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Lynn, E. B., Brown, J., Tatum, S., & Morote, E.-S. (2011). The Relationship Between Teachers' Attitudes Towards Multiculturalism and Assigned Grade Level. *One Voice Journal*.

This study examined whether a relationship exists between teachers' attitudes toward multiculturalism and their assigned grade level. The survey instrument used, *Multicultural Awareness to School Environment* (MASE) developed by Tatum and Morote (2005) was used to measure teachers' multicultural awareness in K-12 schools was used. The teacher sample that completed the survey came from one Long Island school district across grade levels, 42 elementary, 16 middle and 22 high school level teachers. For the purposes of this study, multicultural awareness was defined utilizing the work of Banks (2006) as "appreciation, sensitivity and understanding about the experiences, history, institutions, lifestyles, symbols and values of several cultures". It is noted in the introduction that Long Island is accounted nationally as the third most racially segregated suburban community in the United States (Erase Racism, 2009).

The research of multi-cultural awareness is laid out in the theoretical framework of Elfe's article. The foundational construct that multicultural awareness of teachers is necessary in order to serve a diverse student population in the nation's schools. One interesting finding of Wasonga (2005) was that although studies such as Milner et al. (2003) and Garmon (2004) support

increased knowledge and awareness among teachers' multicultural awareness, the influence over teacher attitude toward children of diverse backgrounds was minimal.

The research of differences among elementary and secondary teachers was also examined. Work done by Book and Freeman (1986) revealed that reasons for choosing teaching as a career was different between elementary and secondary, with the former being more child-centered and the latter as a starting place for future professional movement. One study (Avery and Walker, 1993) found a significant difference between levels of preservice teachers' explanations of ethnic and gender differences in student achievement. Elfe deduced that more child-centered educators may be more interested in the child's culture and perspective and what negative stereotypes might affect the child's success in school. In contrast, teachers who are focused mainly on subject matter, may not have such interest(s).

This study was done since there was no published study of the differences between multicultural awareness among teachers and the grade level taught as of 2011. The MASE was completed by the sample, and the three dimensions, curriculum development (9 questions), professional development (11 questions) and school climate (8 questions) were examined. The analysis of the data showed a significant difference among grade level and teachers' attitude in multicultural curriculum instruction. There was no significant difference among groups for Professional Development or school climate. It was noted that a previous study (Bowens-McCarthy et al. 2006) showed a slight gender influence on teachers' attitude toward multiculturalism, so an ANOVA test was run without male teachers but the results were the same. Also a relationship between years in the teaching profession and teachers' attitude toward multicultural was found by Fuchs, et al. (2006) however in this study it did not show a correlation.

The findings in this study lead to a discussion about the need for multicultural training being differentiated for elementary and high school teachers in order to align with their curriculum and instruction needs and differences in their multicultural awareness. Elfe notes in the discussion that the teachers in this study, “need additional experiences with multiculturalism and interactions with diverse people to improve their attitudes toward making the necessary changes to curriculum and to value diversity” (p. 11) and that it is consistent with previous studies (Garmon, 2004). Also, that multicultural awareness in itself is not enough to change teacher practice (Wasonga, 2005).

The further research is indicated by enlarging the sample and paying special attention to attitudes and concerns of high school teachers in further studies of multiculturalism. In considering that Long Island leads the country as one of the most racially segregated suburban communities in the country, and that due to the current socio-economic changes in many suburban communities, the demographics are shifting. Today more than ever, the teachers in historically all-white communities will need to reach a diverse population of learners.

This study caught my interest mainly due to the use of the MASE. When creating a survey instrument for another class, I happened upon this “Reliable Survey to Measure Teachers Multicultural Awareness to Their School Environment” and it was not until I saw it applied in this study that I understood its use in context. There is much opportunity for future research of Long Island’s need for multicultural awareness in the public school system.