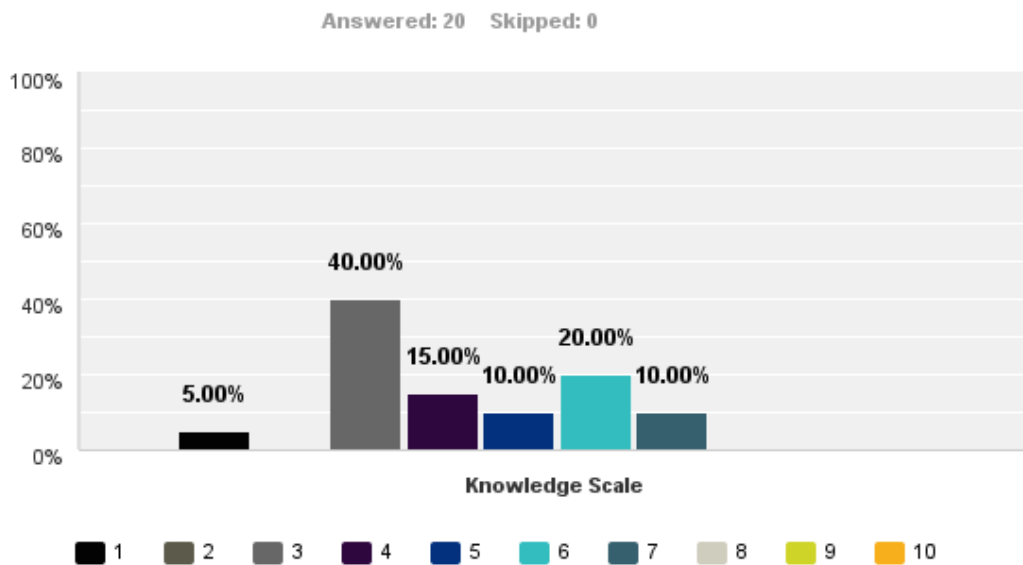


Table 1 Data Analysis Overview 1

Figure 2. Display of teachers' knowledge of the Middle Eastern culture.

**Teachers' Interest**

Although, it appears to be clear after analyzing the answers mainly to questions

three and four, most of the teachers seem to recognize that there is a gap in the knowledge about their Middle Eastern students and that this issue needs to be addressed. Question eight at the end of the survey aimed to ascertain if the participants are interested in taking a brief professional development about important aspects of the Middle East culture to improve and facilitate communication with their current or potential students who belong to this culture. Seventeen teachers selected “yes” and only three out of the twenty teachers selected “undecided”. None of the 20 teachers responded with “no” to this question. It is likely that the reason of the three teachers stated that they were uncertain is either their lack of interest or simply because they have a demanding schedule that may not allow them to participate in this training rather than the lack of interest. This assumption was based on one of the added comments by the respondents to the same question explaining, “I am open to learning more about this growing community of Middle Eastern learners but, honestly, am concerned about having time to do so. The little contracted time we have to collaborate, plan, and assess is already seriously hampered by meetings for new technology, curriculum, and other obligations. Good luck with your efforts!”

Nevertheless, as shown in the Figure 3, eighty percent of teachers showed a desire to participate and learn more about the Middle East culture not only by selecting yes but also noting in the comment box. For example, “I appreciate you reaching out and asking for input. Great idea!” More similar responses, which reflect the teachers’ genuine interest in participating in the professional development and that it can positively affect their teaching practices to the targeted students, are displayed in the Table 3.



Table 3

Teachers' notes expressing an interest to learn more about the culture of their Middle Eastern students

Question Eight	
Would professional development training enhance your knowledge of the Middle East and subsequently facilitate interaction with current and potential Middle Eastern students in your classroom?	
Respondents	Comment Text
Teacher 1	All information helps.
Teacher 2	I believe that understanding all cultural areas with professional development training would be beneficial to all teachers.
Teacher 3	I think talking about cultural norms in the middle east would give me a better understanding of my students. It would also help to ensure that I am best communicating with the parents and the student.
Teacher 4	Great idea! I feel it is important for us to be more aware of similarities and differences.
Teacher 5	It would be beneficial to learn more about the cultural needs of students from the Middle East in order to better serve them within the class.
Teacher 6	What are the best instructional practices?
Teacher 7	Discussion of how the Middle-Eastern culture influence students within an American public school: what teachers need to be aware of when teaching students from the Middle East.

Answered: 20 Skipped: 0

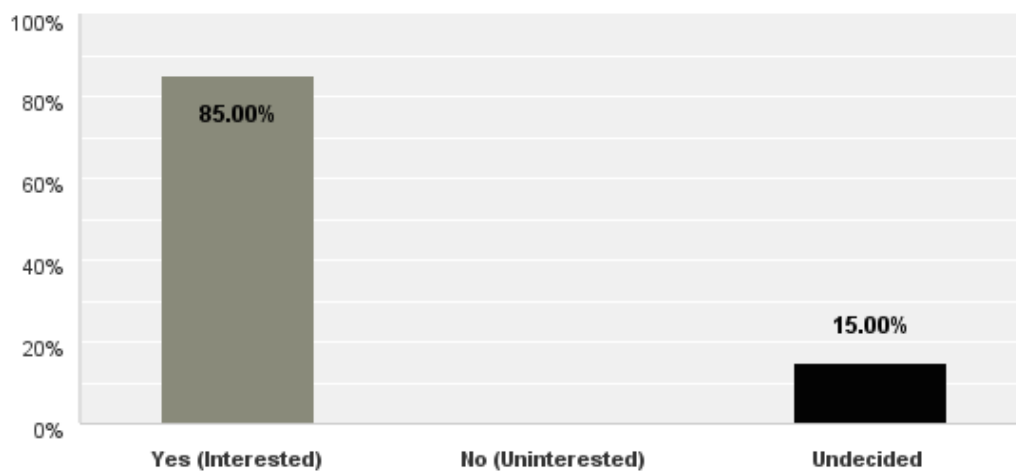


Figure 3. Visual Display of teachers interested in attending the training session.

**What Teachers Want to Know?**

When participants asked about the kind of information they want to learn about

their Middle Eastern students in question five, their responses varied in a positive sense. It seems like most of teachers' answers reflected a sincere desire to increase their awareness about different aspects of their Middle Eastern students' culture and background as reflected in their responses displayed in Table 4. The responses for question five were classified in three parts based on the most frequent themes among the responses, which mainly included: general cultural related information and educational differences as well as what can teachers do to help them fit in the new learning environment.

***Culture in general.*** "Their culture," "cultural believes," "cultural nuances," "cultural norms", and "more about their culture and heritage" were common phrases in majority of the responses. This finding suggests that teachers have shared an interest in getting more information about the Middle East culture to help in improving their understanding of it. This information can be related to the meaningful values of the culture that are either different, or similar in some cases, from the main or dominate culture of the school. Such as, customs, beliefs and family dynamics as some answers reveal (see Table 4). Nonetheless, some respondents communicated a curiosity in knowing the "cultural and religious expectations" so that she or he will not "offend students or families", which shows an attention paid by teachers to understand the students more. Moreover, one teacher asked, "Can girls sit next to boys?" Another added, "How much do boys and girls interact with the world outside of their home?" These questions mirror the realization by some teachers that there might be some very essential cultural information about these students they ought to know about, yet this information might not be accurately presented or introduced to them so they can grasp it

and apply it to their teaching appropriately.

***Educational.*** Several answers highlighted teachers' curiosity to learn about the educational system in the Middle East and how is it different than the U.S. This finding appears to be significant because it highlights the teachers' concern of the challenge their Middle Eastern students may face due to the differences between the education system at their home of origin and the US educational system. "Educational differences" one teacher responded, "expectations of educators/schools" another added, "Best instructional practices" another commented. Some of the answers provided specific details about what information of the education system will be of a great use to help the teachers be more mindful of these differences. One respondent specified, " It would be great to know at what age students enter school and the size of a typical public school class," and continued to add "I'd like to know more about pre-literacy activities and adult-child interactions." Moreover, another teacher's explained "How they best learn, are there cultural differences I, as their teacher, need to be aware of in order to best meet their educational needs."

After analyzing the responses, it seems that learning about the education style and system the Middle Eastern students are accustomed to is an essential concern of the teachers. Teachers' own experiences with Middle Eastern students, confirmed a need to pay a special attention to dissimilarities in education between the two education systems when learning about their students from this region. It is important to note that despite the differences between countries within the Middle East, similarities in learning and teaching styles are expected as they share some common cultures, languages, and life styles (Azizoglu, et al, 2011). This note is critical to be aware of when reviewing and

comparing the contrasting values in education between the U.S. and the Middle East in general.

*Helping students adapting to the school culture.* One of the most significant finding that emerged, after analyzing the teachers' response, is that the majority of teachers have expressed the importance to remain culturally sensitive to the students who come from this region. And what they need to be aware of to connect with those students and help them acclimate and adapt to the school culture. Apparently, as shown in Table 3, teachers have voiced a concern that some of those students might face challenges in adapting and fitting in as a result of misunderstanding their culture or having negative concepts about them. Additionally, the respondents asked what they can "do to make them feel they belong in America," and "I do not want to show disrespect by making the student do something that is contradictory to what she is taught at home." Additional similar responses are listed in the Table 4. These comments suggest that teachers are aware that students' lives in the classroom might be impacted due to the cultural difference, which might have negative affect on their learning.

### **Communication**

To understand the communication better between the elementary schoolteachers and their Middle Eastern students both qualitative and quantities data were gathered by the survey. The responses to questions six and seven, as presented in Table 1, provided answers to identify if there is a communication issues between the teachers and their Middle Eastern students and learn what communication style teachers find more helpful them.

Table 4

Three Main Types of Information were frequent in teachers' responses

Respondents	Response Text	Information Type
1	I would like to know more about the cultural and religious expectations.	General about Culture
2	History Culture, family dynamics, personal goals.	
3	All cultural beliefs	
4	Cultural norms so that I could better help my students to assimilate and feel comfortable in the classroom.	
5	More about customs	
6.a	I would like to better understand cultural norms and traditions.	
7.a	Cultural nuances	Educational
6.b	As well as how the school system works (ie: attitude toward teachers, expectations of parents, expectations of students, classroom management.)	
7.b	Expectations of educators/schools	
8	It would be great to know at what age students enter school and the size of a typical public school class. Additionally, I'd like to know more about pre-literacy activities and adult-child interactions. Is there a tradition of preschool?	
9	I would like know more about how middle eastern parents treat (educational wise) their children	
10	I would like to know more about how the culture may impact students' lives within the classroom.	
11	Social differences would be helpful to know as well in encouraging and supporting new friendships.	Helping students Adapt to the learning environment
12	I think that would be really helpful as a teacher because not only would I get to know my student better I would know how to connect with them and connect the learning to fit their needs and their interests.	
13	Maybe how they are feeling and if they are being mistreated or feel there are racial issues from a religious standpoint.	
14	As a teacher, it is important I remain culturally sensitive to each student. Because I do not	

	know much about the social norms of Middle-Eastern families, I do not know how to go about interacting with the student or the family.	
--	--	--

*Note. Teachers' responses were copied from the survey and not modified.*

**Communication issues.** This part of the finding shows the respondents stating the occurrence of only two main communication issues with their students from the Middle East. As shown in the graph below, only five out of the 20 teachers selected yes while the majority selected no when were asked if they ever had a miscommunication issue with these students. This can be a positive indication that either the issues in communication is very minimal or they have already figured out a way to resolve them. However, it has to be taken into consideration that possibly some teachers could have not yet identified an issue in the communication even exists. Since most of teachers have stated in responding to previous answers that their knowledge about the cultural information of these students is very limited and can be improved. Moreover, some have listed “ using Google translate” which is not an accurate way of translating and can lead to misunderstanding.

After analyzing the teachers responses to this question it seems like the main problem in communicating is resulting from the language barriers between the teachers and their students, “Communicating with students with no English Ex: Instruction in academics” as indicated in one respondent’s comment. In addition, students’ parents might also have very limited to no English language skills or ways of articulation and pronunciation to be fully comprehensible and may hinder the communication with the teachers. These challenges in communication were evident in the notes some teachers provided “I would say just the school to home communication when the parents have limited English,” and “ yes, partially because of the articulation errors that occur in English that sometimes makes it very difficult to understand what they are saying.” Based

on these answers, it's obvious that due to language barriers, ways of expression between the teachers and students and their parents is described to be the main block in the communication.

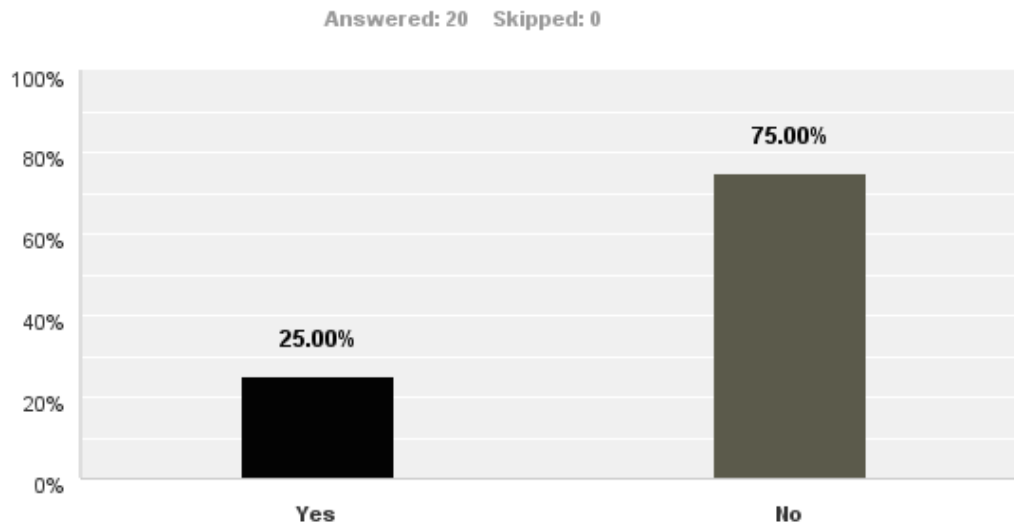


Figure 4. *Teachers' responses to question number seven.*

**Communication style.** This part is focused on learning what communication style or mode teachers use or find more effective when interacting with Middle Eastern students. Many teachers have provided excellent responses to this question and it seems that they have a good experience to know how to interact in appropriate manner and adjust their approaches to students who come from a different culture. Teachers have listed a variety of ways they use to interact effectively with Middle Eastern students. These ways ranged from basically talking “Connecting with them through talking,” visual “ I use a lot of visual aids depending on their stage of English language development,” to variety of modes, respectful manner, and understanding more about the students and their families. One teacher provided for example “If you know your students then you have a much easier time of connecting with them and developing a relationship that facilitates

learning,” more detailed answers are presented in Table 5. In addition, respondent number three highlighted using face-to-face communication with Middle Eastern students as the best mode based on his or her experience “I think the most effective way to communicate would be face-to-face, using expression and gestures and picture cues, if necessary.” When reviewing the responses, it seems like most of the surveyed teachers seem to pay attention to the way they communicate with their students in the aim of reaching a better understanding. However, some teachers also expressed a concern that students from this culture seem to be shy and not active in the classroom and that they have limited interaction with them. Teachers stated, “My interactions with students from the Middle East in the classroom is very limited,” and “The students I have had from the Middle East have been respectful, yet quiet in the classroom.”

After analyzing the data in regard to the communication mode it shows that the teachers who participated in this survey recognize that communication can be challenging with Middle East students due to language and culture differences, and therefore, each of them is adopting a communication mode that may work better than the other. The use of face-to-face communication, for example, indicated a good sign of understanding and adopting the method that works best based on the students’ cultural background. The responses, however, still show that the challenges for some still persist and students might be inactive or very shy. This issue can simply be due to difference in cultural values between where the students come from verses the culture of the classroom



Table 5

*Various communication modes adopted by the teachers*

Respondents	Response Text	Communication Mode
1	I like having several modalities to communicate. As a SLP, I prefer written in combination with presenting the information orally in English. I would also then check for understanding (Just like I would do with any other student who has the capacity to understand the information provided).	Varity of Modes
2	All modes of communication. Pictures, gestures, words etc.	
3	I think the most effective way to communicate would be face-to-face, using expression and gestures and picture cues, if necessary.	
4	Using multi- sensory instructional practices	
5	Lots of hands on items, pictures. etc.	
6	Communicate in a clear compassionate manner that is respectful of their beliefs and culture.	Respectful Manner
7	I think the most effective way to communicate would be in a respectful manner like all my students and a knowledgeable manner.	
8	With respect and inclusion	
9	I believe the best way would be to get to know that family individually by meeting with the parents and conducting ongoing conversations to get to know the needs and wants of the family.	Understanding Students
10	Always set a time when needed. Include the family mother, dad and child	
11	I prefer talking with the parents and students together to understand what the home and school expectations are and how I can best accommodate them.	
12	To have an understanding of their interests and background.	

Note. SLP = Speech-Language Pathologist

**Summary**

This chapter discussed my findings both qualitatively and quantitatively. The data gathered by the teacher's survey was analyzed in several categories that are relevant to answer both research questions. Through identifying mainly how teachers perceive and communicate with their middle eastern students and if they are interested to learn more about this culture to improve their classroom interaction with them.

The data provided some significant findings that were utilized as a base in creating my professional development unit for teachers about the Middle Eastern culture. Moreover, these findings were also useful in identifying useful authentic resource materials to recommend for teachers to use when they want to learn more about the Middle East. The following chapter will present a discussion of the overall study and results. It will also provide limitations that may have impacted the study as well as an action plan.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **Introduction**

This chapter presents a discussion of the overall study focused on the following research questions: What kinds of information do teachers know about their Middle-Eastern students, and how can they effectively reflect that knowledge in their pedagogical approaches? How can teachers of culturally relevant pedagogy utilize the culture of their diverse students as a resource for classroom learning to improve the students' cognitive development? These two questions were answered by surveying 20 elementary school teachers who have Middle Eastern students in their classrooms and serve in two different schools in the Monterey area. I will summarize the purpose of the study in relevance to the main ideas from the literature reviewed in Chapter two, as well as the findings and discuss the implications of the findings. This chapter will also include the limitations noted when doing the research and an action plan that includes the professional development session and website designed to raise awareness about the Middle Eastern culture.

### **Study Overview**

The focus of this study was to determine the level of elementary schoolteachers' knowledge and perceptions about their Middle Eastern students and if they have misconception that may lead to stereotyping. This study also examined what communication style teachers adopt when communication with students from the Middle East and if there is any reported miscommunication issues due to the lack of cultural understanding. Additionally, participants in the study were asked to identify what kind of

information is most essential for them to know about this culture to improve their communication and interaction with those students.

Literature in this area has shown the importance of teachers' awareness of the cultural backgrounds of their diverse students as well as understanding how to communicate with them effectively to facilitate their learning. Scholars emphasized that it is essential for teachers to be more culturally aware of the diverse cultures in the classroom, to help them create a more engaging learning environment. However, teachers should be careful to avoid generic information about a specific culture that might lead to negative stereotypes (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Furthermore, culturally informed teachers can be more successful when incorporating culturally sensitive teaching practices (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Moreover, previous research disclosed that teachers who are well aware of their diverse students' backgrounds and experiences will foster cross-cultural interaction and communication in the classroom that reflects positively on their students' learning outcomes (Nykil-Herbert, 2010). The study focused on Middle Eastern students in particular because they face additional challenges compared to other immigrant students due to the major differences in education between the U.S., and cultural, racial and religious stereotypes (Fuller, 1991; Mahrous & Ahmed, 2010 Jackson, 1995).

### **Discussion of Findings and Implications**

Using quantitative and qualitative data analysis, my findings revealed that the gap in most teachers' knowledge still persists about their Middle Eastern students. As stated in chapter three, these findings will be used as a base to create a professional development unit for elementary schoolteachers. Therefore, I will be discussing them in themes that are relevant to what was identified in the findings and responding to teachers

inquires.

***Misconceptions of the middle eastern culture.*** The Middle East is a common word in the news, especially when it comes to political and military conflicts, and this has been the case in the last three or four decades. Despite the attention given to the region's current affairs, and political future, it continues to be a misunderstood area when it comes to knowledge about cultural norms, beliefs, and nuances. Most of the participating teachers have showed that their knowledge of the Middle East culture is very minimal (see Figure 2, p. 31). Additionally, some answers reflected teachers' misconception about the basic information of this region such as, name of the countries within the region. Thus, the introductory portion of the professional development unit will provide quick facts about the Middle East such as number of countries, various ethnicities in each country, languages spoken, etc. Teachers also need to be aware that while countries in the Middle East share some similarities such as language, religion, and traditions; they are different in other ways. Such differences are a result of the gaps in the social and economic standards and political influences in each of these countries (Azizoglu, Junghans, Barutchu, Grewther, 2011; Mahrous & Ahmed, 2010).

***Communication Style.*** Although some teachers have shared some excellent examples of communication modes they have adopted with their Middle Eastern students (refer to Table 4, p. 37), some challenges were reported such as different culture and language between the two that can lead to misunderstanding.

Different communication styles between the two cultures can be mainly due to related contrasting cultural values such as directness versus indirectness and high context versus low context. By understanding the differences between the communication styles

in the Middle East when compared to those in the West, teachers in the West can approach their Middle Eastern students more effectively. Some communication styles in the West can be described as linear, direct, task-focused and low context (Ting-Toomey, 1982). In each of these styles, the person communicates with a clear focus on the point they are trying to make with high clarity to the point or task they are trying to explain to the other person. Meanwhile, communication styles in the Middle East can be described as circular, indirect, relationship-focused and high context. When one person communicates with another it is always based on high respect and praise to the other person, and almost never address them without a title. In a conversation context, people communicate in an elegant almost flowery language that is indirect and assumes the other person knows the information that they are being told.

***Education system.*** Most of the participants in the study have expressed and interest to gain more information and understanding of the education system in the Middle east and how that influence their learning styles of their students as shown in Table 3, p. 33. In general there are key distinct aspects between the American school system and the Middle Eastern one for teachers to be aware of; for example, student-centered versus teacher-centered and problem-solving based learning versus memorization and exam-oriented, as well as other contrasting educational values.

In their description of the unique characteristics of the educational environment in the Middle East, Mahrous and Ahmed (2010) talk about how teachers in public Middle Eastern schools tend to use direct lecturing illustrating concepts and reading from textbooks. Teachers also rely almost entirely on examinations creating an examination-oriented system that is dependent on memorizing facts and not on applying concepts.

Contrary to this, the educational and pedagogical approaches in Western countries such as the United States or United Kingdom tend to focus on interactive educational activities and assignments that bring up more complex problems in a practical learning way.

Furthermore, in the Middle East students hold their teachers in high regards and are treated with superiority. In return, students are expected to work hard to meet performance standards. Their course requirements focus entirely on their effort to read and memorize the assignments they are given and almost never asked to do a group project or activity (Mahrous & Ahmed, 2010). Thus, Middle Eastern immigrant students often struggle with the problem-solving approach and communication skills in Western schools.

***Critical information for teachers.*** Teachers have posed other inquiries in their responses to my survey in an effort to understand their Middle Eastern students more and not offend them. As presented in chapter four, these questions mostly revolved around questions such as, students' religious beliefs and interaction between girls and boys. Moreover one teacher requested that the professional development unit include "Discussion of how the Middle-Eastern culture influence students within an American public school: what teachers need to be aware of when teaching students from the Middle East?" Answers to these queries and concerns will be discussed in the following critical points, which are included in the professional development:

1. Religions and ethnicities: Religious practices/traditions and races vary in the same country and from one country to another. Not all Muslims are Middle Eastern and not all Middle Easterners are Muslim. Not all Middle Easterners are Arab. There

- are Kurds, Turks and Persians. Religious, cultural and ethnic diversity is vast in the Middle East and must not be generalized.
2. Liberal parent vs. conservative parent: The Middle East consists of secular and conservative states. In secular states there are conservative areas and people living there are very culturally timid. In secular parts of the country, families tend to be highly educated and of a middle-to high class social statuses. This affects the way they practice religion the ways they raise their children and encourage them to pursue their educational and career goals.
  3. Muslim vs. Islamic: It is important to understand the difference between “Islamic” and “Muslim” when addressing students. For instance “Ahmad is Muslim.” But you can’t say “Ahmad is Islamic.” You can say, “That building has Islamic architecture.” These minor definitions make major differences in regards to rhetoric and can be uninformed and inconsiderate.
  4. Cultural Do’s and Don’ts: “Do boys and girls sit next to each other?” As explained in the second point above, in secular parts of the Middle East, most families raise their children in somewhat liberal settings where they can attend a mixed school (boys and girls). While in the conservative parts of the country, students attend separate schools. If the student shows discomfort with sitting next to a peer of the opposite sex, it is important to understand that such discomfort is probably a result of growing up in a conservative/religious household. Generally, with elementary schools this should not be an issue.

### **Limitations**

The limitations regarding the study involve the number of participants and



therefore the limited generalizability of the findings to a broader context. The number of schools in the area who have Middle Eastern students allowed for including a limited number of eligible participants in the study. Surveying more than 20 elementary school teachers could have provided more data to produce a more comprehensive professional development that can be delivered and used by a broader population of elementary school teachers. This, however, can be the next step for expanding my professional development session in the future.

Another limitation relates to the sensitivity of the topic investigated in my research and not having direct contact with the participants. It can be challenging for many teachers to open up or admit they have issues in understanding some students in the classroom, especially Middle eastern or have misconception about them. Therefore, the electronic survey was adopted instead of conducting interviews with them. Although the online-survey provided privacy to the teachers and made them feel more comfortable responding to the questions; conducting face-to-face interviews might have yielded for more in-depth answers and discussions with participants.

### **Action Plan**

This project yielded significant findings that were apparent through analyzing the responses teachers provided that identified essential factors to highlight when bridging the knowledge gap between them and their students. Providing a professional development session to teachers and a website about the Middle East have deemed to be a practical way to address this cultural gap. Teachers became more aware that these issues has to be addressed and expressed an interest to participate in attending my professional development to promote a better understanding about the Middle east

culture, which can ultimately lead to a more enhanced communication and interaction with students from this culture. Additionally, mutual understanding between teachers and students can increase student engagement allowing for more class participation and peer interaction.

***Professional development session.*** Provides a brief training for elementary school teachers about the critical cultural awareness they need to have about their students from the Middle East (see appendix B). Two professors at Agnosco reviewed a draft of the professional development session. The professor's feedback and suggestions were used to improve the session. Doing so ensured that the cultural training would be comprehensive and on target to cover essential points as identified by the study. The initial date to deliver the cultural training to the teachers in both schools will be before the beginning of the next academic school year in 2015-2016. Following the professional development for teachers, I will ask for the participants' feedback to use for improving the professional development unit for the future.

***Website.*** After finalizing my professional development session, I began creating the website for teachers, which would be as a resource for them to learn more about the Middle Eastern culture. The website contains links to multiple resource such as textbooks, media, and other literacy materials in addition to the basic facts of each Middle eastern country. The website is easy to navigate and to locate information for teachers. The main page on the website includes the map of the Middle East. When users click on one of the countries in this map, Iraq for example, he or she will be prompted to another page where all the specific information links about that country will be listed. A blog was also included in the website where teachers can share their own stories and

experiences working with Middle Eastern students. The blog would serve as platform for teachers to discuss and collaborate with each other.

### **Conclusion**

As a language teacher and researcher, conducting the study raised my awareness and mindfulness to always remain informed of the cultures and experiences of my students to engage them better and keep them motivated. Promoting mutual understanding between teachers and their diverse students creates a better learning environment that is beneficial for both. Middle Eastern students share many similarities with other immigrant groups like seeking to establish an ethnic identity in a heterogeneous country. However, they also face additional challenges such as, stereotypes related to culture, race and religion.

This study will not only help educators become more aware of the challenges of Middle Eastern students but also help them explore methods to help those students acclimate to the school culture. Multiple solutions are addressed, including participating in professional development and utilizing recommended textbooks, media, and other literacy materials to promote understanding of Middle Eastern students' culture. Lastly, teachers cannot only serve as instructors in a classroom, but they can also provide help in various ways such as cooperating with students' parents to help acclimate their children to the school environment, using technology to facilitate their learning experiences, and providing bilingual instruction when mostly needed.

## References

- Agar, M. (1994). The international frame. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 18(2), 221-237.
- Al-Batal, Mahmoud. "Towards Cultural Proficiency in Arabic1." *Foreign language annals* 21.5 (1988): 443-453.
- Azizoglu, S., Junghans, B. M., Barutchu, A., & Grewther, S. G. (2011). Refractive errors in students from Middle Eastern backgrounds living and undertaking schooling in Australia. *Clinical and Experimental Optometry*, 94(1), 67-75.  
DOI:10.1111/J.14440938.2010.00563.x
- Brown-Jeffy, S., & Cooper, J. E. (2011). Toward a Conceptual Framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: An Overview of the Conceptual and Theoretical Literature. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 38(1), 65-84.
- Borland, M. (Ed.). (1998). Middle childhood: the perspectives of children and parents. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Boyer, J. B. (1993). Culturally sensitive instruction: An essential component of education for diversity. *Catalyst for Change*, 22(3), 5-8.
- Camarota, S. (2002, August 1). Immigrants from the Middle East. Retrieved February 4, 2015, from <http://cis.org/MiddleEasternImmigrantsProfile>
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2012). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. NYU Press.
- Dixson, A. D., & Rousseau, C. K. (Eds.). (2006). *Critical race theory in education: all God's children got a song*. Taylor & Francis.
- Fuller, L. K. (1991). Taking terrorism into the classroom. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 25(1), 93-98.

- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Gay, G. (June 06, 2004). Beyond Brown: Promoting Equality Through Multicultural Education. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 19, 3, 193-216.
- Gonzalez, N., Moll, L., & Amanti, C. (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in house-holds, communities, and classrooms*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Good, T. and Brophy, J. (1977). *Educational Psychology: A realistic approach*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- Gurin, P., Dey, E. L., Huetado, S., & Gurin, G. (2002). Diversity and higher education: Theory and impact on educational outcomes. *Harvard Educational Review*. 72(3), 330-366.
- Kamalipour, Y. R., & Snow, N. (Eds.). (2004). *War, media, and propaganda: A global perspective*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Jackson, M. L. (1995). Counseling youth of Arab ancestry. *Counseling for diversity: A guide for school counselors and related professionals*, 41-60.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465-491.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate IV, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *The Teachers College Record*, 97(1), 47-68.
- Lee, J. S. (n.d) Culturally relevant pedagogy for immigrant children and English language learners. *National Society for the Study of Education*, 109(2), 453-473.
- Lewis, B. (1968). *The Middle East and the West*. George Weidenfeld & Nicholson.

- Li, J., & Karakowsky, L. (2001). Do we see eye-to-eye? Implications of cultural differences for cross-cultural management research and practice. *The journal of psychology*, 135(5), 501-517.
- Lynn, M., & Parker, L. (2006). Critical race studies in education: Examining a decade of research on US schools. *The Urban Review*, 38(4), 257-290.
- Mahrous, A. A., Ahmed, a. a. (2010). A Cross-Cultural Investigation of Students' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Pedagogical Tools The Middle East, the United Kingdom, and the United States. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 14(3), 289-306.
- Milner, H. R. (2008). Critical race theory and interest convergence as analytic tools in teacher education policies and practices. *Journal of teacher education*.
- Moll, L., & Diaz, R. (1987). Change as the goal of educational research. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 18(4), 300-311.
- Moodley, K. A. (1995). Multicultural Education in Canada: Historical Development and Current Status.
- Nieto, S. (1992). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education*. Longman, 10 Bank Street, White Plains, NY 10606.
- Nykiel-Herbert, B. (2010). Iraqi refugee students: From a collection of aliens to a community of learners--The role of cultural factors in the acquisition of literacy by Iraqi refugee students with interrupted formal education. *Multicultural Education*, 17(3), 2-14.
- Ottaviano, G. I., & Peri, G. (2006). The economic value of cultural diversity: evidence from US cities. *Journal of Economic Geography*, 6(1), 9-44.

- Rivkin, S. G., Hanushek, E. A., & Kain, J. F. (2005). Teachers, schools, and academic achievement. *Econometrica*, 73(2), 417-458.
- Suleiman, M. (Ed.). (2010). *Arabs in America: Building a new future*. Temple University Press.
- Shaheen, J. G. (2003). Reel bad Arabs: How Hollywood vilifies a people. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social science*, 588(1), 171-193.
- Ting-Toomey, S. (1982). *Toward a theory of conflict and culture*.
- UNHCR Global Appeal 2015 Update - The Middle East subregional overview. (n.d.). Retrieved March 10, 2015, from <http://www.unhcr.org/5461e6068.html>
- Vang, C. T. (2006). Minority parents should know more about school culture and Its impact on their children's education. *Multicultural Education*, 14 (1), 20-26.
- Villegas, A. M. (1991). *Culturally responsive pedagogy for the 1990s and beyond*. *Trends and Issues Paper No. 6*. ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 610, Washington, DC 20036-1186.
- Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002). *Educating culturally responsive teachers: A coherent approach*. Albany, NY: Suny Press.
- Wingfield, M., & Karaman, B. (1995). Arab stereotypes and American educators. *Social studies and the Young Learner*, 7(4), 7-10.

## Appendix A

## Teacher Survey Questions

## Raising Teachers' Cultural Knowledge of Middle Eastern Students

1. What grade level do you teach?
2. Do you currently have or have you had Middle Eastern students in your classroom?
  - 1- If yes (please specify which country)
3. Have you ever visited the Middle East?  
If yes, which country?
4. Rate your knowledge of the Middle East on a scale from 1 to 10?  
1 = Minimal Knowledge & 10 = Extensive Knowledge  
  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
5. What do you wish to know about your Middle-Eastern students? Please explain.
6. What do you think is the most effective way to communicate with students from the Middle East in the classroom? Please explain.
7. Have you ever had any miscommunication issues with your students from the Middle East?  
If yes (please explain the situation and how you dealt with it)
8. Would professional development training enhances your knowledge of the Middle East and subsequently facilitates interaction with current and potential Middle Eastern students in your classroom? If yes, what would you like to see included in this training.
9. Would you be interested in a short (1 hour) workshop to help you develop a better understanding of Middle Eastern students instructional and social needs?
10. Do you have any other comments, questions, or concerns?



Appendix B

Professional Development Outline

Working with Middle Eastern Student. How to understand and communicate with them more effectively?

Session at a glance

Content	Time	Activity
Introduction	10 minutes	Card and chart, personal reflection and sharing
Quick Facts	10 minutes	Brief display of basic facts about the Middle East such as, number and names of countries, and other key facts.
Contrasting Values & Discussions	20 minutes	Presentation of main contrasting cultural values that are directly related to education.
		Discussions of critical information for teachers to be aware of about their Middle eastern students.
Conclusion	10 minutes	Summarizing the information presented and answering questions.

Preparation

Context and Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting a better understanding of Middle Eastern culture and students for elementary school teachers.</li> </ul>
Learning Objectives	By the end of this training, participants should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify some of the main contrasting cultural values between teachers and students that could hinder effective communication and interaction.</li> <li>Recognize key differences between the American and Middle Eastern Education systems.</li> <li>Decide on some strategies for productive engagement</li> </ul>
Materials and Supplies Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom board, markers, post it sticky paper, projector, world map, and Power Point File (PPT).</li> </ul>
Setup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PPT loaded on computer, ensure audio-visual works, and pass out sticky post it notes.</li> </ul>

Delivery

Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relate learning objectives of training session to group.</li> <li>The purpose of this training is raisin cultural knowledge of Middle Eastern students as well as discussing the challenges in communicating and interacting with them. This is the place to make</li> </ul>
--------------	---

	<p>mistakes – we're learning from each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce opening exercise (card and chart): all participants will have a sticky note in front of them. Participants will be asked: <i>what do you anticipate the main barriers in dealing with Middle Eastern students?</i></li> <li>• Give participants a couple of minutes to make their response. Then, collect responses and post to the front board, grouping responses by any themes that emerge.</li> <li>• Briefly report back and discuss any dominant themes</li> </ul>
Quick Facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presenting basic information about Middle Eastern countries break down in terms of various languages, ethnicities, religions, etc. For example, in the PPT a slide for each country will be display: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Iraq (basic information and a map)</li> <li>○ Turkey (basic information and a map)</li> <li>○ And the rest of the countries in this region.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Contrasting Values & Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a more engaging learning environment for Middle Eastern students is directly related to awareness of the cultural values that play a significant role in education.</li> <li>• Slide show with main contrasting values: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teacher centered vs. student centered learning</li> <li>○ Individualistic vs. collective</li> <li>○ Direct / indirect communication</li> <li>○ Teacher based vs. student based learning</li> <li>○ Formality vs. informality</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Discussions of cultural Do's and Don'ts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Religions and ethnicities</li> <li>○ Liberal parent vs. conservative parent</li> <li>○ Arab vs. Non-Arab</li> <li>○ Muslim vs. Islamic</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Debrief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions</li> <li>• What did teachers learn?</li> <li>• What are some strategies we could employ in the classroom when interacting with Middle Eastern students?</li> </ul>

Appendix C

Professional Development Review Questions

Date -----

Job Title -----

1. Do you think this professional development would be beneficial for teachers?

2. Is the content precise and does it cover all the aspects to promote cultural understanding?

3. What would you suggest to improve this professional development?

4. Do you have any additional comments?

Appendix D

Professional Development Evaluation Template

Professional Development Evaluation

Date .....

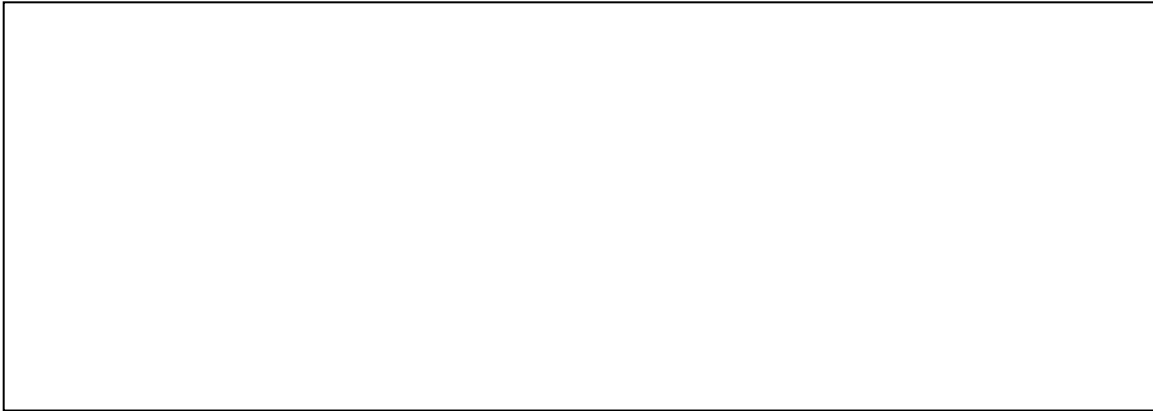
Instructions to Participant:

Thank you for participating in this professional development session. In this feedback form, there are no WRONG or RIGHT answers. You do not need to put your name on this form – your responses are anonymous. Please respond to ALL the questions below to help us to improve the materials and the delivery of this professional development session.

For each item below, please circle only a single appropriate response.

	<u>RESPONSE</u>		
	NOT AT ALL	SOMEWHAT	VERY MUCH
1. The session was well organized.	0	1	2
2. The session was relevant to my needs.	0	1	2
3. The presenter was well prepared.	0	1	2
4. The presenter was receptive to participant comments and questions.	0	1	2
5. The visual aids helped me to learn the material.	0	1	2
6. There was enough time to cover all materials.	0	1	2
7. The training enhanced my knowledge about the Middle East culture	0	1	2
8. I expect to use the knowledge gained from this training.	0	1	2
9. I would recommend this training course to a colleague.	0	1	2
10. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions for improving this professional development? <i>(Next page)</i>			

Comments



Suggestions

