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## Comparing Indigenous and External Teachers: Beliefs, Origins of Beliefs, and Expectations

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COMPARING INDIGENOUS AND EXTERNAL TEACHERS:  
BELIEFS, ORIGINS OF BELIEFS, AND EXPECTATIONS

by

Richard H. Fowler

A Dissertation  
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Faculty of The Graduate College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the  
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Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology  
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Western Michigan University  
Kalamazoo, Michigan  
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## COMPARING INDIGENOUS AND EXTERNAL TEACHERS: BELIEFS, ORIGINS OF BELIEFS, AND EXPECTATIONS

Richard H. Fowler, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University, 2009

This phenomenology examines rural economically poor school teachers' beliefs, belief origins, and their expectations of and for their students. Data analysis employed two lenses. The proposed lens examined participants as either *indigenous* or *external* utilizing Banks' (2001) cross-cultural teaching experiences. In this study, the indigenous participants experienced childhoods in poor rural towns, while external participants experienced childhoods in urban/suburban areas. A second emergent lens examined participants as experiencing *working-class* or *middle-class* childhoods. Findings utilizing lens one were mixed and varied with no definitive pattern. The emergent lens utilizing economic class of participants' childhoods found a number of consistent differences between the groups. An emergent finding about teacher practices provided reinforcing data regarding the differences between working- and middle-class childhood experiences. The differences in beliefs about rural poor students coincided with the expectations of and for the students as well as the espoused practices.

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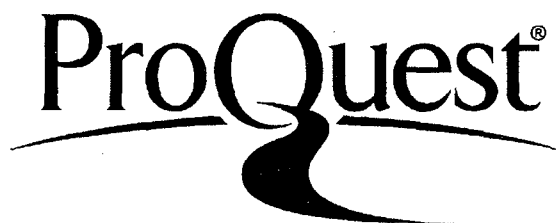
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Richard H. Fowler

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	ii
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
CHAPTER	
I. THE PROBLEM.....	1
Theoretical Framework .....	6
Statement of the Problem.....	8
Purposes of Study.....	10
Significance of Study .....	10
Research Questions .....	11
Methodology .....	12
Definition of Terms.....	14
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	16
Historical Background .....	17
Greek Life View.....	18
St. Augustine's Influence .....	18
Reformation and Renaissance Influence .....	19
Modern Government Influences .....	19
U. S. Government and Education .....	21
Summary .....	23

Table of Contents—Continued

CHAPTER

Theoretical Overview.....	24
Rural Characteristics.....	27
General Characteristics.....	28
Economic Conditions.....	29
Health and Health Care Issues.....	30
Education/Schools.....	31
Rural Values.....	34
Individual Responsibility (Self-Sufficiency).....	34
Community Responsibility.....	35
Place.....	37
<i>Gesellschaft</i> and <i>Gemeinschaft</i> Cultures: Divergent Values.....	38
Individual Responsibility.....	39
Community Responsibility.....	39
Environmental Responsibility.....	42
Attachment to Place.....	42
Summary.....	43
Teachers' Experiences and Beliefs.....	45
Pre-College Influences on Beliefs.....	48
College Influences on Beliefs.....	49
In-Service Influences: Gender.....	53



Table of Contents—Continued

CHAPTER		
	In-Service Influences: Culture .....	54
	In-Service Influences: Practices .....	55
	In-Service Influences: Connectedness .....	56
	In-Service Influences: Affective-Cognitive Beliefs.....	57
	In-Service Influences: Summary .....	58
	Concluding Thoughts.....	58
III.	METHODOLOGY.....	62
	Introduction.....	63
	Research Questions .....	64
	Research Design Rationale .....	64
	Research Questions Within the Design.....	66
	Research Design and Approach .....	68
	Data Collection .....	69
	Site Selection .....	69
	Sample Selection.....	70
	Data Collection and Instrumentation .....	73
	Trustworthiness of Research Design.....	74
	Data Analysis .....	75
	Limitations .....	77
	Delimitations.....	77

## Table of Contents—Continued

CHAPTER		
	The Researcher.....	78
	Summary .....	79
IV.	RESULTS .....	80
	Section I: Background.....	80
	Chapter Organization .....	80
	Study’s Purposes.....	80
	Themes.....	81
	Section II: Indigenous and External Teachers’ Patterns and Themes .....	84
	Theme I: Teachers’ Backgrounds – Beliefs .....	84
	Theme I: Teachers’ Backgrounds – Influences.....	90
	Theme II: Expectations of Students .....	91
	Theme III: Expectations for Students .....	99
	Theme IV: Teacher Practices .....	101
	Section III: Another Lens.....	108
	Theme I: Teachers’ Backgrounds – Belief Similarities and Differences .....	109
	Theme I: Teacher Backgrounds – Influences.....	114
	Theme II: Expectations of Students .....	114
	Theme III: Teachers’ Expectations for Students’ Futures.....	120
	Theme IV: Teacher’s Practices .....	121
	Summary of Key Findings.....	132

Table of Contents—Continued

CHAPTER

Essence of Experiences .....	135
Limitations .....	138
V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	139
Central Focus of the Study .....	139
Discussion .....	140
Theme I: Beliefs and Belief Origins .....	140
Theme II: Expectations of Students (Parents).....	144
Theme III: Expectation for the Students .....	148
Theme IV: Practices.....	148
Purpose V: Summary/Comparisons.....	152
Implications.....	156
Recommendations.....	160
REFERENCES .....	163
APPENDICES	
A. Summary of Banks' Typology of Cross-Cultural Teachers.....	177
B. Administrator's Letter.....	179
C. Principal's Letter Requesting Site Permission.....	181
D. Volunteer Participant Information .....	183
E. Human Subjects Institutional Review Board Participant Consent Form.....	185

Table of Contents—Continued

APPENDICES

F. Interview Protocol.....	187
G. Reflective Journal Prompts .....	189
H. Human Subjects Institutional Review Board Letter of Approval .....	191

## LIST OF TABLES

1.	School Demographics .....	72
2.	Teacher Demographics Background .....	73
3.	Teacher Beliefs According to Childhood Locale.....	85
4.	Influences on Teachers' Beliefs by Childhood Locale .....	90
5.	Beliefs About Expectations of Students by Childhood Locale.....	92
6.	Teachers' Expectations for Their Students' Futures by Childhood Locale.....	100
7.	Teachers Practices With Rural Poor Students by Childhood Locale.....	102
8.	Beliefs of Teachers by Socioeconomics (SES) of Childhood.....	110
9.	Influences on Teachers' Beliefs by Childhood SES .....	114
10.	Teachers' Expectations of Students by Childhood SES .....	115
11.	Teachers' Expectations by Childhood SES for Their Students' Futures.....	120
12.	Teachers' Practices With Rural Poor Students by Teacher's Childhood SES.....	122

## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM

Disconnected students' efforts wane until there is no effort—no learning. Some of these disconnected students are our culturally diverse students who find their textbooks and lessons often do not relate to them.

Many students think school has little to do with them, their friends, and family. They don't know what information ideas in their textbooks and about which the teachers talk come from, why they need to learn these things, and what such things have to do with them and the world in which they live. (McDiarmid, 1991, p. 259)

The texts and lessons appealed to students who have become today's teachers. As in the past, the teaching force continued to be a less diverse group than were their students. This condition does not appear to be changing, with over 85% of the teaching force representing the white middle class (Darling-Hammond, 1990; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2008). Teachers' values have influenced their beliefs regarding such things as other cultures, social economic classes (SES), as well as ideas of how to teach (Cooper, 2003; Hermes, 2005; Love & Krueger, 2005). A number of teacher candidates believed their life experiences were the norm, lacking awareness of the existence of others' cultural experiences, beliefs, and values (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007; Cabello & Burstein, 1995; Cross, 2003, 2005; Gay, 2000; Hale, 2001; Howard, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c). There is a good chance for misunderstanding and disconnection when life experiences, values, and beliefs differ

between teachers and students. Further misunderstandings arose from teachers' lack of cultural knowledge, appreciation, and understanding of their ethnically and culturally diverse students.

Studies of teachers' beliefs or expectations indicated a connection between teachers' beliefs and practices (Kagan, 1992; Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992). A number of studies examined teacher beliefs and practices related to gender, ethnicity, and poverty or lower socioeconomic-status (SES). Gender studies, both past and present, found teachers believed math is primarily a male domain, while reading and writing are considered a female domain (Farmer, Irwin, Thompson, Hutchins, & Leung, 2006; Fennema, Peterson, Carpenter, & Lubinski, 1990; Garrahy, 2003). Ethnicity studies discovered white pre-service (those in training) teachers considered their life experiences as the norm while considering other cultural views as outside the norm (Cabello & Burstein, 1995; Eberly, Rand, & O'Connor, 2007; Hermes, 2005; Hughes, Gleason, & Zhang, 2005). Other studies revealed in-service (trained and employed) teachers judged minorities less academically capable than the white majority students (Baldwin et al., 2007; Cooper, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2006; Lockhart, 2002). Similar finding of students considered less capable came from studies of teachers whose students were from poverty or lower socioeconomic status (Hufton, Elliott, & Illushin, 2003). Considering teachers' beliefs have influenced their practice, then lacking belief in any student's ability or holding misconceptions were manifested in teachers' practices with negative effects for students. The studies cited involved cross-cultural teaching. Banks' (2001) topology of cross-cultural teaching provides the teachers' categories referenced throughout this study.

Banks (2001), in his cross-cultural teaching topology, categorized teachers as either *indigenous* or *external*. Indigenous teachers originated from the local community or a community with a similar culture. External teachers migrated to the rural community from a locale with a different culture, which they brought with them. Indigenous and external were divided into *insiders* and *outsiders*. Insiders identified with or honor the students' and community's culture, while outsiders honored a culture different from the students' or community's culture (see Appendix A). Teachers who were indigenous-insiders or external-insiders honored students' cultures and connected to their students. This connectedness made it less likely students disengaged from their learning, school, and eventually dropping out (McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002; Payne, 1996).

Cross-cultural studies examining teachers who recognized, understood, appreciated, and honored the students' cultural values found positive effects on student academic achievement (Cooper, 2003; Hermes, 2005; Love & Krueger, 2005). Teachers' beliefs examined in urban minority schools found the teachers considered most effective had adopted external-insider beliefs. These external-insider teachers had connected positively with their students and community by inviting community members to participate in or present relevant cultural lessons for their students. The findings indicated practices honoring a student's cultural values positively affected development of positive student cultural identification. Valuing the students' cultures further connected the students to the learning and to the teachers themselves (Cooper, 2003; Hermes, 2005; Love & Krueger, 2005).

Without awareness, recognition, understanding, and appreciation, teachers may have been unable to appropriately honor a student's cultural values, which increased



chances for misconceptions. Teachers' life experiences shaped their beliefs, interactions, and practices (Kagan, 1992; Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992). Whether teachers were suburban-urban or rural, their lived experiences and culture formed the basis for shaping their beliefs regarding the norm. Indigenous teachers reared in rural areas had life experiences different from external teachers, who moved to rural areas from their suburban-urban communities. Misconceptions regarding cultures, whether based on ethnicities, social class, or gender, shaped teachers' educational practices (Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Rural and suburban-urban values differed, creating opportunities for a values clash when they engaged each other. External rural teachers generally originated from suburban-urban areas, and rural and suburban-urban values differ, which provided many opportunities for a disconnection between teachers and their students.

Not all externals clashed or failed to connect, but teachers who remained apart from or ignored their students' cultural values created situations where students were likely to be disenchanting, disengaged, disconnected, and drop out (McNeely et al., 2002; Payne, 1996). Studies of beginning early elementary students found the students were enthusiastic about learning (Tobin & Sprague, 1999). For some students, elementary school was their first prolonged exposure to a different culture and created confusion or a loyalty dilemma. Young enthusiastic students wanted to please the teachers, but may have felt confused by new and different ideals or values promoted by the teachers. When the school's values were in opposition to what students believed or practiced in their home or community, confusion ensued (Carlson & Korth, 1994; Delpit, 1988). This confusion led to distrust of their teacher, frustration with the contrary values, loss of enthusiasm, and, eventually, disengagement. When distrust of the teacher began, many students disengaged

and did not perform, even if it was detrimental to their progress (Payne, 1996).

Maintaining the initial connection depended on the teacher. Those who were either indigenous-insiders or external-insiders were likely to connect.

Another set of cultural studies examined rural communities and the suburban-urban people who moved into the rural communities (A. Howley, 2005; C. Howley, 2006; Kirby, 2007). They found indigenous rural and immigrating suburban-urban folks clashed over basic values. Each group considered the other a hindrance to the school's development of programs best suited for their offspring. Ferdinand Tonnies (1887/2001) explained these cross-cultural situations and their potential for clashing in his book titled *Community and Civil Society*. He argued that society was dichotomous—either *Gemeinschaft* or *Gesellschaft*. Tonnies described *Gemeinschaft*, or rural society, as focusing on living well enough to get by, whereas *Gesellschaft* society, or suburban and urban life, sought the good life with its consumerism and consumption. These two societies formed separate cultures with different value sets.

The important rural values included self-sufficiency, family and friends, school/community, nature, and “place” (Haas & Nachtigal, 1998). Core middle-class values, which were in opposition to rural values, included individualism, meritocracy, being direct and/or assertive, and interactional styles. Not all values differed between the *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* societies; they shared values of equality of all, informal interactions, planning for the future, belief in the goodness of humanity, and punctuality (Roessler, & Stanford, 1998). Poor economic viability has been a powerful influence for rural communities. Because most rural communities consist of working-class folks, they were not middle class and lived below middle-class standards, and developed different

values (Budge, 2006; Nadal & Sagawa, 2002; Sander, 2006). A final powerful influence on rural values was their view of land as communal, which included appreciation of the environment/nature and recreational enjoyment of wide open spaces.

Realizing that rural values differed from suburban-urban values, rural school districts usually attempted to employ indigenous teachers who knew, understood, and appreciated rural life, values, and culture. At times to fulfill all their teaching needs for select or special positions, rural districts needed to hire external teachers (Nadal & Sagawa, 2002). The externals were frequently from the suburban middle-class communities (NCES, 2008). The indigenous teachers hired were likely to be aware of the community's culture and standards, whereas hiring suburban-urban externals created potential for either cultural meshing or clashing between the middle-class and rural culture's values.

The literature reviewed in Chapter II focused primarily on external urban white middle-class teachers' beliefs about their students and their beliefs regarding students based on gender, class/SES, and ethnicity/race. Additional studies examined rural society and how new suburban-urban external residents affected the community and schools. What the studies did not do was combine the ideas of different cultures and rural teachers' beliefs—particularly exploring and describing the beliefs and origins of those beliefs and any differences between the indigenous and external rural teachers.

### Theoretical Framework

There were two overwhelming theories underpinning this study. The first, briefly introduced earlier, is from a 19th century philosopher, Ferdinand Tonnies. His theory

divided society into dichotomous groups labeled as *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (Tonnie, 1887/2001). David Orr explained Tonnie's *Gemeinschaft*, or rural society, as the quest for "living well," where one produces and uses what one needs. On the other hand, *Gesellschaft*, or the upwardly mobile society, emphasized consumption and gaining individual wealth to attain "the good life" (Orr, 1996). These opposing views of life were the respective underpinnings for rural and middle-class life. Tonnie's theory provided the foundation for separating rural from middle-class suburban-urban culture.

The second theory underpinning this study was proposed by Banks (2001). He theorized a topology explaining cross-cultural experiences, which he modified to explain cross-cultural teaching. Considering Tonnie's explanation of rural as a different culture, Banks' topology explained possible outcomes that may occur when either indigenous or external middle-class teachers cross cultures with rural students. The teachers either meshed or clashed with rural cultural values. The rural teaching experiences for indigenous and external teachers either promoted keeping their original values, or outside influences promoted assimilating to a new set of cultural values.

Banks' theory offered explanations for cross-cultural teachers' beliefs and behaviors (see Chapter II and Appendix A). The first explanation suggested indigenous teachers, who were true to their rural values, remained a part of the culture as an indigenous-insider. The other indigenous option was, when a teacher's cultural assimilation caused a belief shift to an outside or oppositional group's culture, they were considered indigenous-outsiders. The second portion of the theory, explaining external teachers, subdivided into similar groups. The first was the external-insiders who assimilated into the new culture, with the indigenous group accepting them as indigenous

adoptees. The second was the external-outsiders who did not attempt to assimilate, and remained separate from the culture in which they taught. These external-outsider teachers often misunderstood or misinterpreted student and community behaviors.

### Statement of the Problem

While attempting to motivate their rural students, some middle-class teachers inadvertently disparaged students' community, culture, and values when they admonished the students to believe in exerting extra effort. These teachers promoted a belief in the meritocracy as the means to attain a better life (Burnell, 2003; Bushnell, 1999). Students who did not ascribe to the better life, who considered their life as good enough, did not make a connection between a good life, extra or hard work, and academic excellence. This in turn caused teachers to judge the students as lazy, less able, and without motivation (Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999; Woodrum, 2004). This created a situation where students felt their teachers viewed the student's lifestyle as inadequate, even though the student's ideal life was to remain in the community. Genuine connecting relationships between student and teacher were unlikely to form if the teachers did not value the student's culture and community (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

Mike Flanagan, Michigan's Superintendent of Public Instruction, considered relations as one of the new 3R's. He considered the new 3R's to be relationships, relevance, and rigor, with relationships between students and the school/teachers as an essential component in efforts to reduce dropout rates, improve achievement, and raise graduation percentages (Flanagan, 2008). Achieving the connecting relationships necessitates a change in educational approaches. Building connecting relationships

required awareness, understanding, and appreciation of a student's major cultural influences (Banks, 2001; Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

Today, a majority of teachers have been reared in the middle-class communities (NCES, 2008) and consider their life experiences the norm (Lockhart, 2002). These middle-class teachers viewed students from poverty or ethnic cultures as less academically capable (Cabello & Burstein, 1995). These same teachers may have lacked awareness, information, or understanding of other cultures' diverse traditions, customs, values, and even learning styles (Cross, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2006). In addition to visibly diverse students, rural communities have students who appeared to be similar to the majority culture's students. Yet a number of the students who visibly appeared similar did not ascribe to middle-class values, thus not connecting to their teachers or the school. Teachers who held and promoted outsider, non-rural beliefs may have inadvertently disparaged students, which led to students' disenchantment, disconnection, and disengagement. The students become disengaged in learning because values promoted by the teacher/school disparaged their own rural values (McNeely et al., 2002; Payne, 1996). Lacking information, understanding, and acknowledging students' culture and values led to the disconnected relationships that Flanagan (2008) believed were some of the problems facing schools. Current research provided a substantial examination of the consequences for learners, parents, and teachers when they came to the learning environment (classroom) with different cultural lenses that affected how they interacted and related to each other. Much of this research focused on racially and culturally diverse or high minority and poverty-laden urban school contexts. This raised the question of how teachers' beliefs about and expectations of and for students might or might not have

been an issue in small economically poor rural schools where the student and teacher population was more homogenous (racially and culturally). Specifically, the literature did not look at how teacher status as either indigenous or external to the small rural school context (based on personal life experience) shaped the values and beliefs teachers bring to the classroom, their expectations of students, and their teaching practices.

### Purposes of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe indigenous and external teachers' belief systems, origins of those beliefs, and expectations of and for rural students that guided their teaching and interactions with rural students. Specifically this phenomenological study examined and described: (1) the essence of rural teachers' life experiences; (2) the beliefs rural teachers hold (about their work as teachers and their students as learners) and origins of those beliefs; (3) what rural teachers' expectations are of their students; (4) what rural teachers expect for their students; and (5) how indigenous and external rural teachers' life experiences, beliefs, origins of beliefs, and expectations compare.

### Significance of Study

Previous studies explored teacher beliefs regarding gender (Garrahy, 2003), ethnicity (Lockhart, 2002), and socioeconomic status (Hufton et al., 2003). Others examined teachers' beliefs regarding different cultures, particularly about students' abilities based on ethnicity (Cabello & Burstein, 1995; Hasslen & Bacharach, 2007). Rural communities' values were examined and explored along with the values of urban-

suburban immigrants to rural communities (A. Howley, 2005; C. Howley, 2006; Kirby, 2007). The previous studies focused on cross-cultural differences in urban schools and not rural schools. Although rural culture was considered by some as similar to urban-suburban culture, Tonnies (1887/2001) argued rural society is a unique culture. Banks (2001) based his typology of cross-cultural teaching experiences on urban settings. Studies have not examined indigenous or external rural teachers' cross-cultural experiences with rural students.

The results of the study are expected to contribute to the literature by:

(1) providing data regarding the essence of rural indigenous and external teachers' life experiences, beliefs, and expectations; (2) providing data for considering the inclusion of rural culture to pre-service teachers' cultural preparation; and (3) adding to the discussion about the importance of teachers' cultural awareness to improve ability to connect with each student. Considering the study of teachers' beliefs is important, then how those beliefs develop is just as important. Thus, teacher pre-service and professional development may benefit by knowing how teachers describe the beliefs about teaching and about their students, and how those beliefs shaped their practices and interactions with their students.

### Research Questions

The research questions listed below will provide answers for this study (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2000).

*Question 1:* How do teachers describe the belief system that guides their teaching and interactions with students?



*Question 2:* How do teachers describe the origins of their beliefs?

*Question 3:* What do rural teachers expect of their students?

*Question 4:* What are rural teachers' expectations for the students?

*Question 5:* How do indigenous and external rural teachers compare in: (1) their belief systems, (2) origins of their beliefs, (3) expectations of rural students, and (4) expectations for their students?

### Methodology

This design for this qualitative study was based on the phenomenological tradition. The phenomenological approach was well suited to this study with detailed descriptions and in-depth explorations of indigenous and external rural teachers' experiences, beliefs, and expectations (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). The phenomenological tradition provided an in-depth discussion of the major characteristics of qualitative research designs that support the purpose and intent of this study (Patton 2002). Patton's major characteristics focused on three strategies: design, data collection, and data analysis. All three strategic categories of characteristics supported this study's choice of a qualitative design (Patton, 2002). Those specific to the study are discussed below.

Patton's delineation of qualitative design characteristics supported the choice of a phenomenological design within the qualitative tradition; i.e., this study was conducted in naturalistic setting, employed flexibility (probes and extended questions not in the original protocols), and utilized purposeful sampling. A naturalistic study occurs in real-world situations without manipulation and an openness to whatever emerges. The design

also allowed for emergent design flexibility and the option to adjust the inquiry as understanding of the phenomenon developed. Purposeful sampling limited data collection to those with insight into the phenomenon (Patton, 2002).

Qualitative strategic characteristics for data collection further supported the choice of a qualitative design for this study. First, qualitative data yielded detailed descriptions that revealed personal experiences. Secondly, interviews were utilized as the primary data collection method with the researcher conducting interviews. This approach provided for close personal engagement, an immediate opportunity for clarification through additional questions, and respect and sensitivity for the participant without judgments (Patton, 2002).

Finally, characteristics of qualitative analysis added additional support for this design choice. The analysis assumed each case was unique and each case captured special details. Additionally, the phenomenon was studied from a holistic perspective: not as separate parts, but more than merely the sum of its parts. Lastly, the context sensitivity emphasized careful comparative case analysis allowing for the emergence of patterns and themes.

A quantitative survey design was considered as an alternative, but was insufficient for this study's purposes. Drawbacks of a quantitative design included having preconceived expectations (hypotheses), being non-emergent or lacking flexibility, and primarily employing random sampling. Quantitative designs did not consider the content from which the data emerged nor did quantitative studies occur in a natural setting. The primary reasons for rejecting a quantitative design were the removal of the researcher

from the data collection and analysis, and a lack of depth in the data to provide deep, rich, and full descriptions of the lived experiences.

The site selection was based on two criteria: (1) the NCES (2006) definition of rural distant or rural remote, and (2) student enrollment of more than 35% free and reduced lunch program. The participants were selected from the schools' elementary teachers. Banks' (2001) typology for cross-cultural teaching used either *indigenous* or *external* for participants who were purposefully selected based on community type in which they were reared. The sample attempted to equally balance the number of indigenous and external participants, but was dependent upon the number of volunteers in each category. When more than 6 to 8 potential participants volunteered in a category, the selection of volunteers to interview was based on volunteers with whom interviews were arranged quickly and easily. A one-on-one interview was used as the primary data collection technique (Seidman, 2006). Additional data were collected for 1 month following the interviews through requested weekly electronic journal entries. These data provided another opportunity to communicate the lived experience from the perspective of specific interview question prompts. The data were analyzed using an iterative inductive process to code units, examined the units for clusters, patterns, and themes, which lead to the essences of the teachers' experiences (Hatch, 2002).

### Definition of Terms

A number of terms introduced in this dissertation may need to be operationally defined.

*Beliefs:* Beliefs as a proposition do not have to satisfy a truth condition. They do not have to be based on facts (Richardson, 1990).

*Place:* Place is a deep-rooted affection and connection to the land, community, and common good. The five dimensions of place are perceptual, sociological, ideological, political, and ecological (Gruenewald, 2003b).

*Rural:* A census defined territory that is no nearer than 5 miles from an urban center or 2.5 miles from an urban cluster (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2006).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature reviewed for this study focused on two major underpinnings, which are (1) rural perspectives (characteristics and values), and (2) teachers' beliefs. Ferdinand Tonnies, a late 19th century author, proposed considering rural communities as a unique society. Tonnies (1887/2001) purports that rural life was a different culture or society from urban or mobile society; thus, it had different values and perspectives. Teachers teach students in rural areas from a mixture of backgrounds and beliefs. What teachers believe was vital to their practice. Several authors argued beliefs, although not easily discernable, were observable through teacher practices (Kagan, 1992; Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992). The literature reviewed provided background for rural life and values and then discusses the current findings regarding teacher beliefs.

The first portion of the review presents rural life as a unique culture followed by the difference between rural life and suburban-urban life. To better understand the development of rural communal life, a brief historical discussion of rural/communal life will be presented. Next, a brief overview reveals a social dichotomous theoretical perspective considering the opposing cultural values of rural/communal and urban/individualistic society. Following the historical and theoretical presentations, a view of rural life as characterized by its general, economic, health, and education characteristics is discussed. These rural characteristics and values are important elements

weaving through traditional rural life. The characteristics and values emerged as the foundation for the resilience vital for the continuance of traditional rural life. Finally, the divergence between rural values and those of the non-rural dominant economic and political culture is presented.

The second part of the review focuses on teachers' beliefs, practices, and experiences connected to those beliefs. Teachers' beliefs and experiences are reviewed by examining the literature about middle-class and/or rural teacher's experiences and beliefs. The life experiences reviewed in the literature considered pre-college, college, and finally pre- and in-service teaching experiences. The literature of in-service teachers' beliefs examined gender, culture, connectedness, and affective-cognitive beliefs.

### Historical Background

Historically, individuals have been oriented toward service to their community, as exemplified by rural communities today. Yet, that world view is no longer as prevalent as it once was. A brief discussion considers the societal shift from practices and beliefs in the common good toward beliefs embracing individualism, personal gain, wealth attainment, and consumer consumption. Then a brief discussion follows of Greek life examining how Greek communal elements shifted toward individualism during Roman and Medieval times. Next is a presentation of how religious individualism became intellectually manifested in the Reformation and the Renaissance, and its eventual influence on modern government. Finally, how modern government influenced educational trends and shifted focus from common good to individual rights is discussed.

### *Greek Life View*

Earliest Greek community members derived personal status by how well they performed their community duties. This expectation became the accepted Greek view of life. Greek communities solidified contribution and commitment to community as a way of life (Theobald, 1997).

The Greek world view was external; that is, it looked to the community in an effort to establish its order or harmony. People looked at community and its need to find an individual “fit”—the communal role that an individual’s life might occupy (p. 9). Quality of life was measured by embracing duty to others or the external communal view. A person’s success in meeting community obligations determined their virtue (Theobald, 1997).

### *St. Augustine’s Influence*

The Romans, the next dominant Western culture after the Greeks, borrowed some of the Greeks’ world view. In addition, the Romans also provided the beginnings of individualism as a concept and practice. It was neither the Roman Senate nor its privileged citizens that promoted individualism, but Christianity through St. Augustine. In the sixth century A.D., St. Augustine advocated the importance of man’s individual relationship with God (Theobald, 1997). Group or community religion was no longer the focus. St. Augustine’s emphasized how each person related to God individually. This new religious ideal started a movement that grew slowly through medieval times, festering and eventually bursting in the 16th century as the Reformation (Theobald, 1997).

### *Reformation and Renaissance Influence*

Reformation leaders Martin Luther and John Calvin expanded the ideological concept of individualism to mean religious choice. Others who accepted the concept of choice followed either of these leaders. People no longer relied on the church as the singular authority (Theobald, 1997). Accepting individual relationships with God morphed into questioning the Church's authority to interpret God's Word. With the Church's authority questioned, the concept of individualism soon extended beyond the religious realm and into the intellectual arena of philosophical thought promoted during the Enlightenment or Renaissance (Theobald, 1997).

Renaissance intellectuals revisited the early Greek world view of life, and the Greek ideals of freedom, dignity, and rationality. The Renaissance intellectuals focused particularly on rationality. Their interpretation of rationality promoted the concept of the individual choosing what was rational, whereas, for the Greeks, rationale related to communal, not individual, decisions (Theobald, 1997). Renaissance human rationale focused on an individual's right and ability to choose. Emphasis on individual thought and pursuits promoted autonomy and singular reform (Theobald, 1997). By the 18th century, this movement encouraging human rationality became the seeds that festered into a different view of government.

### *Modern Government Influences*

The new concept of government was based on a contract between the ruler and the people. The contract meant government's duty was to establish a safe and harmonious



society (Theobald, 1997). With government performing its duty to ensure a safe and harmonious society, business used their resources for production instead of protection. This new role for government provided more unencumbered opportunities for profit. Increasing profit became the new king. Yet, the general populace did not benefit from the economic systems change, because only the labels changed; feudal lords and vassals became land owners, while serfs became peasant farmers (Theobald, 1997). The individuals who controlled resources realized to perpetuate their position and profits required government to promote a common culture, “in a sense of the larger and economic concerns” (p. 14). Promoting the new common culture grew through the 18th and into the 19th century as government gradually accepted the duty of educating the people.

The new world view promoted by public education favored the concepts and practices of individualism, commercialism, and consumerism. The concept of community was considered antiquated, backward, and an impediment to economic progress. Rural people and communities, ridiculed since the Renaissance, were now disparaged publicly as simple, old-fashioned, ignorant, living in the past, and fearful of technological advancement (Theobald, 1997).

Modern individualism viewed technology advances as necessary for improving production. For rural peasants or subsistence farmers, these technological changes were not guarantees for enhancing survival, and were thus rejected as poor risks. They may have appeared backward or afraid, but the welfare of the community and individual depended upon decisions that considered wise resource allocation. Therefore, unless

success was a guaranteed, the rural economy was reluctant to try anything new (Theobald, 1997).

The processes promoting urbanization/business culture and the broader acceptance of the ideal of individualism spread to the new world. In the United States between 1820 and 1860, the growth of urban areas of 8,000 or more people increased in number from 13 to over 140 (Nachtigal, 1982). This trend of urban growth and expansion has continued into present times, while rural communities struggle to survive (Lichter & Crowley, 2002; NCES 2008). This rather recent phenomenon belied our history of connection and dependency on the land (Theobald, 1997). The growth of urban areas initiated a trend where government promoted urban education's successes as best for all schools: a one-size-fits-all approach. This led to congressional reforms for rural education extending from the late 19th century well into the 20th century (Nachtigal, 1982). These reforms emerged as four themes over approximately 80 years. Each theme had the intent of improving rural education due to the perception that rural schools were deficient (Nachtigal, 1982).

#### *U. S. Government and Education*

Theme I began as the last powerful voice of rural America, the Populist Party, waned and eventually disappeared (Theobald, 1997). Theme I or fixing the rural problem continues even today. The solutions or improvements promoted were:

1. Consolidating rural schools
2. Transporting students
3. Supervising schools by superintendents

4. Removing schools from politics

5. Professionally training and certifying teachers (Nachtigal, 1982).

Rural community voices were ignored by the urban fixes or one-size-fits-all approach to problems (Nachtigal, 1982, 1990). Even today, NCLB or No Child Left Behind (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) promotes the one-size-fits-all initially promoted by Theme I.

A bright spot for rural schools emerged during the 1950s through Themes II and III. Both gave voice to the rural school communities. Theme II, or the necessarily existent small school, focused on support for schools too distant to be consolidated. Private funding became available for projects emphasizing the inherent strengths of rural small schools, especially in modifying instruction. Advances and successes were achieved, but eventually the private funds disappeared, and so did the projects (Nachtigal, 1982).

Also in the 1950s, Theme III, advocated by Dr. Frank Cyr of Columbia Teachers College, promoted the benefits of small schools. Dr. Cyr promoted a different school design that more closely fit with small rural schools and their less rigid structure. In this new design, he suggested:

1. The small school serves small groups.
2. Human relations are basic.
3. Organization and operation are articulated.
4. Operation must be flexible.
5. Personnel must be versatile.
6. Facilities must serve multiple purposes.
7. Students participate in policy and planning.

8. The school is an integral part of the community. (Nachtigal, 1982, p. 19)

Some of these ideas were attempted, yet soon fell out of favor, only to be resurrected again in the 21st century. After 10 years, both Theme II and III were pushed aside or disappeared as Theme IV emerged.

Theme IV, which is much like Theme I, began in the mid-1960s as part of President Johnson's Great Society (Nachtigal, 1982). This theme emerged as a shift in the one-size-fits-all. The shift was primarily in the labeling; no longer were schools divided as rural and urban, but as disadvantaged or non-disadvantaged. Because a majority of districts had students in poverty and/or minorities, solutions were devised to fix all schools. Again, one-size-fits-all prevails (Nachtigal, 1982).

### *Summary*

Fifty years after Dr. Cyr advocated for school design changes in Theme III, some of his ideas are finally being promoted by local districts or state departments of education. In Michigan, Superintendent of Public Instruction Mike Flanagan now advocates for new approaches that include some of Dr. Cyr's design elements. Flanagan is particularly focused on how to reduce the dropout rate. He advocates adding three new R's to the traditional 3R's of reading, writing, and arithmetic. He suggests the new 3R's to consider are rigor, relevance, and relationships (Flanagan, 2008). This, of course, is nice rhetoric, but with Theme I still the dominant ideology as evidenced by NCLB and Michigan Merit Curriculum (Michigan Merit Curriculum [MMC], 2006), it is difficult to imagine a major shift without changes in mandates or support for new approaches. When educators focus on teachers' beliefs about the non-dominant cultures' students, then Flanagan's objectives

can be met. By understanding other cultures, teachers stand a better chance to connect and develop the vital relationships Flanagan argued were important to reduce dropout rates and provide a meaningful education.

Public education promotes the dominant cultural ideology of a meritocracy, social justice, and personal responsibility (Cozzarelli, Wilkinson, & Tagler, 2001). This works well if one's world view was based on individual rights and the idea that the government's duty was to ensure the pursuit of personal accumulation (Theobald, 1997). Currently, individualism and individual rights are more of education's focus, then duty or service to the community. The shift toward individualism has even redefined how we measure success. Today, success is the amount of wealth or commodities one has accumulated. From early Greek society through Jeffersonian times, the measure of success was a person's virtue, which was earned by meeting communal obligations (Theobald, 1997). Maybe today the question should be how do we judge success, either by one's virtue or by one's material possessions.

Theoretically, the differences between rural communities valuing the common good and greater or urban society valuing individualism was presented and explained by Ferdinand Tonnies, a 19th-century philosopher. The following section presents his theoretical views and arguments about this dichotomous issue.

### Theoretical Overview

German philosopher Ferdinand Tonnies first published *Community and Civil Society* in 1887. In this work, Tonnies discussed culture as a way of life or social system that encompassed culture, society, politics, and economic civilization. Tonnies presented

social culture as a dichotomy. He even coined new words, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, to represent his dichotomous culture. Throughout this study, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, respectively, represent the cultural aspects of life as rural/communal and suburban-urban society (Tonnies, 1887/2001). What follows is a brief overview of how Tonnies described the distinguishing characteristics of each view, which then delineates how each manifests itself.

*Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* represent Tonnies' dichotomous views of culture. Today, modern Germans, Tonnies' native country, often misunderstand and misuse *Gemeinschaft* and its antithesis *Gesellschaft*. Modern Germans simply say *Gemeinschaft* means "semi-mystical, communion, to simply share or partnership; while *Gesellschaft* often reflects a club, association, social gathering or business firm" (Tonnies, 1887/2001, p. 18). Tonnies provided a broader distinction between the two terms. For Tonnies, *Gemeinschaft* represented community, mutual sharing of responsibilities, and real organic life. On the other hand, *Gesellschaft* represented a culture where the individual emphasis was more global, societal, mechanical, unattached and disconnected.

How would we recognize *Gemeinschaft*? Through observation of cultural groups who live a *Gemeinschaft* existence, we can view unified positive relationships that inwardly and outwardly are the entity; with the entity being the community. Each individual from birth connects with his or her community. They belong to the community, and build an enduring and sustainable life together. *Gemeinschaft* has permanence. It was, is, and shall be life shared reciprocally with "affection and reverence" (Tonnies, 1887/2001, p. 27).

*Gemeinschaft*'s organic nature grows and breathes from all its parts through the people, land, social and political activities, and traditions. The community traditions are tied together through a "community by blood, indicating personal unity of existence, develops more specifically into community of place" (Tonnie, 1887/2001, p. 27). In *Gemeinschaft*, people lived near each other, shared a common spirit, and had similar goals and purposes. Community of place physically held life together. In a community of place, individuals accepted personal responsibilities for self, family, community, and the land.

In Germany, during Tonnie's time, families tended to their land from planting through harvest time. After harvest, they removed any barriers so the land became communal pastures for the community's livestock (Tonnie, 1887/2001). The transition from personal land to communal land exemplified the whole community's shared sense of duty by everyone to the community. The primary duty was to take care of one's own self while looking out for the welfare of all. *Gemeinschaft* was community of place where common good was pre-eminent.

*Gesellschaft*, the antithesis to *Gemeinschaft*, focused on the individual where "everyone is out for himself and living in a state of tension against everyone else . . . so everyone resists contacts with others and excludes them from their own spheres, regarding any such overtures as hostile" (p. 52). *Gesellschaft* is a fight for whatever each individual can obtain and hold. One thing for sure, nobody wants to do anything for anyone else unless the transaction benefited him or her. Burns (1978) would concur that these types of interchanges are transactional. "What anyone has and enjoys, he has and enjoys at the exclusion of all others" (Tonnie, 1887/2001, p. 52).

Tonnies felt societal movement towards *Gesellschaft* would be a step backward and the ruination of culture. He feared a loss of shared responsibility and community of place. *Gesellschaft* had become the dominant culture of the modern industrialized world. It overshadowed, exploited, or marginalized *Gemeinschaft* communities who lived “well enough,” while the *Gesellschaft* mentality of “me first” embraced the “good life” of resource consumption and individual wealth advancement. Even though *Gesellschaft* mentality is prevalent in modern global society, *Gemeinschaft* practices continue, but in towns that are rural in nature just as during Tonnies’ time.

For this study, Tonnies’ dichotomous cultural theory was the underpinning for the concern about rural teachers’ beliefs and values influencing their beliefs. Can teachers who are exposed during formative years to *Gesellschaft* ideology reach, teach, and connect with their *Gemeinschaft* students? Will their *Gesellschaft* beliefs interfere with their pedagogy to best assist rural students to learn what fits their lives?

### Rural Characteristics

In this section, a discussion of rural characteristics is presented. Although rural areas are all individual and unique, there are some general characteristics commonly shared by all. The most commonly shared characteristics involve elements that are interconnected, but for discussion purposes, are presented separately. General conditions, economic status, health and health care issues, and educational factors characterized rural communities.



### *General Characteristics*

Although originally populated by farmers, rural areas are no longer primarily an agrarian economy (Berry, 1996; DeYoung, 1992; Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999; Khattri, Riley, & Kane, 1997). Some rural areas have remained agrarian, but are primarily agribusiness and not individual subsistence farming (Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999). Today small individual farms or subsistence farms are a rare occurrence compared to 100 or even 50 years ago. Today, people in rural areas are more likely to be employed in the service industries than any other business or industry (Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999).

Rural communities generally have lower population densities and are often isolated from larger urban/metropolitan communities (Budge, 2006; Collins, 1999; Helge, 1990; Howley, Harmon, & Leopold, 1996; Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999; Lichter & Crowley, 2002). Being isolated with lower population densities contributes to a loss of talent when members seeking viable employment outmigrate, or physically move out of a community (Budge, 2006; Burnell, 2003; Chalker, 1999; C. Howley, 2006; C. B. Howley, A. A. Howley, C. W. Howley, & M. D. Howley, 2006; Khattri et al., 1997). Also, possibly due to the isolation and lower population densities, rural communities have insufficient financial resources, infrastructure, and fewer support institutions (C. B. Howley et al., 2006; Nadal & Sagawa, 2002; Provasnik, Ramani, Coleman, Gilbertson, Herring, & Xie, 2007). With fewer people, fewer support institutions, and less infrastructure, it followed that rural areas more often than not experienced depressed economic conditions.

*Economic Conditions*

Most rural areas have higher poverty rates than urban and suburban areas (Budge, 2006; Bushnell, 1999; DeYoung, 1993; Helge, 1990, 1991; Nadal & Sagawa, 2002; Provasnik et al., 2007; Sander, 2006; Theobald & Howley, 1998). Poverty in rural areas is related to low wages and a lack of quality job opportunities (Burnell, 2003; Helge, 1990; Sander, 2006; Woodrum, 2004). When comparing suburban-urban towns to rural communities during economic downturns and recoveries, the rural community's unemployment rates, respectively, rose faster and recovered more slowly (Bushnell, 1999; Nadal & Sagawa, 2002).

Businesses capable of providing a positive economic impact remained unwilling or unlikely to relocate to rural areas due to lower population density and an accompanying limited labor force (Gibbs & Bernat, 1998). The labor force was less skilled when compared to the suburban-urban work force (DeYoung, 1992; Helge, 1990; Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999; Khattri et al., 1997; Lichter & Crowley, 2002; Sander, 2006). These two factors—(1) low population density, and (2) an unskilled work force—when combined, are sufficient reasons why businesses bypassed rural areas as potential sites for new development or expansion. It followed then with limited rural job opportunities, and an unskilled labor force, that wages are lower than in more populated areas. This combination of a lack of job opportunities and lower wages created a dilemma for young people.

The young people either stayed and worked at jobs below their ability or outmigrated. Outmigration, the physical moving out of your community (Haas &

Nachtigal, 1998; Theobald, 1997), contributed to the perpetual deficit of labor talent and skill. The outmigration of talent, a less skilled labor force, fewer job opportunities, and lower wages become a cycle where businesses did not relocate, invest in, or expand into rural areas. So job opportunities diminished, wages continued to be depressed, and poverty increased. With these economic characteristics, it is no wonder 195 of the 200 most poverty-inflicted counties in the United States were rural (Nadal & Sagawa, 2002).

### *Health and Health Care Issues*

Another powerful and debilitating characteristic of rural communities involved health and healthcare. Rural community's isolation means reduced availability of medical care, social services, and emotional care compared to urban-suburban areas (Helge, 1990; Lichter & Crowley, 2002). Additionally, the paucity of public transportation and often unreliable personal transportation created difficulties in obtaining any healthcare. Lack of health care significantly affected prenatal care.

Prenatal care was another significant health care issue. A lack of prenatal care leads to increased incidences of debilitating physical or cognitive birth defects. These birth defects eventually become part of the school's educational responsibility, creating pressures on scarce school resource allocation (Lichter & Crowley, 2002; Nadal & Sagawa, 2002).

Health care risks, for rural communities, also included exposure to a higher degree of toxins with the related negative health effects (Lichter & Crowley, 2002; Nadal & Sagawa, 2002). Some of the toxins come directly from groundwater wells. In most rural communities, there was a lack of financial resources for public works such as water

treatment plants. Fewer than 40% of rural communities had public water systems available to them (Nadal & Sagawa, 2002).

Between inadequate health care options and a lack of public water treatment facilities, rural people faced a difficulty just to become healthy. They faced more obstacles than their urban-suburban counter parts (Nadal & Sagawa, 2002).

Possibly due to isolation, economic depression, air, water and soil toxins, and lack of adequate public utilities, infrastructure, or inadequate social and mental services, rural students' rates for at-risk behavior outpaced or equaled their urban peers (Helge, 1990). Rural students' at-risk behaviors were highest in depression, suicide, dysfunctional families, sexual or drug abuse, sexual activity, and teen pregnancy (Helge, 1990, 1991). All these risk behaviors contributed to the economic and health cycles that plagued rural communities. Individual, family, and community emotional well-being was at risk largely due to fewer available services, scarce resources, and a lack of economic security.

### *Education/Schools*

In rural communities, the schools are the common element that tied and bonded the community together socially and economically. Even though their general economic, and health conditions in many rural towns were below average, the community had its schools, which remained a source of community pride (Bauch, 2001; Bushnell, 1999). Their students achieved well academically in spite of the fact rural schools faced more adversity than their suburban-urban counterparts did. Rural adversity included fewer resources, higher per pupil cost, and lower federal and/or state funding (Helge, 1990; Lichter & Crowley, 2002; Nadal & Sagawa, 2002; Provasnik et al., 2007). Yet rural

students performed and achieved at rates commensurate with their urban peers when controlled for socioeconomic status (SES). Rural students performed comparably on achievement tests without the advantages of a broad curriculum, access to Advanced Placement courses, or International Baccalaureate opportunities (Chalker, 1999; Helge, 1990; Khattri et al., 1997; Lichter & Crowley, 2002; Nadal & Sagawa, 2002; Provasnik et al., 2007).

Smaller school sizes currently promoted nationally, which are the norm for most rural schools, were found to benefit at-risk students. At-risk students were students who qualify in at least two of the current criteria for being at-risk: poverty, single-parent families, dysfunctional families, abuse, and sexual activity (Helge, 1990, 1991). This described a majority of rural students (NCES, 2008). Yet, the at-risk students' performances were better in small schools than in large schools (Bickel, Howley, Williams, & Glascock, 2001; C. Howley, 1989a, 1989b, 1994, 1996a, 1996b, 2000). Smaller rural high schools with fewer than 400 students were found to boost student achievement better than schools with over 1,000 students. The only exception to this finding was the economically advantaged students performed better in larger high schools (Fan & Chen, 1999; C. Howley, 1989a, 1989b, 1994, 1996a, 1996b, 2000; Reeves & Bylund, 2005).

In addition, rural districts' adversity included receiving lower amounts of federal and state funding than suburban or urban districts (Nadal & Sagawa, 2002; Provasnik et al., 2007). While compensating for fewer resources as compared to urban-suburban schools, statistics indicate rural schools achieved commensurately with larger urban areas

particularly when controlled for socioeconomic status (Bickel et al., 2001; C. Howley, 1989a, 1989b, 1994, 1996a, 1996b, 2000).

The business and/or economic conditions of towns were also dependent upon the schools. When school buildings remained within the town limits, businesses near the schools prospered, and the communities mutually benefited. When schools relocated their buildings outside town limits, the community's economic viability suffered, businesses closed, and resilience diminished (Lyson, 2002). Thus, schools were vital to a rural community's pride and economic and social resilience.

This sense of pride that emanated from and through the schools provided a strong sustainable force for rural communities. For many, the pride was even more visible in support of their athletic teams with full town support at home and away events (D'Amico & Nelson, 2000; A. Howley, 2005). Communities also took pride in their students' achievement scores on state and national tests. Even if we focused on the devastating, debilitating, or depressing characteristics, there was more to rural areas than the difficulties. Rural communities exhibited tremendous resilience. The resilience came from more than their school/community bond. It was derived from powerful values that often escaped the non-rural culture's comprehension. Rural values revolved around individual self-sufficiency, community, nature, and "place." Place, a deep-rooted affection and connection to the land, community, and common good, was the unifying value (Gruenewald, 2003b).

## Rural Values

Craig B. Howley of the Appalachian Educational Laboratory writes that “the rural tradition embodies an ethical ideal that encompasses individual, community, and nature” (C. B. Howley, 1992, p. 27). David Gruenewald (2003a, 2003b), Paul Theobald (1997), Alan DeYoung (1991, 1992, 1993), along with Toni Haas and Paul Nachtigal (1998) would add one final value that connects individual, community and nature: they called it “place.” These four distinctive values were the foundation of traditional rural communities. While no two communities were exactly alike, they shared these common values, which were distinguishable from non-rural culture. Even while verbalizing how they desired possessions and a somewhat similar life to non-rural folk, these four values provided individual grounding for each rural community. The values were related, interconnected and unified, but for purposes of discussion are addressed separately.

### *Individual Responsibility (Self-Sufficiency)*

Rural values began with individual commitment as it relates to responsibility and doing one’s fair share. The first responsibility learned as a child was the commitment to family and its well-being. Everyone’s duty was to do his/her part and learn to be self-reliant (Gruenewald, 2003b). Self-reliance could be misinterpreted as the individual being independent or aloof; instead, it was pride in oneself to be self-sufficient and the ability not to burden your family or community (Burnell, 2003; Howley et al., 1996). In some communities, the pride and practice of self-reliance was so strong many who were eligible do not seek public assistance.

Family and/or personal pride along with self-reliance were powerful forces that caused some to forfeit options, such as public assistance, that their urban counterparts readily accepted (Lichter & Crowley, 2002). This was because rurals did not want to appear as a burden, or feared that others would learn of their dilemma. Not wanting to be a burden was an example of each individual's sense of duty extending also to the community. They did not want to be considered burdens to the welfare of the community. Instead, they preferred to help others in need by volunteering time, effort, or sharing what resources they had. In this way, individuals contributed to the "common good" of the community.

#### *Community Responsibility*

Commitment extended beyond individual pride and self-reliance to the community as a whole. Rural membership, particularly generational, commits to traditions of conservation and honoring sustainability. Rural folks knew they would be a part of the community for years, and they valued what they had. Rural people desired to keep things as they were and held on to what existed around them. Many were somewhat conservative and frugal about changes and expenditures (Bushnell, 1999; A. Howley, 2005). They did not spend money to make changes without a productive purpose, a true *Gemeinschaft* ideal. They remained frugal and conservative particularly in relationship to changes in the community, land-use, and natural beauty.

The concept of personal gain at the expense of family, friends, and community is abhorrent and the antithesis of rural *Gemeinschaft* values (Budge, 2006; Bushnell, 1999). Rural community members used what they need, while they conserved for the future. All



around them were reminders of shared commitment for a sustainable life and future. Although a minority of rural people continued to farm the land, most took advantage of the land and its bounty by hunting, fishing, and using it recreationally. The concept of commitment to community and sustainability manifests itself in leaving nature in as good or better condition than it was found.

Community established a sense of shared interaction and responsibility for the future. Rural communities developed close ties between the school and the community (D'Amico & Nelson, 2000; Dees, 2006; Lyson, 2002). In some cases, schools equaled the community (Bushnell, 1999; D'Amico & Nelson, 2000; Lyson, 2002). Social life flowed through the school's activities. For some, promoting athletic success was more valuable than promoting higher academic standards (A. Howley, 2005). Pride came from the school's victories over neighboring rural towns. Yet, there was more to community than athletic prowess. There was a special pride that graduating students remained in the community, and added to the community's common good. In this way, schools added to the sense of community pride and shared responsibility.

The shared responsibility became an extension of commitment to self-reliance, family and friends, and personal pride. The shared responsibility extended beyond the school. In rural communities, it was about doing what benefited the community as a whole or for the "common good." The common good created tight close-knit community. What was good or benefited all was a strong force.

Sense of duty to community manifested itself most in the youth who often decided to leave to earn a living. They were faced with a powerful dilemma. Sometimes the brightest students would forgo opportunities that took them away from the community,

and other times they outmigrated because they had little choice. Seeking additional education or training, perceived by externals as a benefit, was not perceived by some rural graduates as an enticement if there was no benefit to the community. The young even viewed extended training or education as a means to put off growing up and accepting adult responsibilities (Bushnell, 1999). The strong community commitment came first even if they sacrificed an opportunity for employment at their skill level and training.

Desiring to stay in the communities was more than a duty or fulfilling of a sense of commitment. The force that kept students and others at home near family and friends was not fear of new adventures, fear of obtaining unusable training, or fear of a different life. It was the fear of losing connections with family, friends, and “place.”

### *Place*

“Place” did not have a simple or easy-to-understand concrete definition. Place was more an ethereal term. David Gruenewald (2003b) argued place has five dimensions: perceptual, sociological, ideological, political, and ecological. Gruenewald’s five dimensions were similar to Ferdinand Tonnies concept of “community of place” (Tonnies, 1887/2001, p. 18), except Tonnies had not included the perceptual dimension. By viewing place through all five dimensions, Gruenewald wanted us to understand place was not definable as a geographical term, an idea, a voting entity, or a spot on the map.

Place was a feeling (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991). It was that feeling of being held in a firm grasp by the land, the people, and the traditions (Gruenewald 2003a, 2003b; Hurley, 1999; Theobald & Howley, 1998). Place was a connection to everything that made you and everything you contributed to the place (Gruenewald, 2003a). It interacted

between the people and the combined animate and inanimate experiences lived while there. Place felt as though a mutual hug existed between the individual and place. The concept of place connected individual, community, school, and nature in one powerful driving value for rural communities. Defining place in simpler terms would be a deep-rooted affection and connection to the land and community (Esbjornsen, 1996; Gruenewald, 2003b; Orr, 1996).

### *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft* Cultures: Divergent Values

Linda Darling-Hammond reported in 1984 that 90% of the teaching force consisted of white middle-class teachers, a majority of whom are female (Banks et al., 2005). Today the teaching force has remained very much the same (NCES, 2008). With non-middle-class student populations currently between 30-35% and projected to increase to 45-50% by 2025, children born now will graduate from schools whose population will look much different than at the turn of the millennium (Banks et al., 2005). Rural communities were for the most part not middle-class (Lichter & Crowley, 2002; Nadal & Sagawa, 2002).

Divergence in values was important when examining *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft* cultures. When *Gesellschaft* values met *Gemeinschaft* values, several issues arose. Often the cultures clashed more than assimilated or acculturated (Budge, 2006; Bushnell, 1999; A. Howley, 2005; C. Howley, 2006). This study focused on indigenous rural *Gemeinschaft* teachers and external non-rural *Gesellschaft* teachers' beliefs, experience, and values influencing those beliefs. Before examining and exploring

these beliefs, it was vital to examine how rural and non-rural values diverged regarding individualism, education, the environment, and a sense of “place.”

### *Individual Responsibility*

It has been previously discussed, about the individual, how a sense of self-sufficiency and self-reliance were strongly held rural values. The sense of self-reliance is not to be equated with independence and separation from the group. Self-reliance in rural areas means taking care of one’s self to not be a burden to the community, whereas, for people who moved into rural areas from suburban-urban communities with non-rural values or externals, the focus was more *Gesellschaft* (DeYoung, 1992; C. B. Howley et al., 2006). It was a *Gesellschaft* mentality where individuals did what they could for themselves (Haas & Nachtigal, 1998; Theobald & Howley, 1998). The non-rural individual’s responsibility was not connected to community but to the “good life” (C. Howley, 1989a; Orr, 1996). In the *Gesellschaft* culture, manifested in the dominant middle/upper-class culture in the United States, individual gain was a preeminent value. The object was to get ahead, gain material wealth, and continue consuming to keep the economy burgeoning (Theobald & Howley, 1998).

### *Community Responsibility*

In studies where non-rural people migrated to rural communities, the cultural differences often caused clashes and misunderstandings. Immigrants or non-rurals that moved into rural communities arrived with a *Gesellschaft* concept of life (Haas & Nachtigal, 1998). The *Gesellschaft* ideology focused on individualism, which was the

antithesis of the *Gemeinschaft* value of individual responsibility to the community. Non-rural *Gesellschaft* people emphasized academics to prepare for competition and mobility in a global market (Burnell, 2003; Bushnell, 1999; Dees, 2006; A. Howley, 2005). The non-rural newcomers also wanted other changes that benefited their long-range goals. These benefits include higher academic standards, re-allocating athletic funds to academics, and recruiting non-rurals as professional leaders. To promote these ideas, they developed coalitions to elect Board of Education members who favored their agenda (Budge, 2006; A. Howley, 2005; C. Howley, 2006). Additionally, the immigrants did not honor or value community traditions and long-standing athletic rivalries.

The non-rural individuals focused primarily on themselves and their own personal gain. An extreme personification of this life style was represented by Michael Douglas' portrayal of Gordon Gekko in the movie *Wall Street* proclaiming, "Greed is good." Non-rural folks were not all as extreme as Gordon Gekko, nor are all rural folks altruistic, but the divergence in practice was apparent. The non-rural culture promoted the idea that individual gain was the prime objective, even at the expense or exploitation of another individual, community, or the environment (Friere, 1970/2007). Rural people may have wanted to improve their life circumstances, but would not do what was demanded if it means accepting the *Gesellschaft* ways.

The individual sense of responsibility to others in community also differed. Rural folks considered the common good of the community (Burnell, 2003; D'Amico & Nelson, 2000). For traditional rurals, the very idea of leaving behind a family or community commitment for your own benefits was a non-sequitur. They were unlikely to outmigrate because family and community formed a strong connection (Burnell, 2003;

Bushnell, 1999; Dees, 2006; Woodrum, 2004). Non-rural values did not form strong connections to community; instead, they remained focused and concerned with maintaining upward mobility.

Another area of contention was how *Gesellschaft* non-rurals who immigrated look for personal gain from sales of their homes. The *Gesellschaft* non-rural desired a return on investments, while the rural folk wanted to maintain the status quo (Burnell, 2003; Bushnell, 1999). When non-rural folk purchased property, they viewed it as just that—property, not “place.” When the *Gesellschaft* newcomers purchased land or homes for inflated prices, all housing values rose and created financial pressures for the long-time residents. The long-term rural residents, who were rooted in the land, often had fewer financial resources to pay inflated land tax bills.

When the non-rurals sold their property and left with their personal financial gain, they demonstrated a commitment to themselves and not to the community. As home and land values escalated and provided eventual profit for non-rurals, the escalated land values were passed on to all who remained in the form of higher property taxes. The townsfolk were left in a position to carry the tax burden after the non-rurals departed with their profits (Bushnell, 1999). This was analogous to tumbleweeds that blew into a field, used the nutrients, and then departed leaving the perennials struggling to survive on soil they did not deplete. The rural community members who endured and sustained the community pay a long-term price for the non-rurals’ personal gains. For the non-rural person, community had only been a place to inhabit, whereas for rural folk, community was a deep-rooted connection called “place.”

### *Environmental Responsibility*

How one relates to the environment was another important value in which rural and non-rural views diverged. Previous discussions addressed the importance for traditional rural people of living with the land, nature, environment, and conserving for today and the future. Non-rurals view property as sacred and personal, and not to be violated or shared with the community, while using the land as theirs, for profit, prestige, or privacy. This conflicted with rural views of nature as community property for such things as hunting, fishing, and recreation (Burnell, 2003; Haas & Nachtigal, 1998). Not all non-rurals were unappreciative or depleted the land, but a prevalence of non-rural people viewed property as private and not communal. This view did not mesh with rural pursuits related to the environment and nature.

New housing plats developed for non-rurals interfered with traditional uses of land for such things as pathways/shortcuts, recreation, hunting, and appreciation of pastoral scenery. The non-rurals did not honor the land except for profit (Budge, 2006; Woodrum, 2004). They had no sense of place.

### *Attachment to Place*

Place was the final divergent value of significance between rural and non-rural people. Without a tie to the community (Carlson & Korth, 1994; Woodrum, 2004), acceptance of personal responsibility to family and community (Theobald & Howley, 1998; Kannapel & DeYoung, 1998), and without ties to the land (Budge, 2006; Dees, 2006; A. Howley, 2005), there was nothing to compare. Without the ties, the acceptance

of personal responsibility to self, family and community, or ties to the land, there was no value of “place.” Non-rurals missed the most significant value of rural life.

Place as previously discussed was the special feeling, a community connection to the perception, socialization, ideology, politics, and environment that intertwine. It was the mental hugging of one’s surroundings for what had been experienced, and mutually being hugged back for one’s personal contributions to the experiences (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991). Place was the feeling of being rooted deeply in the land and community (Berry, 1996; Haas & Nachtigal, 1998). Place shaped the individual and the individual shaped place (Gruenewald, 2003b). For non-rurals who were more concerned with self, personal gain, mobility, and the “good life,” the concept of place was at best nebulous. For most non-rurals, place could not be found or felt because their life approach was the antithesis of “place.”

### *Summary*

Understanding the divergence between rural and non-rural values was important, because many rural teachers were *Gesellschaft* externals who come from non-rural communities, or were indigenous rurals educated and influenced by *Gesellschaft* ideals at colleges or universities. Urban colleges and universities have influenced rural students’ beliefs about rural life because higher education institutes usually promoted non-rural values of a meritocracy, mobility, individualism, and consumption (Theobald & Howley, 1998).

How did these non-rural ideas and values fit with rural communities and rural students? Did teachers reared in rural towns remain indigenous-insiders or become



indigenous-outsiders who promoted the meritocracy and individualism (Banks, 2001)? The external teachers from non-rural communities were another consideration. Were they be influenced by new experiences as a part of the rural school and its community? They either remained as external-outsiders or assimilated with the indigenous people and morphed from external-outsider to external-insider (Banks, 2001).

The importance of where one was reared, with whom, and how this influenced individual beliefs and values is discussed in the next portion of this chapter. Previously a discussion of James Banks' topology addressed cross-cultural teaching experiences was introduced as a possible explanation for cross-cultural interactions (please see Appendix A). The topology provided the foundation for comparing teachers' beliefs and values as well as a means to explore how life experiences influence teachers' beliefs about rural students. Did experiences during college/ university or teaching encounters influence changes in beliefs about rural life and rural students?

These questions were examined to discover what educators can do to assist current and future rural teachers to understand and connect with rural students. Without valuing the students and their community, it will be difficult to genuinely connect (Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair, & Lehr, 2004; Strahan & Layell, 2006). If we considered the fourth R as Relationships (Witmer, 2005), then it was important to consider what teachers believed about relationships/connections and achievement. Sher (1989) suggested one-third of our students dropped out because they lack school relationships or connections, while another third were disengaged or became disenchanted. If we listened, we could hear the students speaking loudly by leaving either physically or mentally, but we have not been listening. It did not appear that focusing on

increased rigor alone was the solution for raising overall student achievement. Possible solutions might consider balancing affective and cognitive components through the promotion and development of connecting relationships, in addition to academic rigor and relevance.

### Teachers' Experiences and Beliefs

For over 20 years, educators have been painfully aware of the achievement gap contributing to the inadequate attainment of high school diplomas. A vast majority of literature focused on how urban teachers were addressing this issue. The literature also continued to focus on urban teachers' beliefs and the beliefs of pre-service teachers. A few studies concerned rural teachers' beliefs, but pertained to teacher preparation for diverse urban classrooms not rural school teaching. An overriding focus concerned white middle-class teachers' beliefs, values, and experiences that broadened their awareness and sensitivity for teaching in diverse cultures.

To better understand the importance of the forgotten students in rural schools, it was prudent to review rural/communal history and theoretical perspectives of community. Community was a significant underpinning in rural areas. Although no two communities were exactly alike, a sense of community was a constant in rural areas. In some rural areas, the sense of community was strong and self-evident, while in another town it did not seem to even exist. Yet, upon careful observation it was clear the concept of community permeated all facets of rural life.

Teachers' beliefs drew little interest in the first two editions of the *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (Gage, 1967; Travers, 1973). Eventually in the third edition of the

*Handbook of Research on Teaching* (Wittrock, 1986), a few chapters focused on beliefs regarding teacher thinking processes. By the early 1990s, it became apparent to numerous researchers there was a need to explore teachers' beliefs. Kagan (1992) best summarizes their arguments:

The more one reads studies of teacher beliefs, the more strongly one suspects that this piebald form of personal knowledge lies at the very heart of teaching. Teacher beliefs formed out of the exigencies inherent in classroom teaching may be the clearest measure of a teacher's professional growth. They also appear to be instrumental in determining the quality of interaction one finds among the teachers in a given school. As we learn more about the forms and functions of teacher beliefs, we are likely to come a great deal closer to understanding how good teachers are made. (p. 85)

The study of teachers' beliefs was important, but how those beliefs developed was just as important. Teacher pre-service and professional development may benefit by knowing what experiences influence teachers' beliefs, reflection, and change.

The relevance of respecting and valuing other cultures in developing relationships and ability to connect are presented in this section. Although most of the literature was concerned with urban diversity and Hispanic or African-American students, it was assumed that cultural competence was important for white middle-class teachers in rural areas. Teacher's cultural competence can be defined as assuring students' academic success, providing lessons about the student's own culture, and developing a student's critical sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1994). It also meant the importance of establishing climate/atmosphere and promoting positive connecting relationships for students who were not of the dominant culture (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Hale, 2001; Howard, 1999).

Demonstrating understanding, valuing, and appreciating were essentials for commitment to, and development of beliefs leading to teachers' connecting practices (Cooper, 2003; Hermes, 2005; Love & Kruger, 2005). What life experiences influenced their beliefs? How did indigenous or external rural teacher experiences influence values and expectations?

Today's teaching force consists of between 85-90% white middle-class and female teachers (Banks et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond, 1990; NCES, 2008). Rural schools educate over 30% of the nation's students. This meant some white middle-class teachers needed to migrate to rural schools to be employed (Cross, 2005; NCES, 2008; Rural Trust, 2007; Todd & Agnello, 2006). Even though educators have primarily focused on developing teachers' cultural competence for diverse urban classrooms, there exists a need to extend this practice to include rural teachers and their classrooms.

Earlier discussions regarding rural community characteristics and values were intended to support the argument about rural life as its own subculture. Although rural cultures cannot be described as voluntary, involuntary, or an autonomous subgroup in Ogbu (1983) typology of subcultures, they do differ from the dominant culture of suburban-urban society. Even though they may ascribe to some of the dominant culture's beliefs such as desiring material possessions, they did so without greed (Bushnell, 1999; A. Howley, 2005; C. Howley, 2006; C. B. Howley et al., 2006).

As a unique culture, rural people did not embrace middle-class/non-rural culture's values, particularly the pursuit of individual gain and mobility over commitment to community and place. Place, a deep-rooted affection and connection to the land, community, and the common good (Gruenewald, 2003b), was the foundation for rural

values. Place was the significant difference between cultures. Rural *Gemeinschaft* communities did not choose to be economically deprived, oppressed, or marginalized, but choosing a rural life had some negative impact economically and socially. Whether rural *Gemeinschaft* culture was considered a separate culture or subculture, the significant elements were quite diametrically opposed to non-rural *Gesellschaft* cultural values (Bushnell, 1999; A. Howley, 2005; C. Howley, 2006; C. B. Howley et al., 2006). How did external rural teachers raised in middle-class suburban-urban communities, and indigenous rural teachers, who attended universities with middle-class philosophies, develop beliefs that meshed with their rural students? What were the life experiences that shaped the beliefs and values of the indigenous and external teachers?

#### *Pre-College Influences on Beliefs*

The literature supports experience as the primary belief development process. Teachers' experiences were brought with them to their jobs as beliefs, which became their practices (Cabello & Burstein, 1995; Eberly et al., 2007; de Fatima & Sanches, 1994; Hasslen & Bacharach, 2007; Lockhart, 2002; Tettegah, 1996). The beliefs formed during pre-college experiences were influenced by social class (Hufton et al., 2003; Zeichner & Gore, 1990), religious training, culture/ethnicity, generation, gender, (Zeichner & Gore, 1990), and political and social demographics (Cozzarelli et al., 2001).

With a variety of backgrounds, we could expect a divergence in teachers' experiences, beliefs, and values about *Gemeinschaft* community, parents, and students (Zinni, 1995). Their individual backgrounds have strong influences on beliefs, particularly concerning less affluent communities, which described a majority of rural

communities (Lott, 2001; NCES, 2008; Rural Trust, 2007; Todd & Agnello 2006; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006). Teachers judged students in less affluent communities as less capable and academically behind their middle-class peers (Baldwin et al., 2007; Bennett, Gottesman, Rock, & Cerullo, 1993; Todd & Agnello, 2006; Wenger & Dinsmore, 2005).

Many teachers espoused standard middle-class values. One of those standard values was belief in a meritocracy. Believing in the meritocracy meant promoting the ideal of hard work, extra effort, and perseverance as a means to gain individuals their just rewards. This belief permeated through the middle-class whether their political view of life was conservative or liberal (Budge, 2006; Howley et al., 1996; Theobald & Howley, 1998).

Even though being responsible for your lot in life corresponds to the belief in a meritocracy, not all middle-class people believe individuals were totally responsible for their welfare. Some middle-class political liberals believed there were numerous barriers that impeded middle-class assimilation opportunities for economically disadvantaged individuals (Daniels & Arapostathis, 2005). This would account for why some middle-class people understand rural folks and their rural economically disadvantaged circumstances. The general belief held by non-rural folk was if one was poverty stricken, as were many rural people, then somehow fault was within the poor for their stead in life.

### *College Influences on Beliefs*

What beliefs did teachers hold, and what life experiences influenced their beliefs and values? University experience and pre-service education consumed a majority of the

literature regarding life experiences, beliefs, and values. Many white middle-class pre-service teachers described their preconceived beliefs as “normal” (Cabello & Burstein, 1995; Carlson & Korth, 1994; Cross, 2005; Fischler, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lockhart, 2002).

In an effort to address the preconceived beliefs and include non-traditional learning opportunities, a number of authors expanded teacher preparation programs/courses to include experiential components. The components included fieldwork, service learning, and real cultural or situational immersion (Cabello & Burstein, 1995; Hasslen & Bacharach, 2007; Lockhart, 2002). Many included real-life experiences along with readings, information dissemination, and guided discussions (Cross, 2005; Todd & Agnello, 2006; Wenger & Dinsmore, 2005). Some authors included reflective journals or reaction/reflection papers (Baldwin et al., 2007; Li, 2007). In all cases, the real-life immersion experiences were no longer limited to classroom discussions of vicarious abstract information.

No two programs were the same, but those that reported students either examined or changed beliefs included these elements: immersion/first-hand experience, class discussions of knowledge, information, experiences, and seminars related to students' immersion experiences. The studies focused on how white middle-class teacher candidates (TCs) related to urban minorities, primarily African American or Hispanic students (Hermes, 2005; Hughes et al., 2005; Lockhart, 2002; Love & Kruger, 2005; Saft & Pianta, 2001). The common finding from the studies was the need to develop experiential programs placing the TCs into real-life opportunities.

Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) and Beverly Cross (2003, 2005) both described their teacher candidate programs as including immersion, seminar discussions throughout the course, and knowledge/information dissemination to provide a deeper understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures. Other studies focused white middle-class TCs who believed they knew everything they needed to know about cultural diversity, their preconceived beliefs, and the difficulty in developing awareness and sensitivity (Cabello & Burstein, 1995; Hasslen & Bacharach, 2007; Lockhart, 2002; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006; Wenger & Dinsmore, 2005). Other pre-service studies examining teacher candidate groups, whether discussing a rural area (Todd & Agnello, 2006; Wenger & Dinsmore, 2005) or any urban area (Lockhart, 2002), found similar preconceived beliefs concerning students of different cultures.

The teacher candidates (TCs) held pre-conceived beliefs regarding different students' cultures: believing students from other cultures were less able, lacked motivation, would be troublemakers, lacked discipline, had criminal intent, and created an unsafe work and learning environment (Cabello & Burstein, 1995; Hasslen & Bacharach, 2007; Lockhart, 2002; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006). The teacher candidates saw these problems as stemming from either poverty or the student's culture (Cross, 2003, 2005; Hermes, 2005; Hufton et al., 2003; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006). Some also blamed the victim (student's fault) for their inability to learn, or learn at a pace commensurate with the TC's preconceived beliefs (Cabello & Burstein, 1995; Eberly et al., 2007; Fischler, 1994; Hughes et al., 2007).

The immersion opportunities the teacher candidate's (TCs) experienced were intended to encourage reflection and examination of beliefs. Additionally, the immersion



experiences intended to provide first-hand experience that all cultures have students with a broad spectrum of abilities and motivation from the gifted and persistent to the ones who are disengaged and/or lack skills. The emphasis of the teacher candidate programs was to advance cultural awareness, understanding, and appreciation of diverse cultures, while providing the learner appropriate assistance and support. The secondary goal was to broaden teacher awareness that student failures may be related to the teacher's inability to reach and teach the student, and not blame the students for the teacher's shortcomings. Developers of teacher preparation programs agreed the TC's immersion experiences needed to be more than observational. It was felt that just observing from a seat "on high" did little to broaden awareness. In fact, it was more likely to perpetuate dominant culture's preconceived beliefs (Cross, 2005; Gay, 2000; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2006). The successful university programs carefully planned, guided, and structured lessons to gradually build knowledge, broaden horizons, and discuss experiences and information. The diversity programs expanding TCs' beliefs were developed primarily for diversity in urban areas. Even rural TC programs prepared TCs for diverse urban ethnic students (Baldwin et al., 2007; Farmer et al., 2006; Perry, Donohue, Weinstein, 2007; Todd & Agnello, 2006; Wenger & Dinsmore, 2005).

Although a teacher's beliefs held before they entered university training were not directly studied, several purported that teachers are largely influenced by their class, socioeconomic standing (SES), as well as generation, gender, and ethnicity (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Lacking studies exploring childhood and adolescent life experiences influencing teachers' beliefs, values, and expectations, left only studies exploring pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs. The literature on in-

service teachers examined teacher's beliefs about students from early elementary age into the first years of college. Even though the literature focused on urban minorities, the concept of real-life experiential immersion, paired with carefully led discussions, should be transferable. Any program concerned with promoting reflecting and influencing misconceptions could address rural as well as urban misconceptions.

#### *In-Service Influences: Gender*

A significant number of studies examined teachers' gender beliefs. For example, some discovered teacher beliefs that first grade males had more math ability and females put forth more effort (Fennema et al., 1990). Another gender study revealed evidence that elementary school teachers' beliefs led them to view bad behavior (generally male) as an indicator of lower ability, even when performance did not correlate to their beliefs (Bennett et al., 1993). While the students perceived no difference, it was discovered teachers believed males were more popular (Farmer et al., 2006).

Several other studies' findings indicated the elementary teachers' gender influenced their interactions by providing more support for students of the teacher's gender. As a majority of elementary teachers were female, this meant female students received more support than the males (Hughes et al., 2005; Saft & Pianta, 2001). Other gender belief studies discovered these conditions still existed in some teachers' minds (Garrahy, 2003).

*In-Service Influences: Culture*

In studies focused on cultural beliefs, all found when considering ethnicity or culture the white middle-class pre- and in-service teachers held similar misconceptions regarding students' lack of ability. All studies discovered the importance of valuing cultural differences (Baldwin et al., 2007; Cabello & Burstein, 1995; Cooper, 2003; Cross, 2003, 2005; Delpit, 1988; Eberly et al., 2007; Hanley, 1999; Hermes, 2005; Hufton et al., 2003; Hughes et al., 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2006; Lockhart, 2002; Tettegah, 1996). Some studies discovered white middle-class teachers believed minority cultures' students were inept or lacked innate ability (Hufton et al., 2003; Tettegah, 1996; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2005; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). These studies added evidence to an earlier study by Spradley and McCurdy (1984), who found:

We tend to think that the norms we follow represent “natural” way human beings do things. Those who behave otherwise are judged morally wrong. This viewpoint is an ethnocentric, which means that people think their own culture represents the best or at least the most appropriate way for human beings to live. (pp. 2-3)

Another group of studies discovered that immersion, discussion, and information dissemination were valuable in creating opportunities for possible belief examination and changes in misconceived beliefs (Cabello & Burstein, 1995; Delpit, 1988; Eberly et al., 2007; Hermes, 2005; Hughes et al., 2005). Several studies addressed middle-class misconceptions by reconceptualizing and revamping their pre-service programs/courses (Cross, 2003, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2006; Lockhart, 2002). The reconceptualizations included immersion into the environments for which the candidates held misconceptions. As a continuing experience, the assignments were to use reflective journals and bring thoughts, ideas, and issues for class discussions (Baldwin et al., 2007;

Li, 2007). In all, the careful guidance of the instructor not to overemphasize middle-class fault was significant in getting the middle-class students to reflect and evaluate their beliefs (Hesch, 1999; Todd & Agnello, 2006; Wenger & Dinsmore, 2005). If these experiences worked for pre-service teachers, it seems plausible that continuing education or professional development programs could use similar but modified approaches for the benefit of in-service teachers.

### *In-Service Influences: Practices*

Teachers' beliefs influencing what teachers value and practice were another substantial area of study. A student's behavior greatly influenced a teacher's beliefs about a student's general ability and potential for success (Bennett et al., 1993). Teachers in these studies believed their students were best served by allowing experimentation and creativity (Daniels & Araposthathis, 2005; de Fatima & Sanches, 1994). Others believed it was important to meet each student at the student's level of competence, as well as provide extra academic support. The extra support demonstrates caring about the student or belief in affective/caring practices (Daniels & Araposthathis, 2005; Hermes, 2005; Hesch, 1999; Knestling & Waldron, 2006; Perry et al., 2007). In these studies, teachers believed that equal amounts of caring and support were considered valuable teacher practices to ensure student success.

Teacher beliefs and practices regarding commitment to the community and/or their students reinforced the concept that education was more than what we can test (Heckman & Rubenstein, 2001). A number of studies discovered K-12 teachers believed and practiced positive commitment to students correlated with better student

performances (Brey, Smith, Yoon, Somers, & Barnett, 2007; Daniels & Arapostathis, 2005; Knestling & Waldron, 2006; Murphy, Delli, & Edwards, 2004; Perry et al., 2007). Others were focused on the need to commit to the community and culture (Carlson & Korth, 1994; Inman & Marlow, 2004). Studies employing in-depth qualitative interviews discovered effective teachers committed to both the students and community (Cooper, 2003; Hermes, 2005; Love & Krueger, 2005).

#### *In-Service Influences: Connectedness*

Connecting requires a genuine awareness, understanding, and appreciation of others. Teachers' beliefs regarding affective education generally coincided with their ability to connect, commit, understand, and honor the student and community's culture. A study of teachers of urban Native Americans found that teachers considered successful by the community were committed to the community (Hermes, 2005). These external teachers considered themselves as allied members of the community, which would classify them as adopted externals or external-insiders (Banks, 2001). As external-insiders, they were still uncomfortable presenting cultural lessons, but realized the importance of honoring and presenting cultural lesson for their Native American students. They entrusted and invited community members to present culturally relevant lessons. In this way, as allies of the community, they honored the student's culture.

Cooper (2003) found similar circumstances in a study of African American students and their white teachers. These teachers were committed to affirming their African-American students' community, culture, and values. The white teachers, though not living within the community, demonstrated commitment by remaining as community

teachers. Because the teachers felt uncomfortable in providing cultural lessons for their students, they also invited community members to address cultural issues, thus honoring their students' culture.

Love and Krueger (2005) discovered African-American teachers' demonstrated commitment by residing in the community and by addressed issues of overcoming difficulties by presenting personal and relevant life lessons that connected to the students' culture.

In each of the above studies, the teachers' beliefs valuing their students' cultures became their practices. Each group of teachers affirmed their students' culture by either providing lessons or soliciting community assistance to ensure appropriate cultural experiences. Others considered this an essential practice to reach students whose cultures are different from the teacher's culture (Gruenewald, 2003a; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 2006; Theobald, 1997; Todd & Agnello, 2006).

*In-Service Influences: Affective-Cognitive Beliefs*

Another recurring theme regarding teachers' beliefs combined affective practices, academic support, and achievement gains. A number of studies found K-12 teachers considered by the community, as good teachers believed their primary duty was to be caring and supportive (Daniels & Arapostathis, 2005; Murphy et al., 2004; Perry et al., 2007; Williams, 1997). They believed another significant duty was delivering instruction at each student's own level (Cabello & Burstein, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Love & Krueger, 2005). They understood the need to build confidence and a positive relationship with their students. This belief and practice exemplified the idea that "no significant

learning takes place without a significant relationship” (Comer, 1986). Teachers’ beliefs and practices involved caring and building supportive relationships were found to have positive effects as early as the first grade (Perry et al., 2007).

### *In-Service Influences: Summary*

In an earlier study, teachers saw gender as a major influence when considering ability and effort. Males were considered brighter while females were considered to put forth more effort (Fennema et al., 1990). Another study discovered teachers held beliefs correlating ethnicity and ability. They believed whites had the most ability, Hispanics in the middle, and African Americans as lowest in ability. Others teachers believed behavior was the key to success. Teachers equated bad behavior with lower success regardless of an individual’s ability (Bennett et al., 1993). In all cases, the teachers’ beliefs influenced their practice and their students’ successes. There was other evidence to support teachers’ beliefs influence students even as early as first grade (Daniels & Arapostathis, 2005; Hughes et al., 2005). Even though a plethora of studies existed about in-service teachers’ beliefs, they focused on teacher practices or beliefs regarding students in diverse urban cultures.

### Concluding Thoughts

The literature indicated that early life experiences profoundly influenced beliefs. These beliefs are the most difficult to change (Kagan, 1992; Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992). A variety of pre-service teacher programs provided data supporting immersion, planned discussion, and appropriate guided readings as influences on teachers’ awareness,

understanding, and acceptance of cultural diversity. Many in-service teacher studies were concerned with how teacher beliefs influenced practices and student achievement. One of the earliest studies, *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), focused on how teacher expectations influenced their students' achievement. They focused on how information about students influenced teacher beliefs and practices.

Even though a small number of studies included rural teachers or students as participants, they focused on preparation for diverse urban settings, and not rural schools (Baldwin et al., 2007; Farmer et al., 2006; Perry et al., 2007; Todd & Agnello, 2006).

With rural students constituting greater than 30% of the nation's students, and considering rural *Gemeinschaft* communities' values differ from the *Gesellschaft* culture, more effort needs to be put into learning about how rural teachers' life experiences may influence their beliefs, values, and expectations. In particular, what experiences influenced their beliefs and practices? Did rural teachers expect that rural *Gemeinschaft* and middle-class *Gesellschaft* values would mesh or be the same? What life experiences influenced teachers' beliefs about rural students? What were the teachers' educational values? What expectations did they have *for* and *of* their students?

After 30 years as an urban-suburban educator, I was unprepared to understand the difference between the public schools' promotion of middle-class *Gesellschaft* values and my rural school and community's *Gemeinschaft* values. My experience found rural students were as capable and motivated as their urban-suburban peers; it was just their drive, motivation, and aspirations had a different focus. For a majority of my students,

Schools are places where dominant cultural practices formed the basis of social, academic and linguistic practices and act as a driving force for the varied experiences students have in schools. In cases where dominant cultural practices



shape school culture, many culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families find it challenging to function and participate in school. (Garcia & Ortiz, 2006, p. 5)

For a rural student, education connects when it relates to life skills and occupations that assist them to remain in the community and stay connected to “place.”

With 30% or more of the nation’s students attending rural schools (NCES, 2008), it was essential to address the needs of the rural students and what will help them to connect to their world while learning life and vocational skills. If we do not connect with them at an academic and affective level, they are more likely to drop out (Barton, 2005, 2006). We do not know much about rural teachers’ life experiences, beliefs, values, or expectations. We do not know whether external teachers remained as outsiders, or if the indigenous teachers who left for an outsider education returned as indigenous-insiders or adapt outsider ideology (Banks, 2001).

Fitting education to rural students’ needs does not necessarily mean that rigor needed to be forsaken, but rigor needs to part of a holistic approach, including a strong affective component valuing the student’s culture. Lillard and DeCicca (2001) discovered that raising standards did not ensure closing the achievement gap; instead, higher standards increased dropout percentages. We need to develop approaches that connect the students to their learning. Doing this will greatly benefit our chances to close any achievement gap and improve diploma completion percentages.

This study provided answers to some of these and other questions. If we are going to make gains in connecting students with learning, our teaching methods will need to be based more on cultural awareness, acceptance, appreciation, and honoring a student’s cultural place. What we do not know was what do teachers in rural areas believe about

their students' abilities, values, and needs? We also do not know if their job experiences would or did influence long-held beliefs. Discovering and exploring teachers' life experiences, beliefs, and values might be beneficial in preparing future and current rural school teachers.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

In the previous chapter, I illuminated teachers' educational beliefs as well as important rural characteristics and values. The initial discussions focused on the characteristics of rural communities followed by the connection of the characteristics to the primary cultural values. Then a discussion followed comparing rural and urban-suburban values. The differences discussed in the literature suggested Tonnie's (1887/2001) argument of rural communities as a unique society was pertinent. Additional literature reviewed considered teacher beliefs, and in some cases the experience which shaped those beliefs. Of special importance were studies examining cross-cultural experiences of external-insider teachers in ethnic urban areas who found a means to honor the indigenous students' culture. James A. Banks (2001) proposed a theoretical topology of cross-cultural teaching that provided the foundation for categorizing teachers referenced throughout this study (see Appendix A).

This chapter includes the methodological rationale, research design, and approach, followed by descriptions of site and sample (with access procedures), and data collection techniques. Then the method of analyzing data and process to generate and revise the findings was explained. The trustworthiness of the study followed by the delimitations and limitations of the study were then presented. Finally, the bracketing of the

researcher's biases, experiences, and involvement in the phenomenon and a summary completed this chapter.

### Introduction

When first discussing the concept that connecting relationships were an essential element of education, the concept drew criticism. Today, with dropout rates remaining steady or climbing, educators search for answers beyond test scores for reasons students drop out. Recently influential leaders, such as Mike Flanagan, the State of Michigan's Superintendent of Public Instruction, gave voice to the importance of relationships (Flanagan, 2008). Teachers were considered the school personnel with a consistent opportunity to connect with students. Gary R. Howard, author of *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools*, concurred that relationships were important. Howard argued that cultural knowledge, understanding, and honoring each student's major culture were essential to establish connections (Howard, 1999). Yet, many teachers originate from white suburban-urban or middle-class communities, while our students are increasingly from diverse and poor non-middle-class communities (NCES, 2008). This creates an obstacle to developing connecting relationships as many middle-class teachers view their experiences as the norm (Baldwin et al., 2007; Cabello & Burstein, 1995; Cross, 2003, 2005; Gay, 2000; Hale, 2001; Howard, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c). The focus of this study was to describe rural indigenous and rural external teachers' belief systems that guided their interactions with students, experiences shaping those beliefs, and expectations of and for their students. The research questions below provided the driving force of this study (Hatch, 2002).

## Research Questions

The following questions were the focus of every phase in the data collection of the study.

*Question 1:* How do teachers describe the belief system that guides their teaching and interactions with students?

*Question 2:* How do teachers describe the origins of their beliefs?

*Question 3:* What do rural teachers expect of their students?

*Question 4:* What are rural teachers' expectations for the students?

*Question 5:* How do indigenous and external rural teachers compare in: (1) their belief systems, (2) origins of their beliefs, (3) expectations of rural students, and (4) expectations for their students?

### *Research Design Rationale*

A qualitative research design had numerous advantages for a study whose purpose was to describe experiences of the participants. First, qualitative studies have been naturalistic, occurring in the real world natural settings. There were no controls, manipulations, or predetermined constraints (Creswell, 2003, 2007; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Landridge, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002). Secondly, a qualitative design allowed for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon studied. Data collection through interviews included probing beyond the protocol question to gather extensive data to arrive at deep, rich, full descriptions of the experiences (Casley & Kumar, 1988; Hatch, 2002; Patton, 2002; Richards & Morris,

2007; Seidman, 2006). Thirdly, to discover the essence of the phenomenon experienced by those living it, purposeful sampling was an appropriate data collection technique used by qualitative researchers. In this way, the participants of the study held specific insight into the experiences being described (Casley & Kumar, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Fourthly, an important additional characteristic of qualitative studies was the researcher's engagement in the data collection. The researcher's engagement in the data collection provided opportunities for immediate inquiry to clarify responses or to add depth of understanding (Hatch, 2002; Patton, 2002). Fifthly, in qualitative research utilizing interviews as data collection technique allowed for genuine trust and rapport building due to the researcher's sensitivity, awareness, and responsiveness with the participants (Landridge, 2007; Patton, 2002).

Qualitative analysis also assumed each case was special and unique while still allowing for cross-case analysis. The iterative and inductive process allowed for immersion into the data for emergence of patterns, themes, and relationships (Casley & Kumar, 1988; Hatch, 2002; Patton, 2002; Richards & Morris, 2007). The phenomenon as a complex entity was studied from a holistic perspective. The entity with its independent elements was more than merely the sum of its parts, which were not reducible into cause-effect analysis. Another important element in qualitative analysis was the data's content sensitivity considered from the content's perspective (Casley & Kumar, 1988; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002; Richards & Morris, 2007). Finally, researchers are expected to reflect on their perspective, convey trustworthiness, seek neutrality, and remain self-analytical throughout the process (Casley & Kumar,

1988; Hatch, 2002; Patton, 2002). Thus, a qualitative approach provided the best means to discover the essence of rural teachers' lived experiences (Hatch, 2002; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2006).

The phenomenological approach to qualitative research further refined the design by seeking the essence of the lived experiences (Bogdan & Biklin, 1998; Hatch, 2002; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Moustakas, 1990). As this study sought the holistic essence of indigenous and external teachers' beliefs, expectations, a qualitative phenomenology best fit as a method for data collection and analysis.

Quantitative designs were considered as alternative design possibilities, but were deemed insufficient for this study's purposes. Drawbacks of a quantitative design include having preconceived expectations (hypotheses), were non-emergent or flexible, and did not allow for design adjustment. Quantitative designs also did not consider the content from which the data emerge, nor did quantitative studies occur in a natural setting. The primary reasons for rejecting a quantitative design were the removal of the researcher from the data collection and analysis, and a lack of depth in the data to provide rich, thick, full descriptions of the lived experiences.

### *Research Questions Within the Design*

The method used for this study was a qualitative approach because qualitative methods "focus on understanding experiences from the point of view of those who lived them" (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 35). To yield detailed descriptions that answered the research questions required more than quantitative numbers and statistics. To obtain

descriptions required in-depth data best achieved by employing a qualitative design (Bogdan & Biklin, 1995; Hatch, 2002; Patton, 2002).

Employing the phenomenological tradition to understanding the lived experience was utilized to describe myriad phenomena. Cross and Stewart's (1995) phenomenological study described the experiences of rural high school gifted and talented students using semistructured interview questions as their data collection technique. Another phenomenological study also used interviews as the data collection method to describe women leaders who empowered others (Muller, 1994). Green (1995) examined and described an experiential-oriented nurse educator by using extended observations and semistructured interviews. Three rural Appalachian families' experiences of education and "place" were described using the phenomenological tradition to allow the essence of the experiences to emerge (C. Howley, 2006).

Research questions 1 and 2 asked: (1) How do teachers describe the belief system that guides their teaching and interactions with students?; and (2) How do teachers describe the origins of their beliefs? Both questions sought descriptions of the lived experiences of rural indigenous and external teachers. Further support of a qualitative design included the utilization of purposeful sampling to capture the personal perceptions of those who experienced the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). A qualitative design also allowed for emergent flexibility as understanding of the phenomenon deepened. Adjustments were needed such as additional clarifying questions or probes to get the deeper, richer, and thicker descriptions necessary to answer and describe research questions 1 and 2 (Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2006).



Research questions 3 and 4 focused on describing (3) what rural teachers expect of their students and (4) what rural teachers expect for the students. In this qualitative research design, each participant was considered a unique case with the data for each being context sensitive (Patton, 2002). The research questions required viewing each participant as a separate individual. Each answered protocol questions in one-on-one face-to-face interviews. Qualitative studies are holistic, meaning there is more than merely the sum of the parts. To best describe the essence of teachers' expectations, a qualitative design enabled a holistic approach with context sensitivity to compare carefully each case to its self and to others.

Following the phenomenological tradition, the above researchers considered each case separately, carefully, and compared the findings of each case to allow the overall essence of the phenomenon to emerge. Research question 5 asked: How do indigenous and external rural teachers compare in: (1) their belief systems, (2) origins of their beliefs, (3) expectations of rural students, and (4) expectations for their students? An inductive comparative analysis of experiences was needed to describe the essence of rural teachers' experiences in a manner similar to the above described studies. Employing the phenomenological tradition in a similar fashion to the above studies focused on the essence of the phenomenon provides additional support for the qualitative design proposed for this study.

### *Research Design and Approach*

This phenomenological study examined and described the belief system that guided teachers, their interactions with students, and the origins of their beliefs. The study

also described what rural teachers expected of their students and what they expected for their students. The answers to the research questions for this phenomenological qualitative study were used to describe and examine two categories of teachers. The first category was the indigenous or homegrown teachers raised in the school's community or a similar community. Banks (2001) subdivided them as either indigenous-insiders who remain aligned with the indigenous culture, or indigenous-outsiders who aligned with a culture different from their indigenous one. The second category was external or non-indigenous teachers reared in non-rural communities, often either suburban or urban communities. The external were subdivided as external-insiders aligned with the new culture in which they work, or external-outsiders remaining aligned with their original culture (Banks, 2001). The data were compared and contrasted between *indigenous* and *externals* categories.

## Data Collection

### *Site Selection*

Upon receiving Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) approval in mid-December 2008, eight districts' sites were solicited as potential sites. District superintendents were contacted by emailing an explanatory letter (see Appendix B) describing the study's purpose, the commitment required of the volunteers, and assuring the districts' and participants' anonymity. Each superintendent then either forwarded the email to their elementary principals or provided the elementary principal's email and phone contact information. All building principals received a principal letter (see

Appendix C) and a volunteer information form via email (see Appendix D) which they forwarded to their staff. Each principal was contacted by phone to discuss the study's purpose, types of volunteers needed, and questions or concerns they might have.

### *Sample Selection*

The study sample included multiple rural communities considered distant or remote according to the NCES standards (2008). This meant the communities were at least 10 miles and no more than 25 miles from an urban area. Further reduction of the sample was determined by limiting sites to districts with greater than 35% free and reduced lunch program enrollment. Eight districts were contacted, with six districts responding affirmatively and two had no response even after several e-mail and phone call attempts. The six districts permitting site access had eight elementary buildings fitting the site selection criteria. The participants were then solicited from the eight rural elementary schools representing the six secured district sites. All were within a 75-mile drive from my house.

The participants were solicited by either holding a short 10-minute informational presentation with the buildings staff, or having the principals forward the volunteer information form (see Appendix C) to their respective staffs. The potential volunteers were informed that if they wished to volunteer, to reply to the email address enclosed. Two personal presentations were made, but due to time constraints there were no other presentations.

Volunteers interviewed as study participants were selected based on the ease of which they could be scheduled for interviews. Those who responded early were

immediately scheduled, while the rest were on a first-come, first-served basis. In attempts to balance the sample, and after recognizing only five externals (non-rurals) had volunteered, the rural interviews were limited to the six already scheduled. The remaining volunteers were informed that should more non-rurals come forward, they would be informed within 1 week if they were included in the study.

Participant interviews occurred during a 2-week period in mid-January 2009 at mutually convenient times and places. Recorded interviews were transcribed within a few days of each interview's completion. All participants received two follow-up emails requesting any further information they may have discovered in their reflections of the questions asked during the interview. Each email contained one or two prompts to help focus their responses (see Appendix G).

The studies participants represented five districts and six different elementary buildings. Table 1 provides an overview of the districts demographics including the buildings' grade levels served; percentages of free and reduced lunch population; Caucasian, African-American, and Hispanic enrollment percentages; and the buildings' official student enrollment count. The elementary buildings, with one exception, served between 300-400 students. The free and reduced lunch program enrollments found three districts with over 50% enrolled, and one district with two buildings were both beyond the 50% range. They had 66% and 90% free and reduced lunch enrollments indicating a higher rate of poverty across the whole district than any other district in the area. The two districts with the highest percentage of Hispanic students included the district with the highest rate of free and reduced lunch enrollment. Two districts were overwhelmingly Caucasian with each at least 93% or more. The African-American population for all but

one district was between 1-5%. The lone anomaly was district 4 with 28% of their student population consisting of African Americans.

Table 1

*School Demographics*

Site	Grade Levels	Free & Reduced Lunches	Caucasian	African American	Hispanic	Students
1-1	K-4	53.1%	96%	2%	2%	334
2-1	K-5	66.6%	76%	5%	19%	380
2-2	K-5	90.4 %	79%	2%	19%	296
3-1	K-5	39.1%	93%	1%	6%	514
4-1	3-6	57.6%	66%	28%	6%	335
5-1	K-6	52.4%	69%	2%	29%	392

Table 2 provides a summary of the participants, including the teachers' childhood community background, their years as instructional or counseling positions, grade level most frequently taught, gender and race, their specific district and building, and childhood socioeconomic status (SES). Four of the participants were reared in working-class families as children, while the other seven experienced middle-class childhoods. Five had over 20 years experience, two had close to 15 years experience, and four were beginning their careers with 6 or less years of experience. All participants were Caucasian females. No more than three participants were selected from any site, with this occurring on two occasions. A single participant represented a district site on two occasions.

Table 2

*Teacher Demographics Background*

Teacher	Indigenous						External				
	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	N1	N2	N3	N4	N5
Years Experience	22	23	23	2	16	6	6	23	2	31	13
Grade	1-2	K	2-3	K	SW	5	1	3-5	5	ELL	SP
Gender	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
Race	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Site	1-1	2-1	2-1	3-1	1-1	4-1	2-2	2-1	3-1	5-1	1-1
SES	w/c	m/c	w/c	m/c	w/c	m/c	m/c	w/c	m/c	m/c	m/c

*Note.* R = indigenous rural, N = external suburban-urban; SW = Social Worker, ELL= English Language Learners, SP = Special Education, F = female; C = Caucasian/white; 1-1 = district 1/elem. bldg 1; SES = socioeconomic status as a child, w/c = working class, m/c = middle class.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Data collection consisted of two different stages: (1) a 55-65 minute one-on-one interview using the interview protocol (see Appendix E), and (2) electronic journal entries with a maximum of two email prompts sent over the 2-3 weeks after the interviews were completed and reviewed for content. The reflective entries were initiated with an email prompt from the researcher (see Appendix G). All oral responses were digitally taped for later transcription. The electronic journal entries were filed with the interview transcriptions of the respective participants.

Before beginning data collection, participants were reminded (1) of the study's purpose, (2) that individuals and districts mentioned in data collection would be kept confidential, and (3) of the interview instructions. Establishing rapport and trust was established by beginning with several nonthreatening get-acquainted conversational questions and then, gradually and carefully, the participants were guided into the interview questions (Hatch, 2002; Locke et al., 2000; Patton, 2002). The one-on-one open-ended interviews allowed for individual responses without influence from others, as might be the case with a focus group. The one-on-one interviews provided an opportunity to establish a personal relationship between the interviewer and interviewee. Finally, the one-on-one approach allowed participants an opportunity to individually consider the interview questions at their individual pace (Oishi, 2003).

Data collected from this study will be maintained under lock and key in the office of the researcher's advisor for a period of 5 years as stipulated by HSIRB requirements.

### Trustworthiness of Research Design

The researcher made several choices for data collection and analysis to increase the "credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability" (Locke et al., 2000, p. 260). First, to minimize bias toward parties or individuals named by the participants, elementary teachers were chosen from elementary buildings where there was little, if any, recognition of the researcher. Secondly, using multiple data collection strategies allowed for cross checking and corroboration of responses (Creswell, 2003, 2007). Additionally, participants were asked to clarify response meanings through gentle guidance and probes. The open-ended interviews were conducted in conversational style to empower

participants as equal partners in seeking answers to the research questions (Oishi, 2003). To ensure participants' comfort, each participant interview was arranged at a convenient time and place of the participant's choosing. Accuracy of data collection was maintained by recording each participant's interview session with a digital and cassette tape recording. Both taped conversations were then checked against each other for conversation accuracy before being transcribed (Creswell, 2003).

A bracket of my life experiences related to the phenomenon was written to provide information related to my personal biases, involvement, and prejudice with the study's purposes (Locke et al., 2000; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The transferability of the study is limited as all exploratory research findings are tentative. The sample and site selection procedures, appropriate for qualitative studies, are not appropriate for generalization. Finally, to decrease the likelihood that the study's findings would be influenced by idiosyncratic data, the interviews and electronic journal responses were conducted across several school districts (Locke et al., 2000).

### Data Analysis

A number of authors (Creswell, 2003, 2005, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002; Rudestam & Newton, 2007) described a process for conducting an iterative inductive analysis similar to the analytical process suggested by Hatch (2002). Hatch suggested first organizing the data by numbering the transcription lines and coding the transcriptions for ease of identification, and ease of finding quotes or discussions of similar nature.



The process continued with immersion into the data by reading and re-reading repeatedly to identify domains or relationships within the frames of analysis. Memos, notes, and thoughts were written in the margins of the transcriptions to categorize pertinent statements and eliminate extraneous statements. The next procedure involved assigning codes to the data based on the emergent salient domains, and was followed by a re-read and refinement of the salient domains. Then relationships, patterns, and themes occurring within the data were identified. At that point, it was germane to identify supporting evidence or examples from the data to support the emerged relationships, patterns, and themes.

Once the salient domains and relations emerged, the analysis within the domains commenced. This allowed for emergence of themes across domains. From the themes, a master outline was created expressing the relationship within and between domains. Then, excerpts from the data supporting the analysis were combined with the outline. At this stage, an interpretative analysis was considered with possible tentative alternate descriptions and analysis. Finally, the analysis was completed when the essence of the lived experience emerged (Patton, 2002).

An additional review of the data and interpretations were compiled using charts or tables for comparison of teachers' lived experiences and expectations as seen in Chapter IV. From this, the essence of rural teaching for indigenous and external teachers emerged from: (1) how teachers described the belief system that guides their teaching and interactions with students, (2) how teachers described the origins of their beliefs, and (3) what expectations the teachers had of and for their students.

### Limitations

One of the limitations of this phenomenological study was the amount of time available to conduct interviews. They were conducted over a 2- to 3-week period during the middle part of a school year. An additional limitation was the study limited itself to elementary schools within a specific geographic area. There also were a limited number of participants due to the small numbers of teachers in a rural elementary school. The time needed for the length of interviews also limited availability of some participants. My employment as a teacher in a nearby district may have limited honesty and forthrightness, creating either negative or positive issues an outside researcher may not have encountered. My experience as an interviewer was limited to student interventions, parent conferences, and a few in-depth teacher interviews. Finally, the results are not generalizable due to the specific sample and site chosen, but portions of the results may be helpful based on an individual district's situation.

### Delimitations

This study deliberately limited participants to teachers of a rural elementary school with 35% or greater free and reduced lunch enrollment. There was no concern about race, gender, or age of participants. The study was also limited to grouping teachers based on whether they were insiders (homegrown) or externals (imported).

## The Researcher

My personal involvement with connecting relationships has been a professional one of 37 years. As a career special educator, I have constantly worked to empower my students to achieve their personal best and not settle for what others might impose as their optimum level of achievement. I have seen the power of positive reinforcement and connecting relationships between students and teachers beyond my own classroom. My career, with the exception of my first year in the profession, has been primarily in suburban-urban settings until 7 years ago when I was re-introduced to rural culture and values. Even after several years and much research, reading, discussing, and training conferences, I am just beginning to figure out why my rural students are different from my former suburban-urban students. I still am not exactly sure what drives my rural students, but I do know they seem to respond to personal relationships as readily or more readily than their suburban-urban peers. This provided inducement to study rural teachers, specifically those from suburban-urban backgrounds who accept employment in rural districts, but continue to live apart from the rural community. They have chances to establish relationships with the students, but most do not seem to care. I had begun to pursue what cultural competence consisted of in urban settings, but I have since transferred my energy and drive to pursue what rural teachers' beliefs are regarding rural students, and how their life backgrounds or rearing shape their belief systems, interactions, and expectations of and for their students.

## Summary

This chapter has presented an overview, introduction to the methodology, along with detailed rationale for the design choice. The choice to utilize qualitative study in the phenomenological tradition was deemed appropriate to describe the essence of rural teachers' job experiences. The research questions driving this study were presented, followed by detailed procedures for site, sample, access, data collection, trustworthiness, and analysis. The final sections of the chapter discussed the study's limitations, delimitations, and bracketing of my own personal involvement, biases, and experiences with the phenomenon. Next is the discussion of the findings based on the data collection and analysis procedures previously described.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Section I: Background

##### *Chapter Organization*

This chapter is divided into three sections. Section I briefly discusses background information that leads to the results discussed in the final two sections of the chapter. Section II presents the analysis of the data within the study's original framework to examine indigenous and external teachers in rural schools. All tables presented in section II used R1, R2, and so on, to indicate indigenous rural participants. The abbreviations for external participants were N1, N2, and so on. Section III examines the data from another lens that emerged from the memos and notes written during the discovery of salient points, coding, and analysis. The tables utilized in this section separated the participants by their own self-determined childhood socioeconomic status. Their self-determined childhood socioeconomic class was as either working-class or middle-class. The data for working-class participants used "w/c" to indicate their group, while the middle-class group is identified with the "m/c" label.

##### *Study's Purposes*

The purposes of this phenomenological study were to explore and describe (1) the essence of rural teachers' life experiences; (2) the beliefs rural teachers hold (about their

work as teachers and their students as learners) and origins of those beliefs; (3) what rural teachers' expectations were of their students; (4) what rural teachers expect for their students; and (5) how indigenous and external rural teachers' life experiences, beliefs, origins of beliefs, and expectations compare.

### *Themes*

This study found four themes using an inductive analysis of salient points. After reading and re-reading, the salient points were identified, coded, and clustered into the subthemes. Then the codes were reviewed and examined for consistency, and whether any salient points were inadvertently missed, ignored, or if any new codes were needed. The first three themes were derived from the study's purposes. They are (1) teachers' backgrounds (beliefs and influences on those beliefs), (2) teachers' expectations of students, and (3) teachers' expectations for students. The fourth theme of teacher practices did not correspond directly to the lens created by the study purposes and questions; rather, this theme emerged directly from the data collected within the study's framework.

The first theme of teacher backgrounds and beliefs encompassed the beliefs developed during the teachers' own childhoods from either familial or educational influences. The second theme of teacher expectations of students reflected two major concerns for the teachers who participated in this study. Their first concern focused on students' cognitive and affective skill preparation for school, and the second concern focused on parental preparation of their children for school. The third theme of teacher expectations for students breaks down into three areas of teacher focus: short-term, mid-

term, and long-term expectations for the students. Finally, the emergent fourth theme described teachers' school practices for/with their students.

Theme I focused on beliefs resulting from the teachers' own childhood, family, and school experiences. When teachers discussed their childhood experiences, they related their own experiences to their students' experiences. They spent considerable time reflecting on their own childhood, and the similarities or differences they noticed about their students. Whether raised indigenously (rural community) or externally (urban-suburban community), all reflected on their childhood as the basis for beliefs about expectations.

Theme II examined teacher expectations of their students. The findings were not all directly related to students. A majority of the subthemes related to parents about how parents needed to do for and with their children. The study participants did not discuss expectations of students with regard to achieving goals or objectives. Even though studies have correlated teacher expectations with student achievement, this study's participants focused on elements associated with achievement only on the periphery. Teacher expectations were not associated with achievement in this study; rather, they were focused on parental duties and responsibilities that enhanced or developed a child's learner skills.

Theme III focused on a wide variety of responses concerning what teachers expected for the students. When considering what they thought or felt might be expected, most responses focused on mid- to long-range future expectations. Their descriptions used non-numerical vocabulary such as *few*, *some*, or *most* when referencing what they expected for their students. No teachers used words describing *all* or *everyone*.

In addition to the three themes framed by the study purpose and research questions, a fourth theme emerged from the data, i.e., teacher practices. The data leading to the emergence of Theme IV about teacher practices emerged through participants' descriptions of their experiences with the students and the participants' responses to those experiences. The practices discussed by the teachers also coincided with their previously described beliefs.

The fifth research question for this study looks at how the responses of indigenous teachers and external teachers compare across the three pre-figured themes and the one emergent theme; yet, this was not where the data showed notable areas of contrast. There was, however, a distinct area of contrast between the responses of the participants pertaining to participants' childhood socioeconomic status as either working-class or middle-class. This created a new lens through which to examine how the study's participants compared and contrasted in their responses to the interview questions. For the purpose of examining the similarities and differences in participants' responses based on self-determined childhood socioeconomic status were the criteria used to assign participants to one of the two participants' socioeconomic group.

This chapter presents the analysis of the themes as they related to (1) teachers' beliefs and influences on those beliefs, (2) expectations of their students, (3) expectations for their students, and (4) teachers' practices with and for their students. The last section examined the data through an additional lens different from the study's intended lens of indigenous or external teachers. The additional lens employed the participants' childhood social class (working or middle) emerged from the memos/notes written during the



discovery of salient points, coding, clustering, and analyzing. All data employed for analysis were gathered through one-on-one semistructured interviews.

## Section II: Indigenous and External Teachers' Patterns and Themes

The following section discussed the themes/patterns, and compared indigenous and external participants for comparisons and contrasting patterns. The four themes presented focused on describing teachers' (1) beliefs and influences on those beliefs, (2) expectations of their students, (3) expectations for their students' futures, and (4) teachers' practices. Within each of these themes were specific patterns that tied participants together or separated them from each other. There were outliers or anomalies in each theme, but the described general pattern emerged from continual review of the data with a best fit for each group.

### *Theme I: Teachers' Backgrounds – Beliefs*

Table 3 represents the data related to Theme I, Teachers' Beliefs, as discussed by each participant. An X indicated the participant had a comment related to the subtheme listed at the left. The totals along the right side of each group indicated the number of participants from that group who commented about the row's specific subtheme. The totals in the bottom row indicate the total number of subthemes in which the individual participant commented. The participants were divided according to the locale of the childhood rearing. The indigenous were the rurally raised participants, and externals are the non-rurally raised participants.

Table 3

*Teacher Beliefs According to Childhood Locale*

Belief / Teacher	Indigenous							External					
	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	Group Totals	N1	N2	N3	N4	N5	Group Totals
Showing Respect	X	X	X	X		X	5/6	X	X	X	X	X	5/5
Sacrifice for Future	X	X		X		X	4/6	X	X	X	X	X	5/5
Being Responsible	X	X	X	X		X	5/6	X	X	X			3/5
Working Hard			X	X		X	3/6	X	X	X	X	X	5/5
Organizing Skills		X		X			2/6	X		X	X		3/5
Traditional Families		X		X		X	3/6	X		X	X		3/5
Religion		X	X		X		2/6	X	X				2/5
Individual Totals Subthemes	3	6	4	6	1	5		7	5	6	5	3	

*Note.* R = indigenous rural, N = external suburban-urban, X = ascribed belief/value

The first four of the seven subthemes were meaningful for almost all participants regardless of group. The subthemes of (1) showing respect, (2) sacrificing for the future, (3) being responsible, and (4) working hard were not differentiated between indigenous or external participants. The only anomaly or outlier is R5, whose position involved more direct one-on-one or small group work. This participant did not make any comments that related to the subthemes about beliefs that were similar to the other participants. Her focus was related more to practices and cultural acceptance, which will be discussed later in this chapter. All participants described their beliefs of the four main subthemes in their

own terms. With the exception of the anomaly, participants' responses are presented according to the subthemes listed in Table 3.

*Showing respect.* Some of the participants described respect as how teachers respected students and the students' sense of privacy. Others discussed respect as how students needed to appropriately respond to authority figures, parents, and teachers. An indigenous participant made a typical response that related to what respect looked like for students.

The value of his friends and making sure that; he had a laser, he bought two for his friends over the weekend so he could play after school, and the little girl that's with them now that's playing didn't have one, so he got her a flashlight. That's what I'm teaching him. That's what's important. The people around you are important.

An external participant made comments about respect that captured the manner in which a number of others felt about respect. She said, "We've been taught that a lot. Everybody does things differently. We want to make sure the kids know everybody's different."

*Sacrificing for the future.* The participants' responses indicated sacrificing for the future meant delaying gratification, such as a willingness to wait for the long-term goal, or planning and steadily working until the goal is achieved. Comments again came from members of both groups that this was an important quality to have in order to be successful. Their comments about not sacrificing for the future were typical and were best represented by the following exchange that is about what beliefs one participant thought represented her students. After several responses, I commented:

It sounds like we're looking at two different sets of beliefs, one from your system here and the one at home.

I think a lot at home, from what I get from these kids, it's all video games. It's all about keeping us occupied. One family admitted to me that they're going bankrupt, but their son admitted to me that he has a Wii and all these video games, and you know.

What do these people value?

Exactly!

No, tell me.

I think they value the material things in life. They've lost their house, they've lost everything yet they have a Wii and their son always wears nice clothes. But they don't have any money. They're going bankrupt, and they're losing their house.

*Responsible behavior.* Participants defined responsible behavior as behavior toward community, family, or living up to one's responsibility. Others described responsible behavior as how well a student handled being a member of the class along with accurate and timely work completion.

The next set of comments came from an indigenous participant who described responsible behavior in a style similar to most of the other participants. She says:

I guess she thought it was my job to let the girl know when she was missing assignments. That's what a progress report was for. It was my fault because I hadn't. That's what I deal with. If something happens, it's never the student's fault and it's absolutely not the parent's fault. It's always our fault.

The next example from an external typifies beliefs about how responsibility toward the community's needs are met or not met.

They're not coming with those anymore, so more and more I think the responsibilities of the parents are falling on to the school. It seems like we keep picking up more and more of what used to be done at home, and that just makes your day shorter. Now you've got to teach more things in the same amount of time. It's hard to incorporate that.

*Working hard.* Belief in working hard or hard work was related to school efforts such as giving one's best effort, persevering, and determination. Again, a large number of

participants believed this was an important quality for success and achievement. An indigenous participant's comments provided insight into her personal determination, and why she believed working hard was important. She says, "I mean you know, but I look back and I pride myself on pulling, I pulled myself up by my own bootstraps. And moving on. I didn't start going to college until I was an adult . . ."

When commenting about the students and what they expect was related to what an external participant considered the students' options regarding hard work, she said:

It's part of life and every day they come to school they really do work hard. Most of them anyways, and I don't think they see the future as being easy. No one's going to hand them anything, but most of them aren't going to give up because why would they?

The final three subthemes related to (1) having organizing skills, (2) having traditional families, and (3) having religious beliefs drew comments from roughly one-half of the participants. All three of these themes were distributed rather evenly between indigenous and external participants.

*Having organizing skills.* Organizational skills meant having good organization or learning to be organized in a fashion that allowed students easy access to necessary materials for school or classroom activities. Participants' statements were not relegated to just the students, but how students could not learn this skill when parents had organizing deficiencies. A veteran indigenous participant mentioned that not everyone was disorganized, but seemed annoyed at those who lived in disorganized homes exemplified this subtheme. She said:

What they're doing is flying by the seat of their pants. They admittedly tell me that. They don't know how to parent—a lot of 'em are 25 years old. They're looking for shoes, mittens, gloves that morning, and the bus is honking out front. They don't know how to organize, get their child ready and prepared, but, on the

other hand, I have parents you can just tell—the backpacks are organized—the children will say no! The notes go in this slot, shoes go in this one—someone has talked to them about that.

*Traditional families.* Traditional family responses and comments focused on families consisting of two married parents and children. Much of the discussion centered on what no longer seemed to exist and what new families looked like, and how this dysfunctionality was detrimental for the students. A less experienced indigenous participant's comments were typical of those whose responses related to this subtheme. She stated that some of her high school classmates now had children old enough for her class and she described one in particular. Her comments were made with a frown and a continual shaking back and forth of her head when she said:

When she's got four children, even though she's married, that's not good. I see my high school classmates and they'll come in for conferences. I'll think, oh, my gosh! And of course, of those people that I'm thinking, they have their children with one person and they might have had a child with somebody else, besides the person that they're married to. So that's very prevalent around here. The last name of the child is not going to necessarily be the same last name of the parent.

*Religion.* Religion's importance was mixed equally between the two groups of participants. Religion for most was a personal belief not related to students, but because almost one-half of the participants mentioned it, it was considered a meaningful belief. A few discussed how religion enters into their students' lives. This indigenous participant commented:

Kids talk about going to youth church activities—that's an outing for them—church buses and vans pick up kids from poor neighborhoods and take them to these activities and classes so kids talk about church every now and then—they love it because it's an outing they get to go do something. I think that is a good influence because they are meeting other people other stations in life. I think the churches do wonderful things—they give out food, they give out support, they reach out, and they do it free. These kids don't get much like that.

Overall, the pattern for the two groups in Theme I, Teachers’ Beliefs, was not distinguishable as almost all subthemes were equally distributed between the indigenous and external participants. The only meaningful pattern to be discerned from either group or individual participants was that as teachers they believed in the importance of the seven subthemes discussed.

*Theme I: Teachers’ Backgrounds – Influences*

Beliefs were formed or developed early on in life and are influenced by people in our childhoods. For many teachers, their family members or teachers from their schools were common influences. Table 4 presents the people who influenced the participants’ beliefs that were previously presented earlier in Table 3.

Table 4

*Influences on Teachers’ Beliefs by Childhood Locale*

Teacher/ Influence	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	N1	N2	N3	N4	N5
Parents/ Family	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Teachers	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

*Note.* X = an influence on beliefs.

All participants’ beliefs were influenced by parents and teachers. There was no pattern here other than they fit the findings of the previous studies cited earlier. Parental influence was important, but good teachers were often mentioned in conjunction with parents.

An external participant discussed an example of how her parents influenced her belief development. She talked about unspoken expectations of behavior and responsibility.

Since I'm the oldest, I guess I watched my brothers and sisters. We were expected to make our beds when we woke up. There were expectations. You clean up after yourself and you're home by dinner. We ate dinner together at night if we could. I don't know I didn't expect much; I felt like I had what I needed. In fact, I don't know where this came from, but I never dared asked for anything. If the ice cream truck was coming down the street, I wouldn't ask.

An indigenous participant discussed the importance of a good teacher and family in her belief system. She mentioned:

I always wanted to be a kindergarten teacher ever since I was in kindergarten. It's been ever since I can remember. I loved my kindergarten teacher. I have a lot of teachers on my mother's side, actually university level or high school. So that was always talked about; education was very much an important thing even though my father didn't graduate from high school and my mother never went to college. Education as whole was always very important.

### *Theme II: Expectations of Students*

Although the questions considered what the participants' expectations of students were, participants focused more on parent issues than on what they expected of the students. Table 5 represents the subthemes related to expectations of the students. The top portion of the table represents the comments and concerns that focused on parental duties and responsibility. The participants wanted their students to be prepared for school by their parents so they would be able to complete more of the prescribed curriculum. The lack of student skills slowed each teacher's progress in meeting the district, state, and federal goals. The lower portion of Table 5 holds the two subthemes in which participants discussed somewhat the expectations of their students.



Table 5

*Beliefs About Expectations of Students by Childhood Locale*

Belief / Teacher	Indigenous						External						
	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	Group Total	N1	N2	N3	N4	N5	Group Totals
Support education	X	X	X			X	4/6	X	X	X	X	X	5/5
Interact w/child	X	X		X	X	X	5/6	X	X	X	X		4/5
Social Skills				X		X	2/6			X		X	2/5
Safe Home		X				X	2/6	X		X		X	3/5
School Readiness			X		X		2/6			X	X	X	3/5
Extra Experience	X	X	X		X	X	5/6	X		X	X	X	4/5
Individuals Subthemes	3	4	3	2 *	3	5		4	3	6	4	5	

*Note.* R = indigenous rural, N = external suburban-urban, X = ascribed belief/value.

Subthemes related to expectations of students through the parents included the participants' beliefs in (1) supporting education, (2) interacting with their children, (3) teaching children social skills, and (4) providing a safe home. The final two subthemes were related to both the students and parents. The students should be cognitively school ready, and should have extra experiences provided by parents and schools. Because the final two subthemes are related to students and parents, they were discussed first to coincide with the purpose and research question related to expectations of the students. Then the subthemes focusing only on parental duties are discussed.

*School readiness.* When discussing what they expected of the students in terms of school readiness, the participants suggested concepts such as knowing shapes, colors, categorizing, counting, as well as being able to listen and comprehend. Teachers expected their students' parents to develop the skills and information expected for kindergarten or first grade before the child enters school. The following were examples of participants' comments about expected school readiness. An external teacher noted what seemed to be missing.

Well, you have to incorporate more team activities in order for them to learn cooperation, and sharing, and taking turns. In kindergarten I saw, we learned how to count in one-to-one correspondence by game boards. We played Sorry, Chutes and Ladders, you played Cootie and you learned the numbers on the dice, and now you don't play with board games anymore. They don't come to school with that one-to-one correspondence, or counting skills, so you have to back up and teach that.

Another external said, "Children have changed. Let me say families have changed, because you get a lot of children that come in that have not been connected properly in a family or with adults."

Finally another indigenous participant described the beginning of the year in lower elementary:

For example, if I say go sit down, they don't know go sit down means sit on your bottom in the chair. I have to do a lot of training. Another example is the little paper towel holder. They don't know that they have to push it to get paper towels. There's a lot of training that goes on. The first few months are chaos. This is what it means to raise your hand; this is what it means to not talk. It's a lot of training.

All comments about school readiness presented a pattern for participants that connected both parents and students. The students were expected to have the skills, and the parents were the ones responsible for the task of preparing their children to be school ready.

*Extra experiences.* Participants mentioned how providing extra experiences helped students' awareness. From their responses, extra experiences meant providing opportunities for the children to do things beyond the school building and their neighborhood environment. The experiences did not need to be grandiose or expensive, but something that adds to the usual school and home environment. One indigenous participant discussed what the community was doing to help families.

They had a community light parade. My boy was there because he's a Cub Scout and they were marching in the parade. There were maybe eight or ten entrances in the parade but the town was full. They served hot cocoa and hot dogs. They had reindeer and a bonfire and it was a good family thing to do. It was a memory to build with your family.

Another indigenous participant described how even poor families can do big events. She related the following story.

They had quite a few children and they had gone to a large amusement park, which surprised me because I didn't figure they would have the money to do that. They had worked for a week picking blueberries, and they had pooled all the money that they had made and they went to the amusement park. That's the kind of thing that . . . that changes a family from survival mode to really being a family, and those kinds of things where the people try to provide their children with memories of time together and the fun of doing things together in whatever manner that they can make that happen.

Finally, an external participant shared enthusiastically a trip planned for her class to provide some extra experiences.

I think these kids don't even know a Great Lake is down the road. It's like the ocean wouldn't make any difference because they don't have those experiences, and I think it's pretty fulfilling and neat when you bring it to them. Even though we don't have the resources to bring it to them, we try. We're taking our group to the Great Lake in the spring. I would book my father-in-law's sailboat, but we wouldn't all fit. I'd have him take us for a boat ride. Those are the kinds of things that I look forward to sharing, and I think that they benefit from that even more than a science lesson on Tuesday.

This final story related responses similar to those mentioned by a large number of the participants. Their students do not have the experiences, and often the families cannot afford to travel, so teachers attempted to get the money from their schools, or find any means to provide that special event or trip.

The portion of Theme II related to the first four subthemes in Table 5 that considered participants' expectations for the parents was an unexpected emergent finding. Other than having some basic skills, teachers did not have expectations of their students much beyond what they felt parents needed to do. Each subtheme provides a rich background of how the participants viewed their students' parents.

*Supporting education.* Participants defined supporting education as encouraging children to do well, providing a place to do school work, help with school work, and encouraging continued educational pursuits. Several typical examples represented the responses from most participants. The most typical statements were typified by the following:

I had to switch to public schools and the only difference I really saw there, I thought the education was provided in both, but there were a lot more kids in the public school where their parents didn't care. They didn't care if they passed or failed. Whereas in the parochial school, because they were paying for the education, and valued the education, there was a lot more parent involvement in learning those flashcards and doing the homework at home. I don't see that here.

This belief that parents were not living up to their duty also drew comments from a younger external participant who was frustrated with not getting home support. She said:

One mom I can call and she's always sick and I think she doesn't value education, so she'll yell at him because his teacher called and he didn't get his homework done, but I don't think she's going to look any farther into that. And there's at least two like that that I've called.

Students who were also allowed to delay school work for fun things were mentioned as examples of parents who were unsupportive of education. One indigenous participant commented that

A good third of the class—that's what you hear every single day. My mom said I could not do it today 'cause I had cheerleading practice last night or I had football practice. They're really involved in all the activities, which is really okay, it's a wonderful social thing, but they have their parents backing to not do a lot of their work.

Those who commented provided a consistent pattern of desiring all their parents be supportive of a child's education and that this would help the student and the teacher achieve the goals and objectives of the class.

*Interact with children.* The participants, whose responses fit this subtheme, considered interacting with children to be taking time to play with them, supervising their play, talking to them about the day, and keeping the children away from inappropriate influences. Most seemed to believe the parents poorly supervised or did not supervise their children, and that few of the lower SES parents spent much time talking or being with the children. Responses typical of the participants were represented by this comment: "Some parents just drug them so they don't have to deal with them. Then we have other parents that don't care either way, and things are so chaotic at home that they don't realize that they can't focus."

An indigenous participant shared her thoughts that represent the other side of parents not doing their job, but demonstrating that SES was not always what makes a difference. She commented that interacting and providing time were important commodities.

I mean we have some of the strongest families with the least. If you look at them materially, they're getting by. They might have to go to a church or welfare to get home, but the adults in that home are contributing and doing all that they can do to try to provide for the children in that home and, at the same time, they're giving them stability. People get together for a meal, meager as it may be, but they're gathering together. They share time together. They do things together.

*Social skill development.* For the participants, social skills meant being able to get along, follow rules, routines, and work in groups. For many, it seemed as if school was the only place where students had to behave in a school appropriate manner. An indigenous participant described her visit to relatives who lived across the country. Her parents did not want to be embarrassed, nor did they want their children to appear unworldly or ignorant. Our conversation about this event follows with her beginning by describing where the family went.

We visited two of my uncles and we went through Washington, D.C. and just remembering that and just noticing how much this was very different than what we knew and what we had, being coached in the car.

Coached in the car?

As we drove along my mom and my dad would say at my uncle's house they had a live-in servant and you needed to understand what my parents thought was appropriate for us to know how to speak to them, to not be country bumpkins. I guess that would be their term.

An external participant's conversation was about working at a new grade level (upper elementary), and she described what the social skills were for her students, and how they had not developed appropriate social skills.

They were really, really naughty. They kicked the doors off the hinges, there was swearing, calling of names, and jumping over aisles to fight. The girls were in a lot of trouble.

What grade?

Fifth and sixth. I mean the letter writing and the pure selfishness, egocentrism, they didn't know how to express themselves, yet they were trying to express themselves. They were getting involved with boys and hating each other already.

What did that look like?

It looked like it does on MTV.

*Safe home.* This subtheme had a broad range of responses but all related to parents needing to provide an environment that was safe for the children. For some participants, this meant children not fearing for their existence, being afraid of physical or mental abuse, and a having sense of peace and calm. Others felt it meant freedom from being involved in adult issues such as financial difficulties, adult topics of conversation, sex, and violence. Many also thought it meant having basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and nurturance.

The best example of a safe home and a secure place to live comes from a story retold by an indigenous participant. She tells the story of how a young boy was frantic and would not return to class from recess. She begins with the problem of staying out after the recess bell.

A little boy lost a note, came in from the playground, and said, "I'm not coming in."

I said, "Why?"

"Because I lost a piece of paper, and I have to have it."

I said, "You lost a piece of paper outside, and you're going to find it outside? I don't know if that's going to happen."

"Well, I'm going to look."

I said, "Why is it so important?"

He said, "Because it has my escape route on it."

“Can you explain that to me?”

He said, “Yeah, it has my escape route on it, so if I get home and my dad is screaming and yelling and we know we don’t want to go in, that’s my escape route to the back, and I’ll go there and my sister will meet me there.”

This story exemplified the conditions a majority of the participants described for their students’ home lives. Basic needs such as food, shelter, and a safe place to go were not available to a number of students in each participant’s classroom. Most wondered aloud about how the children could learn when survival and safety were so prevalent in their minds.

Both groups, the indigenous and the external participants, were similar in their broad comments about parental dysfunction. There was no pattern to what they expected other than that all participant responses wanted a safe secure environment or home with sufficient basic needs and care. It was not clear why the participants focused so heavily on parents and expectations of the parents to provide adequate care, and prepare the children for school appropriate social and cognitive skills. What was apparent was the emergent theme of parental failures to perform duties related to preparing their children appropriately for social interactions and learning cognitive skills.

### *Theme III: Expectations for Students*

The third theme came from data the participants related when asked, “What do you expect for your students?” Most began with discussions of short-term hopes and then expanded to mid-term or long-term expectations. The subthemes considered the long-term expectations of college, employment, doing okay (general welfare), needing help, dropping out of school, ending up in dismal situations, and, finally, learning good values.



There was not a pattern of responses according to the *indigenous/external* categories. Table 6 presents the subthemes and used terms from participants' comments to indicate how many students they felt would fit into the subtheme listed on the left. They used non-numerical terms such as *a few*, *some* and *most*. So, all responses are indicated by F = few, S = some, and M = most, while an asterisk \* = no mention of that subtheme being an expectation for the participants' students.

Table 6

*Teachers' Expectations for Their Students' Futures by Childhood Locale*

Teacher/ Future Teacher	Indigenous						External					Group Totals
	R-1	R-2	R-3	R-4	R-5	R-6	N-1	N-2	N-3	N-4	N-5	
College	S	F	F	*	*	F	M	*	*	*	S	F=3 S=2
Employed M	M	S	M	M	M	S	M	S	M	M	S	M=7 S=4
Do Okay	M	F	M	M	M	F	M	S*	M	S*	S*	M=6 S*=3
Need Help	F	S	F	F	*	S	F	S*	S	S*	M	F=4 S=4
Dropout	S+	S+	F	F	*	S	S	S	*	F	S	s/s+=6 s=5
Dismal	F	S	F	F	*	S	S	S**	*	F	S	S=5 F=4
Learn + Values	M	S	M	S	M	F=S	M	M	M	S	S	M=6 S=5
Totals M	3		3	2	3		4	1	3	1	1	21
For S	2	5		1		4	2	5	1	3	6	29
Each F	2	2	4	3		3	1			2		17
*				1	4			1	3	1		10

*Note.* F= a few, S = some, S\*= connected to other in column, S+ = some plus a few more, M = most, \*= not mentioned.

When examining Table 6, it was clear the participants saw a range of options for their students, which might relate to their realizing their students have a range of abilities and/or opportunities. Whatever the influence on why the participants had a variety of expectations was not clear. For me, what was clear was that the pattern for each participant, whether indigenous or external, is varied. Their responses were without any consistency between participants or within either the indigenous or the external groups.

#### *Theme IV: Teacher Practices*

This theme about teacher practices was an unexpected finding and was not part of the study's framework. Teacher practices presented in Table 7 emerged from the data as participants responded to their beliefs and expectations. It involved how they put into action what they believed. The theme was comprised of nine subthemes. These nine subthemes were split equally into three groups of three subthemes, each based on the number of responses the group had for each trilogy. The first trilogy drew comments from all participants and their practices of (1) attending to students' needs, (2) knowing the students, and (3) their diversity and culture. The second trilogy described practices of (4) empowerment, (5) differentiation, and (6) using relevant lessons. The last trilogy focused on (7) rules and routines, (8) requirements and mandates, and (9) transience of their students. The first trilogy included all participants, the second included a little more than one-half of the participants responding, and the final trilogy had a little less than one-half the participants responding.

Outside of the pattern, when all participants focused on the first three subthemes, there was not a clear pattern of responses based on whether a participant was indigenous

or external, nor whether the group as a whole found the practice important or used it in their classrooms. Beyond slightly more than one-half of participants responding in Trilogy II or a little less than one-half of the participants responding in Trilogy III, the final two trilogies have no pattern.

Table 7

*Teachers Practices With Rural Poor Students by Childhood Locale*

Teacher / Practice	Indigenous							External					
	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	Group Totals	N1	N2	N3	N4	N5	Group Totals
Attend to Student Needs	X	X	X	X	X	X	6/6	X	X	X	X	X	5/5
Know your Students	X	X	X	X	X	X	6/6	X	X	X	X	X	5/5
Diversity & Culture	X	X-	X	X	X	X	6/6	X	X	X	X	X	5/5
Empower	X		X		X	X	4/6		X			X	2/5
Differentiate	X	X-		X-	X	X	5/6			X	X		2/5
Relevant Lessons	X		X		X		3/6	X	X			X	3/5
Rules & Routines		X		X		X	3/6					X	1/5
Requirements & Mandates		X	X	X			3/6		X			X	2/5
Transience		X				X	2/6	X		X			2/5
Totals for Individuals	6	7	6	6	6	7		5	5	4	4	7	

*Note.* R = indigenous rural, N = external suburban-urban, X = recorded response, X- = a comment not in favor of this subtheme.

*Trilogy I – Attend to students’ needs, know your students, and diversity/culture.*

These three subthemes were grouped together as all participants employed these practices or espoused they did (observation was not a part of the data collection). Each subtheme was addressed individually, but they remained part of the first trilogy because all were important to each participant.

The first subtheme of attending to students’ needs came from responses such as these from an indigenous participant who was discouraged by the fact her students did not have their basic needs met. She began with one of her methods to nurture students. She says she begins the year

by spoon feeding and it gets harder as you go along and part of that is I spoon feed them in here. I allow them to look on other people’s work, copy each other to learn from each other, whereas when you get older you’re not expected to do that—but be independent it’s all about you—don’t look at others. I encourage that. I say look at how she is making that face on that person, Aaaahh, Yaaahh, and then they do it and they learn.

Another indigenous participant began with finding out about her students’ abilities.

I assessed them the first week of school, and I eliminated a whole unit on colors and shapes because they already knew them. I can still cover that in things that I’m teaching, but I didn’t need to spend a whole unit on that because they already knew that.

The whole group also felt getting to know a student was important and was best represented by this indigenous participant’s response.

I ask them if you could choose any place to sit where would you sit, and how do you like to learn, by yourself, in groups. Who’s your best friend, who’s somebody you don’t know, ’cause I’ll make sure kids get to know everybody. My room doesn’t stay the same very long. I move ’em all the time.

Getting to know the students was best exemplified by these comments made by an indigenous participant.

Last year I had a very active group so we had to do a lot of hands-on things, and had to do grabbers to get their attention and keep 'em rolling, keep 'em rolling. This year is very inquiring minds, you know, you throw something at them and they throw it back at ya. So we do a lot of research, so you go back, and you have to change.

The final subtheme within the first trilogy considered diversity and cultural practices. Some allowed for rural cultural ways, while others did not. The first are represented by this typical comment.

And I'm like, well, the culture in this community makes it okay that they dress this way. With deer hunting, families survive a lot on fishing and deer hunting. For show and tell we've had a dad that brought his buck up because his son wanted to show it for show and tell. There are some of the teachers that are very opposed to that because they think that's gross or hillbillyish. A lot of people in this town are hunters. They have guns. There are some people that are like that is wrong you shouldn't talk about that.

The second group, who did not want to allow for rural hunting culture, agreed with or commented similarly to this indigenous participant's comments.

That's very good—I do set a standard that is my value system—we do not talk about guns in here and they look at me like, “We do at our house” and I say, “Your family is your family; this is your school family and here we don't talk about guns because of danger.”

Both groups responded about equally concerning hunting culture. Some were okay with it and allowed for discussions, while others were against it in their classroom. No pattern emerged as to whether indigenous or external participants did or did not allow discussions of gun/hunting culture. The groups were divided, with each holding members who had made comments about allowing the discussions or not allowing the discussions.

*Trilogy II – Empower, differentiate, and relevant lessons.* This second trilogy was discussed by either six or seven of the participants, or a little more than one-half the whole group. They were discussed as a group because of the number of participants who discussed their importance was relatively the same.

The first subtheme within this trilogy was empowering or empowerment of the students. This included activities that build individual self-esteem, provide decision-making opportunities for groups or whole classes, encouragement to continue to do their best, and focus on the positive. Comments that best represented these practices were made by an external participant who wanted to empower her students to be like everyone else. She said:

The materials that they left were ridiculous. They did whatever they wanted when they were in that room. The kids never got out of that room. It was playtime. Those teachers didn't expect anything of these kids. When I got there and this other teacher we set high expectations, we took them on field trips to show them things that we could do. We got them involved in jobs in co-op programs. When they got out of school, they could hold a job.

An indigenous participant wanted students to know they were valued. She mentioned:

You spend a lot of time letting them know that they're important, and trying to redirect their behavior so you know they get some satisfaction with a proper connection rather than whatever means they have already learned to at least get some attention from somebody.

The second subtheme within this trilogy considers differentiating the lesson, material, or assessment to accommodate anyone in the class. Indigenous and externals both commented on this practice. Some from both groups embraced it, while others did not find it of much value. They needed to get the curriculum completed, and that took much of their time to plan. Comments of those favoring differentiation were typified by

an indigenous participant who wanted to allow for individual students' differences within Gardner's multiple intelligences. She commented that because she had gotten to know her students and the objective was to demonstrate knowledge about a particular concept, she gave the class options from a list placed in the front of her classroom. The rubric for the assignment remained the same, but the end product could vary. Their personal choices could range from writing a report, drawing a picture, presenting a story or drama with other students, or whatever best fit the students' multiple intelligences.

On the other side were those who did not use a differentiated approach. This indigenous participant felt that her approach worked and everyone would learn, with some taking more time but the materials remained the same.

Well, to be honest I am pretty much a realist, I pretty much teach everyone the same materials, unless they're struggling. So I pretty much expect they'll all master my curriculum, but I'm a realist and know that won't be true. Some kids need more time.

The final subtheme within this trilogy considered the use or development of relevant lessons. Some felt it enhanced engagement or enticed students to try to learn the necessary facts to be able to perform a task. The following comments represented those who discussed relevant lessons. An external participant made these statements:

We only have a short time with them, and I want to spend that time working on those skills that will benefit them after education, because that whole education part; there are many people in the real world who are productive and succeeded in life with very little education. . . . I don't think our academic system here at school is very real world although that's one of the things I strive for in my classroom is to make it more real world, but the way our curriculums are set up and the whole way our school systems are structured, I don't like it at all.

Another external participant represented the impact of relevant lessons through this story.

He couldn't understand why fractions were important. So, I brought in measuring cups and we learned to identify the fractions used for baking. Then I gave them problems with multiplying fractions in baking. We did actual recipes and tried them. When they failed to do the correct math, the recipes turned out poorly. So they got the real feel for why fractions are important.

Again, the discussion was equally split between indigenous and external participants with no definitive pattern of responses other than the indigenous and externals both had a variety of practices.

*Trilogy III – Rules and regulations, requirements, mandates, and transience.*

These final subthemes were discussed by a little less than one-half the participants. They were still meaningful because both indigenous and external participants responded to the questions or probes related to these subthemes.

The first subtheme considers how teachers' practices incorporated or did not incorporate rules and routines. For example, those who discussed how they employed routines and rules were represented by an indigenous participant, who described her approach with rules and routines by saying:

Well, I'm a rule abider, so I loved school because it's all about rules and structure. I try to have routine schedules; there's always flexibility, of course, I try to be the same, I hate to be gone, I try to warn them ahead talk them through it—they need consistency and need to know what sameness is—how things can stay steady and dependable—they don't have a life that is dependable.

The next subthemes involved discussions about mandates and requirements. The comments were in response to federal and state requirements. The best example of a comment representing those who discussed this subtheme was made by an indigenous participant who said, "We are no longer on a journey, but a race."

The final subtheme examined the transience of the student population and the adjustments this created for classroom instruction, social bonding, and attending to the



new student's needs. An indigenous participant's statements represent the whole group's discussion about transience. In this case, the participant's comments represent how transience affected her practice. Our conversation began with a discussion of issues facing her practice as a teacher. She laments:

I think the transience and moving is the biggest change I have seen. These little towns used to be the same, nothing changed—very rarely, now it's changing.

What has that done for your classroom as the year progresses?

Some years worse than others. It can affect the classroom a lot or a little—if you get a child in here who you know some children meld right in; some children don't. It's all going well, the class is jelling, and you get one who moves in and doesn't fit and you're working at making it fit, but they just don't fit a square peg in a round hole and it will throw everything off. One person will do that for whatever reason—for whatever reason one person can do that. They can be loud, they can be demanding, or needy, who knows.

The transience part that has changed for me is you expect the unexpected when you get a new one in—I do not assume anything—The secretary says you have a new one coming in and you have no idea what they're gonna be.

Again, there were few overwhelmingly meaningful patterns within either the indigenous or external groups, and no pattern between the groups as each group had some comments similar to those used as examples to demonstrate the thoughts and actions of the participants. Individuals held differing views, but the differences occurred both within and between the indigenous and external participants' responses.

### Section III: Another Lens

During the process to discover salient points and continuing through the coding and clustering I wrote memos or notes, or indicated when something was a bit different, or when an individual participant began to respond similarly to another participant. I sensed there was another lens or approach that might allow other patterns to emerge.

Finally, it began to emerge that the socioeconomic status of the participants' childhood could lead to different contrasts and comparisons. During the data collection each participant had self-determined their families' socioeconomic status while they were children as either working-class childhoods (w/c) or middle-class childhoods (m/c). Examining all tables after rearranging them based on the w/c or m/c groupings provided additional evidence of distinctive differences between the two groups.

What follows is a re-examination of the original data using the lens of childhood social class of either working-class or middle-class. The order of this discussion parallels that used in Section II. First, the beliefs and influences were presented. Secondly, the teachers' expectations of the students were discussed. Thirdly, a discussion of the teachers' expectations for the students was presented. Finally, a discussion of teachers' practices, a theme that emerged from outside the study's frame, was presented.

#### *Theme I: Teachers' Backgrounds – Belief Similarities and Differences*

Table 8 presents Theme I, beliefs rural teachers hold about their work, and their students as learners. The discussion of this theme included only those subthemes that provided results different from the findings presented by the first lens of *indigenous* or *external*.

*Showing respect.* The middle-class participants discussed respect as how students needed to appropriately respond to authority figures, parents, and teachers.

A middle-class participant's comments typified this group's beliefs about respect. She related an ongoing issue that when the students used equipment for projects, they did not seem to respect the need to find all the items, nor return them to the proper place. This

concerned the participant because she needed to share the equipment with other classes and to have it available for the next school year.

Table 8

*Beliefs of Teachers by Socioeconomics (SES) of Childhood*

Teacher / Belief	Working Class SES					Middle-Class SES							
	R1	R3	R5	N2	w/c	R2	R4	R6	N1	N3	N4	N5	m/c
SES	w/c	w/c	w/c	w/c	Total	m/c	m/c	m/c	m/c	m/c	m/c	m/c	Total
Showing Respect	X	X		X	3/4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7/7
Sacrifice for the Future	X				1/4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7/7
Being Responsible	X	X	X	X	4/4	X	X	X	X	X			5/7
Working Hard		X		X	2/4		X	X	X	X	X	X	6/7
Organizing Skills					0/4	X	X		X	X	X		5/7
Traditional Families					1/4	X	X	X	X	X	X		6/7
Religion		X	X	X	3/4	X			X				2/7
Individual Totals	3	4	1	5		6	6	5	7	6	5	3	

*Note.* R = indigenous rural, N = external suburban-urban, X = ascribed belief/value, w/c = working class childhood, m/c = middle class childhood.

The singular working-class example revolved around the students about how individual differences are important. She was also an indigenous participant when the following comments were first mentioned.

I do surveys about what they like, dislike, how they like to learn and go from there. I offer them different chances to learn, for instance maybe they like to draw, or write or perform. . . . They both give me the same information, but in a manner

that individually fits the child. To me is that okay, yah, because they learned their own way.

*Sacrifice for the future.* All of the m/c participants mentioned the importance of sacrificing for the future. Their responses indicated sacrificing for the future meant delaying gratification such as a willingness to wait for long-term goals, or planning and steadily working until the goal was achieved. Only one working-class participant commented about this subtheme.

The working-class participant's response about sacrifice for the future was not related to the students, but to herself. She had spent a number of years working in a noncertified instructional capacity. She sacrificed time, effort, and money to earn her teacher certification so she could officially be a classroom teacher. The concept was similar to that promoted by the middle-class participants.

The middle-class participants' views were best summarized by a participant who made statements about the difference between the belief system schools promoted and the beliefs her students actually lived. The following participant's comment was included earlier in Section II as an indigenous participant. When asked what she noticed about her students she lamented:

I think they value the material things in life. They've lost their house, they've lost everything yet they have a Wii and their son always wears nice clothes. But they don't have any money. They're going bankrupt, and they're losing their house.

This participant's comments were introduced again because they perfectly exemplified the general pattern of middle-class participants' beliefs about rural communities' culture and their students' economic situation. They did not understand why students and their families focused on entertainment.

*Responsible behavior.* Almost all participants responded about the importance of being responsible. As in hard work, the responses differed between middle-class and working-class participants. The responsible behavior pattern for working-class participants was defined as behavior toward community, family, or living up to one's responsibility. The middle-class participants' pattern considered responsible behavior as how well a student handled being a member of the class, and how accurate and timely they completed assignments.

The *Gemeinschaft* ideal of responsible behavior was the behavior exhibited toward community, family, and others (Tonnies, 1887/2001). The working-class participants discussed this view of responsible behavior more than the middle-class participants did. The following examples represented the working-class participants' responses about responsible behavior or acting responsibly.

This working-class participant's response was related to students doing more than required and being responsible in a communal (*Gemeinschaft*) manner.

I have the special ed. kids in my room and when we need to partner up I ask volunteers to work with them and 90% have their hands up to volunteer. They want to help. I have kids every day that stay in and help me at recess.

The middle-class participants' responses were more focused on responsible behavior as school appropriate behavior and schoolwork completion. They also focused on irresponsible behavior. One veteran teacher said, "I'll send a note home, the note comes back. Other kids I can pin it to their shirt and it never makes it home. I don't know where it goes."

*Working hard.* Belief in working hard or hard work was related to school efforts such as giving one's best effort, persevering, and determination. Both groups had similar beliefs and were not discernable from each other.

The next two subthemes of organizational skills and traditional families were the domain of the middle-class participants. The working-class pattern did not exist for this subtheme.

*Organizational skills.* Organizational skills meant having good organization or learning to be organized in a fashion that would allow students to easily access necessary materials for school or classroom activities. This particular belief did not draw similar responses from the working-class and middle-class participants as much as it did between those labeled as *indigenous* or *external*.

*Traditional families.* Traditional family responses and comments focused on families consisting of two married parents and children, which was the same as for the previous lens. Much of the discussion centered on what no longer seemed to exist and what new families looked like, and how this dysfunctionality was detrimental for the students. A working-class participant mentions traditional families when she realized all her children's friends had two parents, were not divorced, and represented the traditional family.

One middle-class participant demonstrated a physical reaction of shaking her head back and forth while making her comments. Her comments best exemplified the middle-class group's responses about traditional families and how families were no longer like they used to be. Her comments were typical of how the middle-class group focused on dysfunctionality of the families. She was quoted earlier as an indigenous member.

*Religion.* The final subtheme from participants' beliefs considered religion, and drew comments from 5 of the 11 participants. There was no discernable difference in the beliefs about religion through either the indigenous/external lens or the class lens.

*Theme I: Teacher Backgrounds – Influences*

This second portion of Theme I, Teachers' Beliefs and Influences, with both subthemes viewed through the lens of childhood SES of *working-class* or *middle-class*, was no different than when viewed through childhood locale of *indigenous* or *external*. All participants had meaningful influences from parents and from teachers or other school personnel. The pattern is the same when analyzing Table 4 (indigenous/external) and Table 9 (working-class/middle-class) for influences on teachers' beliefs.

Table 9

*Influences on Teachers' Beliefs by Childhood SES*

Teacher/ Influence	Working-Class				Middle-Class							
	R1	R3	R5	N2	R2	R4	R6	N1	N3	N4	N5	
Parents/ Family	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Teachers	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

*Note.* X = an influence on beliefs.

*Theme II: Expectations of Students*

The next meaningful theme or pattern intended to focus on expectations of students, but almost totally focused on parents who were not parenting students to meet

participants' expectations of students. The pattern in this theme focused on blaming parents, or finding a reason why students were not adequately prepared cognitively or affectively for school. Table 10 provides an overview of the parenting duties discussed by participants. Their responses indicated their beliefs were formed by their childhood experiences. These reflections were generally positive, and formed the foundations of their beliefs about proper parenting.

Table 10

*Teachers' Expectations of Students by Childhood SES*

Belief / Teacher	Working-Class SES					Middle-Class SES							
	R1	R3	R5	N2	w/c totals	R2	R4	R6	N1	N3	N4	N5	m/c totals
Support education	X	X		X	3/4	X		X	X	X	X	X	6/7
Interact w/children	X		X	X	3/4	X	X	X	X	X	X		6/7
Teach Social Skills							X	X		X		X	4/7
Safe Home						X		X	X	X		X	5/7
School Readiness		X	X		2/4					X	X	X	3/7
Extra Experiences	X	X	X		3/4	X		X	X	X	X	X	6/7
Total	3	3	3	3		4	2*	5	4	6	4	5	

*Note.* R = indigenous rural, N = external suburban-urban, X = an ascribed belief or value, w/c = working class childhood, m/c = middle childhood, \* = outlier /anomaly.

When considering what was important for their students, the working-class participants' experiences or at least their reflections on their experiences differed. The six



subthemes considered what parents should be doing. The three most prevalent expectations of parents for working- and middle-class participants parallel the indigenous/external group's three most important expectations. The three main expectations were that parents should (1) support education, (2) interact with their children, and (3) provide enriching or extra experiences. Other parenting expectations that were only in the domain of middle-class participants were the subthemes of teaching appropriate social skills and providing a safe home. Both groups had about one-half their members discuss the importance of being school ready.

The pattern within Theme II, viewed through the SES lens, found that the working-class participants did not focus on expecting social skills before the students entered their classrooms, nor did they discuss expectations of a child having a safe home environment. This did not mean they did not have those thoughts or expectations, but they did not mention them. The last two subthemes were relatively prominent for the middle-class participants. They had not indicated why, but provided examples of what their childhoods had been like and how different their students' lives were in comparison.

*Support education.* The first subtheme focused on parents being supportive of their child's education, and was similar to the comments made when viewed through the indigenous/external lens. This meant encouraging their children to do well, providing a place for them to do school work, helping them with their school work, and having them look forward to a future educational pursuit. It also meant encouraging them to join and participate in school activities, clubs, and/or sports. Both groups of participants had similar beliefs about the importance of parental support for education.

*Interacting with children.* All participants held the belief that parents' duties included interacting with their children regardless of whether they were w/c, m/c, indigenous, or external participants. By interacting with their children, they described activities that meant taking time to play with them, supervising their play, talking to them about their day, and shielding them from inappropriate influences (scary/violent media or adult conversations and themes). The participants' responses focused on spending time with their children excluded taking them on excursions or trips.

*School readiness.* This theme's responses were also evenly divided between w/c and m/c participants. This theme meant parents should be helping students develop the skills and information expected for kindergarten or first grade. Teachers expected their students to know shapes, colors, categorizing, counting, as well as being able to listen and comprehend. The groups' experiences showed that this theme presented frustration for both. Without some readiness and preparation established by parents, the school needed more time to teach students prerequisite skills so students could learn the state mandated curriculum.

*Social skills.* The next subtheme used the same description as the indigenous and external lens. This parental duty meant parents needed to develop and teach children school-appropriate social skills. The teachers discussed how they learned social skills as children and then followed that with their expectations and experiences connected with their students. Social skills meant being able to get along, follow rules and routines, and work in groups.

For the participants, in addition to learning their own social skills as children, they also discussed their experiences with their students' social skills. Almost all the

comments came from middle-class participants. Other than the one w/c participant noted above, the working-class group did not specifically discuss the students' social skill development as related to parenting duties.

The middle-class group expressed concern regarding manners, group behaviors, and getting along and/or respecting others. Their comments focused on what parents did not do, and how it was different at school because of these students. While describing her students' behavior and how they acted toward each other, she described her students by saying:

I mean the letter writing and the pure selfishness, egocentricism, they didn't know how to express themselves, yet they were trying to express themselves. They were getting involved with boys and hating each other already.

The idea that parental responsibilities include social skill development brought negative views about several communities' parents. The tone and body language of those who commented about this subtheme demonstrated the apparent frustrations they felt.

*Safe home.* The final parenting subtheme considered the need to provide children with a safe home. Utilizing the lens of childhood socioeconomic background did not lead to any other differences than those found using the indigenous and external lens.

*Extra experiences.* A majority of participants mentioned how providing extra experiences helped students' awareness. From the teachers' responses, extra experiences meant providing opportunities for the children to do things beyond the school building and beyond their immediate neighborhood environment.

Responses from the working-class group regarding extra experiences focused on positive experiences. Their reflections about their own childhood included memories of simple experiences that were inexpensive or free such as going to town to shop for

groceries, visiting the library to get some books, and going into town to enjoy a festival or parade. More long-range planning involved saving, often for more than a year, to visit relatives who lived long distances from their community. Some typical responses focused on finding free or inexpensive community activities and experiences all could enjoy were represented by her statement that, “I think with this community we’re seeing a kind of resurgence from what I’ve seen. There are now more community festivals.”

The middle-class participants’ discussions about parents providing extra experiences were mixed. Some participants focused on the parents’ lack of providing experiences while others discussed how they arrange to provide extra experiences for their students.

Some middle-class group members focused on what was lacking or judged the type of experiences parents provided. An experienced middle-class participant firmly opined:

Some illiterate parents, the children have had no life experiences. A lot, at least one-half our children, the biggest highlight is to go to Wal-Mart. They go to Wal-Mart, that’s what they do that’s huge. I’ve had students who tell me they’ve never gone to the Great Lake. So life experiences are very much lacking, but that hasn’t really changed.

The final three duties included providing extra experiences, teaching social skills either directly or as role models, and providing a safe home. The subthemes drew comments from about one-half of the participants. Each of those participant made detailed comments about these areas. Their experiences indicated they believed these were significant duties for parents.

No working-class participant mentioned all of these parental duties. Only two working-class participants commented on the final three subthemes. Except where noted,

they did not specifically comment on anything directly relating to the subtheme. The working-class participants' pattern was related to only a few subthemes, and then in a cursory fashion.

Generally, the middle-class group found parents lacking in these duties. With at least four of the middle-class participants discussing these subthemes as significant duties, this was a different pattern from the one exhibited by the working-class group.

*Theme III: Teachers' Expectations for Students' Futures*

There was no difference in the pattern for this theme when viewed through the m/c and w/c lens. The varied answers were similar to those presented in the indigenous/external discussion. Table 11 presents the varied responses of the participants based on whether they were working-class or middle-class.

Table 11

*Teachers' Expectations by Childhood SES for Their Students' Futures*

Future/ Teacher	Working-Class SES				Middle-Class SES						
	R-1	R-3	R-5	N-2	R-2	R-4	R-6	N-1	N-3	N-4	N-5
College	S	F			F		F	M			S
Employed	M	M	M	S	S	M	S	M	M	M	S
Do Okay	M	M	M	S*	F	M	F	M	M	S*	S*
Need Help	F	F		S*	S	F	S	F	S	S*	M
Dropout	S+	F		S	S+	F	S	S		F	S
Dismal	F	F		S*+	S	F	S	S		F	S
Learn Good Values	M	M	M	M	S	S	F=S	M	M	S	S

*Note.* F = a few, S = some, S\* = connected to other in column, S+ = some plus a few more, M = most.

All participants, whether working-class or middle-class, expressed the same mixed opinions about what to expect for their students as did the groups when split as either indigenous or external. Those with more experience saw long-range options as mixed, with some doing well and making it to college or being employed, with others dropping out. The experienced teachers also believed some form of mentoring or support system would be necessary for a number of students to ensure their readiness for competitive options after high school graduation.

*Theme IV: Teacher's Practices*

Teacher practices as a theme included the same three trilogies as described in the indigenous/external findings. Table 12 presents a list of the subthemes and the participants' responses to each subtheme. Trilogy I addressed attending to students' needs, knowing the student, and diversity and/or culture practices. These subthemes drew comments from almost all participants.

Trilogy II was about empowering students and/or building self-esteem, differentiating instruction, and developing relevant lessons. Comments about these experiences generally came from working-class participants with a few middle-class anomalies due to either job description or comments about not utilizing the approach.

The final trilogy came primarily from the middle-class group's comments about establishing rules/routines, requirements and mandates, and transience. Even though some similarities exist among the subthemes to which the participants responded, their comments diverged according to whether they were a working-class or middle-class participant.

Table 12

*Teachers' Practices With Rural Poor Students by Teacher's Childhood SES*

Teacher/ Practice	Working-Class SES					Middle-Class SES							
	R1	R3	R5	N2	Group Total	R2	R4	R6	N1	N3	N4	N5	Group Total
Attend to S's Needs	X	X	X		3/4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7/7
Know Students	X	X	X	X	4/4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7/7
Diversity & Culture	X	X	X	X	4/4	X-	X	X	X	X	X	X	7/7
Empower	X	X	X	X	4/4			X				X	2/7
Differentiate	X		X		2/4	X-	X-	X		X	X		5/7
Relevant Lessons	X	X	X	X	4/4				X			X	2/7
Rules & Routines					0/4	X	X	X				X	4/7
Requirements & Mandates		X		X	2/4	X	X					X	3/7
Transience					0/4	X		X	X	X			4/7
Total	6	6	6	5		7	6	7	5	4	3	7	

Note. R = indigenous rural, N = external suburban-urban, X = recorded response, X- = a negative comment

*Trilogy I: Students' needs, knowing students, and diversity/culture.* The first part of the trilogy, students' neediness, utilized the same description given by the indigenous and external lens findings. Student neediness considered how the teachers provided a lack of basic needs such as food, clothing, and nurturance. Most realized that without these needs being met, students had a difficult time concentrating and learning.

Working-class participants handled students' needs in a matter-of-fact manner. They accepted it as part of what these children bring to the classroom and devised measures to meet the needs unobtrusively. One working-class participant met the food

needs by having snacks available for any child who came without snacks. She modeled sharing with her students who then began to share their extra snacks with classmates who did not have one. The teacher checked to ensure students did not have allergies to any of the products offered as snacks.

Middle-class participants also recognized the students' neediness, but their comments vacillated between hope and despair. One participant bemoaned the fact that so many of her students just did not have the basics. She particularly focused on nurturance and arranged her students' seating to help provide nurturance for students in need. A few others echoed these statements, bemoaning their students' neediness. Others saw students' neediness as an opportunity to help. One participant discussed "spoon feeding" her students so they would get the information. Another middle-class participant bemoaned the suspension of one of her students. She said:

I'm thinking she's gone for three days. What's she doing at home? Nothing. She's there with her mom, but she's not even with her mom because she says mom don't get home until like three or four in the morning. I'm thinking this kid doesn't sleep so that's why she's a crab, but then again that's no excuse. I have mixed emotions about how to treat people like that. She still has to learn and do what's expected of her. She has to learn. What are you going to do when you get out of school? It's very frustrating.

Overall, it seemed for the middle-class participants their experiences with basic needs and nurturance were somewhat frustrating and attempted to fill the gap as best they could at school, but it remained frustrating.

Know your students, the second part of the first trilogy, found the working-class group used the following to get know their students: filling out student surveys, talking with them as individuals or small groups, and encouraging their best efforts. They demonstrated knowing their students by adapting or modifying homework to fit the child



based on what the teacher had discovered about them at a personal level. Earlier in the Section II discussion of *indigenous* and *external*, an indigenous participant made comments that also represented the working-class participants. Important practices were captured in the following statements:

Last year I had a very active group so we had to do a lot of hands on things, and had to do grabbers to get their attention and keep 'em rolling, keep 'em rolling. This year is very inquiring minds, you know you throw something at them and they throw it back at ya. So we do a lot of research, so you go back, and you have to change.

Two middle-class participants, both lower elementary, mentioned observing the students as a way of getting to know them. Others spent time talking with or talking to the students. This latter interchange did not seem to have the purpose of truly getting to know the student. It was more purposeful in the sense that it involved classroom behavioral management issues. These statements were typical of the middle-class group.

When asked how she managed to assess the students so rapidly for learning problems, one participant stated she does it this way:

By observing. I stand back and watch them and how they interact—that has a huge basis of how I handle my class, what I do and how far I can go with my class. I look for kids who get along, who can't get along, who needs a lending hand.

This topic of conversation about evaluating young elementary students' cognitive ability, sense of school readiness, or maturity also drew comments from another lower elementary teacher, who said:

For the inability to catch on to something like counting by ones, which is something we do every day, that shows me that they're having a major problem. I can feel it in my gut and my heart.

The working-class participants' pattern was that they tried to get more personally involved in their students' lives. They wanted to know more about their students as

individuals, and to be able to program appropriately relevant and differentiated instruction to help them be the best student they could be. The middle-class pattern was to be more observational and less personal.

Culture and/or diversity were the last of the three unanimous subthemes mentioned by the participants relating to their practices concerned culture and/or diversity. It was difficult to separate culture from diversity as many comments were made jointly about ethnicities and about the poor white students. Some teachers honored the culture of their students, particularly the rural ideals and traditions, while others did not allow rural cultural practices into their classrooms.

Honoring each student's culture emerged as a consistent pattern from working-class participants. Their statements regarding diversity or culture first considered the students' self-esteem and well-being. Even though the individual participants may not have practiced the rural traditions such as hunting deer, they did honor the students' discussions and needs to share their hunting experiences. Statements previously included in the indigenous/external findings also best representing practices honoring cultural traditions and values are exemplified by responses such as the following:

And I'm, like, well the culture in this community makes it okay that they dress this way. With deer hunting, families survive a lot on fishing and deer hunting. For show and tell we've had a dad that brought his buck up because his son wanted to show it for show and tell. There are some of the teachers that are very opposed to that because they think that's gross or hillbillyish. A lot of people in this town are hunters. They have guns. There are some people that are like that is wrong you shouldn't talk about that.

The middle-class participants made some statements that did not honor the students' culture. Some were neutral and even a few positive statements were recorded from the middle-class participants about culture or diversity, but most comments

considered how the culture was not like that of the participants. Comments quoted earlier in Section II as indigenous or external also excellently represent the middle-class group.

That's very good—I do set a standard that is my value system—we do not talk about guns in here and they look at me like, “We do at our house” and I say, “Your family is your family. This is your school family and here we don't talk about guns . . .”

When considering cultural responses from each category, there was a marked difference. The pattern for the working-class participants was to respect and engage the students in discussions about their cultural background and rural traditions. The middle-class participants' pattern ranged from neutral to non-engagement or squelching discussions of rural cultural traditions.

*Trilogy II: Empowerment, differentiation, and relevant lessons.* These three fit primarily into the domain of the working-class participants. These practices include empowerment, differentiation, and relevant lessons. Middle-class participants did mention these practices, but their pattern involved keeping to a set curricular standards. Two anomalies did emerge from the middle-class group who practiced adapting or modifying lessons, but use of these practices was an expectation for them as teachers of English language learners or special education students.

The working-class participants' pattern in this subtheme was defined as building empowerment, and included activities that build individual self-esteem, provide decision-making opportunities for groups or the whole class, focus on the positive, and encouragement to continue to do their best. One working-class participant said she regularly practiced all three (differentiation, empowerment, relevant lessons), because they formed the basis for positive student growth. When students felt a sense of pride in

their accomplishments, then learning became easier and behavior issues dissipated. Other discussions focused on empowerment as individual encounters between the teacher and a student. A typical statement from the working-class group came from a veteran participant who said, "I think it's more about taking the kid where they're at and helping them to do the next thing."

It is not as though the middle-class group did not feel it was important to build self-esteem or empower the students to be their best, but the manner in which they spoke of their students or this practice was not as frequent nor enthusiastically delivered as it had been by the working-class group. For instance,

They don't have a life that is dependable. Dad don't have a job, maybe this week but not the next. Things are not the same, ever changing. Sis lived with us last week, sis is not here. I think this has gotten more and more it gradually changed or maybe it's me 'cause I'm older and wiser. I like lower elementary because I like to nurture. And, umm, I see I am able to nurture more in here than any other grade.

Differentiation was described earlier in Section II, meant adapting lessons to individual students, modifying homework amounts, or finding materials in a wide variety of reading levels covering the same topic constitute what differentiation meant for participants. When teaching a science lesson, one of the working-class participants (who was included in the findings as an indigenous participant) differentiated the manner in which students chose to demonstrate proficiency. Because she had gotten to know her students and the objective was to demonstrate knowledge about a particular concept, she gave the class options from a list placed in the front of her classroom. The rubric for the assignment remained the same, but the product could vary. Their personal choices could range from writing a report, drawing a picture, presenting a story or drama with other students, or whatever best fit the students' multiple intelligences.

Differentiation was approached differently by middle-class participants; in fact, two of them specifically mentioned keeping to the curriculum and making sure that it was covered. The outliers for the middle-class group were the English language learner and special education teachers. For each of them, differentiating was an integral part of what they do on a daily basis, so no matter what group they were in, it would have little effect on their practice related to differentiation. An example of how middle-class participants, who also were categorized as indigenous participants, generally handle this practice is:

Well, I'm a rule abider, so I loved school because it's all about rules and structure. That's a comfort zone for me. . . . Well, to be honest, I am pretty much a realist; I pretty much teach everyone the same materials . . .

Relevant lessons and creating relevant lessons drew comments from all four working-class members. They felt students needed to connect to the lessons to enhance learning. They all discussed situations providing the students with relevant learning experiences. The experiences needed to be something that students could identify within their school, neighborhood, and community.

A working-class participant commented on how she had continually changed the curriculum to be more relevant to skills students needed as they progress through life in the community. She had kept her building administrator abreast of any changes in the curriculum and received permission to proceed providing the students' skills were generalizable for the yearly state performance tests. She was quoted earlier as an external participant. Her comments also represent the working-class participants. She said:

We only have a short time with them, and I want to spend that time working on those skills that will benefit them after education, because that whole education part; there are many people in the real world who are productive and succeeded in life with very little education. If you look at, I don't know, Einstein and some of the geniuses of the world who really did not do well in an academic setting, I

don't think our academic system here at school is very real world, although that's one of the things I strive for in my classroom is to make it more real world, but the way our curriculums are set up and the whole way our school systems are structured, I don't like it at all.

Of the seven middle-class participants, only one participant responded to the importance of connecting lessons with student relevance. She discussed getting a student to recognize the importance of a particular lesson. As quoted earlier in Section II, she related this story about learning fractions:

He couldn't understand why fractions were important. So, I brought in measuring cups and we learned to identify the fractions used for baking. Then I gave them problems with multiplying fractions in baking. We did actual recipes and tried them. When they failed to do the correct math, the recipes turned out poorly. So they got the real feel for why fractions are important.

In both groups, this subtheme's pattern for those who incorporated relevant lessons combined them with some differentiated instruction focusing on the student. The participants who did not focus on relevant lessons stated instruction, regardless of category, needed to remain on schedule and follow the curriculum. This latter practice of focusing on the curriculum, not the students, was a pattern exhibited only by middle-class participants.

*Trilogy III: Rules and routines, requirements and/or mandates, and transience.*

The final three subthemes were primarily the domain of the middle-class participants with a few supporting comments from a working-class participant. The three subthemes focused on rules and routines, requirements and/or mandates, and transience. Each seemed to frustrate the teachers, as they spoke in tones or made facial expression indicating their displeasure with the subtheme.

Rules and routines were discussed as an essential practice because some students were unprepared, unruly, chaotic, and undisciplined as well as lacking basic social skills. It also meant knowing what to do and keeping a sense of order.

The following comments are emblematic of this subtheme for middle-class participants. The participant mentioned the difficulty in getting the students to respond appropriately and observe routines and rules.

They don't have a filter. They're not up to raising their hand and waiting their turn. Even when we're sitting down they're moving. They pick at things. They're constant hands on each other.

Requirements and/or mandates were discussed by participants who felt issues related to district, state, and federal requirements or mandates were an obstacle more than a benefit. The mandates were outside forces that required testing, procedures, or curriculum viewed as having little benefit for their students. None of the teachers had positive things to say about the changes in grade level requirements mandated by districts, states, and the federal government. They all focused on how these things obstructed opportunities their students enjoyed and needed.

Only one working-class participant had commented about this subtheme. Yet what she said may actually best exemplify the feeling of all of the teachers. She was previously quoted as an indigenous participant when she said, "We are no longer on a journey, but a race."

The middle-class participants who mentioned the requirements and mandates spoke of how the changes had wiped out the fun things they used to do that connected students to their school, learning, and community. A few examples of these types of

comments reinforce the above working-class participant's comment about turning the journey into race.

I think Kindergarten used to be the social beginning, You socialized 80% of what Kindergarten teachers did was play games, sing songs, take a nap, play in the house, role play, do a little of that—now that has changed. Now we're a little bit like 1st grade used to be. So that is changing.

The idea of increasing the expectations drew additional comments indicating frustration for even teachers who had demonstrated positive outlooks during their interviews. This teacher in particular had talked about noticing the little things, but then made the following comments because she felt there is no time for the little things.

The expectations of curriculum have changed a lot. I'm teaching second grade right now and I have taught second grade at least ten times out of my 22-23 years that I've taught, and expectations for what they should know; they're just pushing, pushing. We're no longer on a journey. We're on a race. I like to be on a journey. All of that garbage at the beginning of the year is so time-consuming, and it's meant to look back and show growth, which it can do but it seems there's more efficient ways to know some of those kids.

This subthemes pattern for all the teachers' experience was frustration with mandates. These issues created a pressure to keep moving forward and get things accomplished within a specific period. The mandates did not take into account the individual differences and paces the students needed to learn effectively. The participants' response aligned with the idea that one size does not fit all.

Transience was the last subtheme of this trilogy. In many of these poor rural school districts, it was common to have students move as though there was a revolving door with some moving in and others leaving only to return later that year or the next. This put pressure on the teachers' practice as some students leave for communities with



lower standards and expectations than the teachers' district. Other students returned to a foreign country where education was substandard or unavailable.

A middle-class participants' comments represented how transience affected their practice. Our conversation began with a discussion of issues facing her practice as a teacher. She earlier lamented as an indigenous participant when she said:

I think the transience and moving is the biggest change I have seen. These little towns used to be the same, nothing changed—very rarely, now it's changing.

What has that done for your classroom as the year progresses?

Some years are worse than others. It can affect the classroom a lot or a little—if you get a child in here who, you know, some children meld right in, some children don't. It's all going well, the class is jelling, and you get one who moves in and doesn't fit and you're working at making it fit, but they just don't fit a square peg in a round hole and it will throw everything off. One person will do that for whatever reason—for whatever reason one person can do that. They can be loud they can be demanding, or needy, who knows.

The transience part that has changed for me is you expect the unexpected when you get a new one in—I do not assume anything. The secretary says you have a new one coming in and you have no idea what they're gonna be.

Overall, only middle-class participants provided responses for this subtheme. The pattern for the middle-class respondents was that transience creates issues for teachers. They needed to find time to get to know the new students personally and academically. They also felt a sense of needing to connect the new people to the class, all while being accountable for the new student's learning.

### Summary of Key Findings

The study's frame intended to use one lens to examine the data. The original lens utilized the participants' childhood locale which divided them into either indigenous (rurally-reared) or external (non-rurally reared). Through immersion into the data, an

additional lens emerged that provided the actual essence of the participants' experience. The second lens utilized socioeconomic status (SES) of the participants' childhood. The participants self-identified their SES, and what emerged was two groups—either working-class or middle-class childhoods.

There were five key findings derived from this study's data. The finding focused on the participants' (1) beliefs that influence their practice and interactions with rural poor students; (2) origins of beliefs; (3) expectations of students (parents); (4) expectations for their students; and, finally, (5) the actual practices and influences on those practices. Two of the findings were emergent surprises. The first emergent finding focused the expectations on the participants' expectations of parents instead of students. The second emergent finding focused on participants' practices and influences on those practices.

The participants held similar beliefs whether they were identified through lens one—childhood locale, or lens two—childhood SES. The most prominently held beliefs focused on the subthemes of showing respect, sacrificing for the future, and being responsible. Approximately one-half of the participants discussed the subtheme of religion and how it was important for them personally, but not in context for their students. The final three subthemes of working hard, having organizing skills, and being part of a traditional family (mom, dad, and children without divorce) were evenly divided among participants when examined through the childhood locale lens. When examined through the childhood SES lens, the view differed. The middle-class (*Gesellschaft*) participants expressed strongly that these were important to them. The working-class

(*Gemeinschaft*) participants commented only about the importance of working hard, but did not mention having organizing skills or being part of a traditional family.

All origins of beliefs were similar regardless of childhood locale or SES. The influences on their beliefs centered on two elements. Participants were largely influenced by their families, particularly their parents and to some extent their immediate relatives such as aunts, uncles, and grandparents. The second influence centered on school personnel, especially on one or two elementary teachers.

The theme of expectations for students emerged as expectations of parents and not as expectations of student cognitive, affective, or psycho-motor skills. Participants, whether viewed through the childhood locale or childhood SES lens, focused on six subthemes related to parenting and parental duties preparing/supporting their children's learning. The first three subthemes of supporting education, interacting with their child, and providing extra experiences beyond the school day, were expressed as important to participants regardless of the lens used to separate them into their categories. The final three subthemes of teaching social skills, providing a safe home, and developing school readiness were evenly divided among those in the childhood locale lens. Utilizing the childhood SES lens provided a different view of these subthemes. With the exception of the subtheme of safe home, these final three subthemes were completely the domain of the middle-class participants.

Expectations for the students focused on the students' immediate and long-range futures. All participants used non-numerical descriptors such as *few*, *some*, *many*, or *most* when they discussed their students' futures. When viewed through the childhood locale or childhood SES lens, the participants had mixed expectations for their students.

The final key finding regarding teacher practices and/or influences emerged from the data, but was not an original purpose of the study. The practices emerged as three trilogies of subthemes, with the Trilogy I including attending to the students' needs, knowing the students, and diversity/cultural concerns. Regardless of lens utilized, all participants expressed ideas about these practices. Trilogy II considered the subthemes of empowering students, differentiating instruction, and developing relevant lessons. The working-class (*Gemeinschaft*) participants all positively expressed ideas and comments about these practices. Two middle-class (*Gesellschaft*) participants also discussed these practices, but were a bit outside the norm as they were a special education and English language learner teacher whose interaction with students necessitated utilizing these practices. Trilogy III considered the subthemes of rules and routines, requirements and mandates, and the transience of their students. Indigenous and external participants were almost equally represented in their expressions and concerns about these subthemes. When examined as either middle-class or working-class, this trilogy was primarily the domain of the middle-class. The only exceptions occurred when discussing state and federal requirements and mandates related to No Child Left Behind.

These five key findings and the emergence of the second lens utilizing childhood SES allowed the emergence of essence of the participants' experience teaching rural poor students.

#### Essence of Experiences

Initially reviewing the results from the original frame of indigenous and external teachers did not provide any clear differentiation in the essence of participants'

experiences. As a phenomenology's purpose is to describe and allow the essence of the experience to emerge, the design's original lens comparing indigenous to external status of teachers did not yield any identifiable patterns of differentiation. The essences of participants' experiences across the three prefigured themes and the emergent theme were essentially common, and any anticipated differences were not forthcoming from the data based on whether the participant was classified as either an external or an indigenous teacher for their school.

Remaining open to the discovery of other patterns of contrast or variation within the essence of participants' experiences allowed a secondary lens pertaining to childhood socioeconomic status to emerge. When examined through this lens, patterns of contrast began to emerge. When this new lens of childhood socioeconomic status was applied to how study participants' responses aligned with the themes and subthemes present in the data, differences in the essence of experience for the working-class and middle-class participants became recognizable. By continual immersion into all of the themes and attendant subthemes, an essence for each group emerged.

When the data for all the themes were examined through the lens of participants' childhood socioeconomic status, a new theme emerged regarding the concept of duty versus commitment. There were distinct patterns of differences between the participants classified as working-class and those classified as middle-class in how they viewed their work as teachers. There was a greater emphasis on duty or job responsibility within the comments of the participants classified as having a middle-class childhood. For the participants classified as having working-class childhoods, there was a stronger theme of commitment versus duty, and for some this was expressed as something more or beyond

commitment. The participants in the working-class group expressed an energy, a spark, or a positive twist on almost everything, and a deep affection demonstrated by their comments about their job. Teaching was not a job for working-class participants. For them, the essence was their ability to re-energize themselves each day and focus on what they could do with their students to help them be the best possible individuals they could be.

For those from middle-class childhoods, the essence was survival, much like their students and their students' parents. Although there were confessions of enjoying their jobs, the focus of their comments indicated daily displeasure or frustration. They sounded as though they were performing a duty and attempting to self-talk to sustain or achieve enjoyment of the job. I sensed they were running out of energy to re-charge themselves enough to enjoy their opportunity to guide, shape, and empower young minds.

One overall finding dominated the analysis process. What emerged was that socioeconomic status of the participants' childhood made more of a difference to their beliefs and expectations than the locale in which they were raised. Several were raised in rural areas, but those with middle-class childhoods and/or family influences (role models with higher education and vocations) demonstrated *Gesellschaft* ideals and qualities. These *Gesellschaft* ideals or qualities revolve around individualism, personal gain, consumer consumption, and upward mobility that aligned them more with the middle-class. Only one external participant experienced a working-class childhood. This participant's responses demonstrated knowledge, understanding, and respectful honoring of the poor rural students' cultures. The ideals and qualities this participant related were consistent with *Gemeinschaft* ideals of concern for the family, community, nature, and the

common good of all. The ideals of *Gemeinschaft* life more closely align to working-class folk or the rural community where physical labor is the norm.

### Limitations

As in every qualitative study, the sample and site selections limit overall generalizability. The results can be used by those who have similar situations to this study's sites and sample. The sample, which utilized elementary teachers and certified support staff, was all Caucasian females. The sample varied in years of experience but lacked both gender and ethnic variety.

The data collection process was limited to a window of 2 to 3 weeks in order to complete the study within a reasonable period. Extending the window may have added additional external (urban-suburban) participants, and other ethnicities for a broader base of comparisons. The interviews were limited to approximately an hour. In a number of cases, the time could have been extended by 15-30 minutes or more as the participants were very conversational and willing to share their experiences. This could have added validating data to their earlier statements or provided new and insightful information.

The final sets of limitations are related to the researcher and lack of experience with employing the data collection and analysis process of conversational one-on-one semistructured interviews. During some interviews, the questions or probes were at times two-fold and may have confused the participant or they only responded to half the question. Often opportunities for that information were not followed up with probes related to the question the participant had skipped.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Central Focus of the Study

This chapter will synthesize the educational, social, and practical aspects forming the study's foundation. This synthesis revolves around five purposes: (1) how do teachers describe the belief system that guides their teaching and interactions with their students; (2) how do teachers describe the origins of their beliefs; (3) what do rural teachers expect of their students; (4) what are rural teachers' expectations for their students; and (5) utilizing the previously stated purposes, how do indigenous rural teachers' responses compare and contrast to those of external teachers?.

The presentation of the discussion section ties the study's findings to the study's purposes and emergent findings. The original framework's lens incorporated the typology of cross-culture teaching developed by Banks (2001), in which he grouped participants as either indigenous or external teachers. A second lens emerged from the data which utilized the participants' self-described childhood SES as either working-class or middle-class.

Describing and discovering the essence of rural teachers' experiences teaching poor rural students was the overarching purpose of this study. The essence described in the preceding chapter emerged from data related to the purposes and corresponding research questions. The theme of participants' teaching practices emerged from the data,



but was not a purpose of the study nor was it a research question. This last theme provides additional insight into the teachers' experiences and beliefs. This emergent theme brought together the varied and multidimensional descriptions of all the participating teachers' practices. This additional theme describing practices is a manifestation of the teachers' beliefs and provided additional reference points to check on individual participants' consistency.

Through the literature review and the findings of this study, the argument that there are several elements contributing to the essence of the teaching experience is reinforced. The descriptions of the participants' beliefs, practices, and expectations provide a means for understanding how teachers of rural socioeconomically poor students experience their students and their teaching practice. The following discussion ties the finding's themes with the study's purposes.

## Discussion

### *Theme I: Beliefs and Belief Origins*

The first theme focused on the beliefs resulting from descriptions of the teachers' own childhood family and school experiences, and addressed the study's first two purposes. Theme I focused on the teachers' belief systems that guide their teaching interactions with their students (purpose one) and the origins of those belief systems (purpose two). The beliefs' origins were similar for all participants. All reflected back to their parental and educational childhood experiences. Their beliefs about the students, as

illustrated in Tables 3, and influences on their beliefs, as depicted in Table 4, provided data that indicated similarities within and differences between categories.

*Belief origins.* Similarities mentioned above described the teachers' beliefs as originating from their parents and teachers. Examining the results through both lenses (indigenous or external; working-class or middle-class) found participants consistently discussed the foremost influences on their beliefs as being their immediate family and their school experiences. Participants consistently referred to what they learned either directly or indirectly from those experiences. The findings related to this theme and the study's first purpose indicate that indigenous and external teachers from working-class backgrounds viewed experiences differently than their counterparts with middle-class childhood backgrounds. The working-class participants viewed the rural poor's activities and beliefs as part of the cultural in which the poor live. This was similar to findings about economically poor urban studies by Eberly, Rand, and O'Conner (2007), Kagan (1992), Lockhart (2002), Lortie (1975), and Zeichner and Gore (1990).

All participants viewed school as an enjoyable experience for a variety of reasons. A majority enjoyed the learning or cognitive challenges, while some discussed the affective or kinesthetic opportunities. Most found learning exciting and easy. A few enjoyed the school's social atmosphere and opportunities to pursue sports or other physical activities. All participants described at least one or two teachers they wanted to emulate. In all cases, the participants remembered school as a positive and enjoyable experience enough to aspire to become teachers. This latter finding is similar to that reported by Lortie (1975).

The origins of the rural teachers' beliefs were similar to those of teachers in previous studies that focused on urban or suburban teachers (Gay, 2000; Hale, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2006). The teachers in this study, although in a rural setting, were found to have the same diverse kind of beliefs as middle-class teachers in studies that examined teacher belief systems in urban or suburban settings. The middle-class participants felt their beliefs were the norm. The working-class participants in this study had parallel beliefs to the urban teachers studied by Ladson-Billings (1994).

*Beliefs.* The discussion of the participants' beliefs presented below is derived from their childhood backgrounds found in Table 3 (indigenous and external) and Table 8 (working-class or middle-class).

The categorization as either working-class or middle-class was determined by the participants' self-identification of their childhood experiences. The indigenous and external categories were determined by the geographic locale of the participants' childhood experiences. Rearranging tables with the participants' beliefs, practices, and expectations by socioeconomic status (SES) made it apparent that SES had more to do with their beliefs than locale. This finding is similar to class studies by Payne (1996), Payne and Krabil (2002), and Kunjufu (1986, 2002). This finding created a need to readjust how the participants were to be compared. Originally, the comparison was by locale as either indigenous (rurally-reared) or external (not rurally-reared). The reconfigured tables found all participants from working-class childhoods responded with similar beliefs, while those from middle-class childhoods were also similar. The difference in belief patterns did not emerge from this study's data until they were compared across middle-class and working-class participants.

Although all the study's participants' belief systems had similar origins in terms of how they related to childhood experiences and influences, their beliefs about their rural students diverged along two separate paths. Participants discussed similar topics, but held differing views based on whether they were aligned with the working-class beliefs or middle-class beliefs. Initially, the indigenous/external lens found mostly similarities. A large majority of participants believed respect, hard work, and responsibility were essential for every student. From that point, the divergence of beliefs about rural cultural traditions, particularly hunting, became more apparent. As indigenous or externals, there was no pattern in how participants spoke about rural hunting traditions. When grouped as working-class or middle-class, participants followed a pattern of acceptance by the working-class group and non-acceptance by the middle-class participants. For this study, the teachers were clearly divided by their responses and comments about their students' culture along lines of socioeconomic class.

The responses describing their beliefs about culture and diversity, parenting, practices, and expectations of and for students provided further evidence for the formation of two separate categories based on childhood socioeconomic class. The participants from working-class childhood experiences held beliefs and expectations that were more in line with the common good as opposed to upwardly mobile, and they understood how family needs could be more important than the schools demands on the students. They in essence honored the community's culture and expectations.

It was also found that teachers' personal childhood experiences with their own parents were demonstratively different from their students' own childhood experiences. The participants' childhoods, regardless of economic class, were traditional in the sense

there were two parents, a mom and dad, along with other siblings, with nurturance and basic needs provided. The students in the participants' classrooms experienced far different childhoods than their teachers; many were from one-parent families and often lived with grandparents. The students related stories about not having basic needs such as clothing, shelter, food, as well as nurturance, a situation not experienced by the participants.

These differences in experiences lead to different beliefs (Heymann & Earle, 2000; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Zeichner and Gore found families have strong influence on beliefs. Heymann and Earle found that economic dynamics from 1947-1997 have affected family life and current beliefs. They found the percentage of working mothers over this period rose from 27% to 78%. This meant the mothers would not always be home, able to take care of sick children, nor were they available to participate in school activities during school hours. The Heymann and Earle findings coincide with how some teachers have become disenchanted with the unavailability of parents to help their children. The participants' experiences and disenchantment with parents became an overwhelming focus in their expectations of the students. It also created concerns about the participants' practices. They felt they would need to delay the grade-level curriculum and thus put their students behind in preparation for the state tests. This also was mentioned as making them appear as less competent teachers.

### *Theme II: Expectations of Students (Parents)*

The study's third purpose coincides with Theme II and considered what teachers expect of their students. Theme II addresses this in a circuitous fashion. Both lenses

found participants expecting their students' parents to be supportive of education, interact with their children appropriately, and provide extra experiences beyond the home.

Both lenses had similar patterns. The responses focused on what the participants expected the students' parents should do. The indigenous and externals equally shared these latter expectations. When viewed through the working-class/middle-class lens, the pattern changed. Only the middle-class participants expected that parents would prepare their children's affective social skill development and provide a safe home. This difference between the indigenous/external lens and the working-class/middle-class lens is more noticeable across the participant sample because the middle-class participants were equally divided between the indigenous and external groups. Careful examination indicates the middle-class and working-class participants' expectations were different in their views of the two subthemes of social skill development and providing a safe home.

Eventually, some participants understood their preconceived notions and expectations were not going to be met. Teachers' level of understanding parental/child school preparedness differed between the working-class and middle-class categories in that regard. Working-class participants either experientially or intuitively knew home preparation for school was not a high priority for many families, and they knew the home would be less safe and secure for the students. The middle-class participants asked, "How could parents not care enough to provide a safe home and prepare their children for school?"

Students in the participants' classrooms experienced a different style of parenting from what the participants had experienced as children. The students' parents were much less involved, which coincides with Clarke's (1993) findings that today's parents are

more hands-off. This parental view may be in response to the school accountability movement promoted for almost two decades (Clarke, 1993). Participants viewed this as a shift in the expectations for parental irresponsibility and expressed the perception that parents view accountability of the schools as some form of absolution from their role as their child's primary teacher (Clarke, 1993). This phenomenon frustrated all teachers, but was a major focus of the middle-class participants who often spoke of not understanding how parents could shirk their responsibilities.

Participants' responses about parenting described what the teachers expected of their students. This study's participating educators also expected that the home and parents would meet all students' basic needs. Parents' ineffectiveness in performing parental roles meant students would not be ready to learn at a pace needed to meet curriculum standards established by district, state, and federal educational agencies. These findings compare with previous studies (Clarke, 1993; Epstein, 1986; Lareau, 1987; Lightfoot, 2004) about how middle-class teachers disconnected with parents by dishonoring and demeaning the parents' inadequate participation in school readiness preparation and viewed them as not caring about their children.

The working-class participants seemed to know at an intuitive level, and maybe from personal experiences, that parents did not often have the time or flexibility in their jobs to participate during school hours. This finding is similar to those found by Clarke (1993), Lareau (1987), and Lightfoot (2004) that parents did not have flexibility to take time from work as it would be costly in an economic sense (loss of pay or even the job). The ability of teachers from working-class backgrounds to better understand or empathize with parents on this issue takes into account the good of all, which is a true *Gemeinschaft*

ideal (Tonnies, 1887/2001). This may be why the working-class teachers indicated a greater empathy for their working-class parents and a greater readiness to provide for some of the student needs that the parents can or do not.

This study agrees with previous urban-based studies, and provides additional evidence that norms developed during their own rearing as children influence teachers' beliefs, practices, and expectations. This study's findings of rural teachers' beliefs and practices coincide with the urban studies Banks (2001) utilized to develop his typology of cross-cultural teaching experiences. The influence of class in this study was noticeable, while the influence of childhood environment (external or indigenous) was not.

An additional finding in this area was the working-class participants honored the students' culture focusing on opportunities and means to provide their students the skills and tools not previously developed at home. The middle-class participants viewed these issues as obstacles. They complained how these obstacles were deviations from their preconceived notions and would decrease the likelihood of their ability to get everyone through the curriculum. Parental failures to prepare their children were obstacles to the participants' ability to complete the curriculum. The middle-class participants' "me/them" perspective focused on either themselves or the curriculum. The working-class participants' "we/us" perspective focused on the students, and adapting to the students' needs. This was a marked difference in beliefs and expectations, which in all likelihood could make a difference in how well the students connect to the school and learning, and how likely the students are to complete their education.



### *Theme III: Expectation for the Students*

Participants were also asked to consider their expectations for their students. There were no surprises that emerged. The patterns for Theme III, employing either lens, found teachers projecting into the future for their students' possibilities. They all had taken into consideration current dismal economic situations. Any economic situation affects the job opportunities more in rural poor communities than urban or suburban areas (Lichter & Crowley, 2002; Nodal & Sagawa, 2002). These economic situations are possible reasons their expectations for their students vacillated between hope and despair regardless of their own socioeconomic background.

### *Theme IV: Practices*

Some authors argue that beliefs become practices or actions (Kagan, 1992; Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992). This study's description of beliefs and the participants' espoused practices provide additional support that beliefs are manifested in actions or practices. Theme IV provided additional descriptions of the participants' practices. These additional findings emerged from the data and were not part of the study's original framework. The findings about practices also confirmed the degree of consistency of each individual's belief statements.

All participants discussed the neediness of their students, knowing their students, and topics related to culture sensitivity and/or diversity. All participants agreed that their students had unmet needs, particularly their lower SES students, which correspond to similar findings by Howley et al. (2006), Lichter and Crowley (2002), Nadal and Sagawa

(2002), and Provasnik et al. (2007). Although all the participants were similar in that they shared consistent perspectives about these subthemes, that was the end of the similarities. The findings diverged for this study's participants in their responses to the themes of concern for their students. The contrast that emerged from the data for this study is participants employed different practices to address these issues. Indigenous and external participants differed as did the working-class and middle-class groups.

Each lens found consistency among the participants in the two contrast groupings. The working-class participants demonstrated knowledge, understanding, and respect for their students. They found ways to ameliorate needs, developed interpersonal relationships, and honored the students' culture. This fit with Berliner's (2004) model of a teacher in the proficient or expert stages. The findings also fit with the Kumar's (2006) finding about teachers emphasizing mastery learning over competitive performance learning. The practices participants described as connecting lower SES students to learning and their teachers fit with findings made by Evans (2004), Heymann and Earle (2005), and Hodges (2004).

As an example of the differences that coincided with teachers' differing socioeconomic childhoods, only the working-class participants' practices allowed discussions about rural traditions such as hunting. This further demonstrated a respect for the students' culture. This illustrates a point of consistency between this study and that of Nash (1977), who found lower SES students connected to teachers who respected and acknowledged the students' culture.

The middle-class participants viewed the subthemes of student neediness, knowing their students and cultural sensitivity as obstacles. They wondered why students

did not have their needs met at home, or why did the parents not care. These kinds of responses came from those with middle-class childhoods. Additionally, the responses from the participants with middle-class childhoods were similar to those responses expected of middle-class teachers found in studies by Lareau (1987) and Lightfoot (2004). The findings confirm teachers of middle-class backgrounds, even in rural districts, had similar beliefs and practices to their urban middle-class counterparts in urban school districts (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lockhart, 2002).

Working-class participants were the only ones in the study who discussed and embraced the need for empowerment, differentiation, and relevant lessons. The middle-class participants' discussions focused on not utilizing these practices and "staying the course," which meant keeping to the prescribed curriculum and daily preplanned activities/lessons. Because empowerment, differentiation, and relevance were not prevalent in the discussion, it was assumed these practices were not foremost in the middle-class participants' thoughts. The working-class participants believed honoring their students was essential to connect students to the learning, which they accomplished by combining empowerment, differentiation, and relevant lessons as one practice. They empowered their students by meeting them at their current levels, differentiating their lessons through multiple types of student groupings, adjusting materials, or allowing numerous assessment choices for students to demonstrate understanding or proficiency.

These findings are important when considered along side of studies that found connecting with the learners was important to achieve academic gains for the lower SES learners (Anderson et al., 2004; Good, 1999; Kumar, 2006; McNeely et al., 2002; Thibodeau & Hillman, 2003; Westfall & Pisapia, 1993). It raises the prospect that

working-class teachers may have an edge over middle-class teachers when it comes to finding ways to positively impact student achievement for lower socioeconomic students regardless of the type of school (urban, suburban, rural) in which they teach. Through either experience or intuition, working-class teachers expressed a keener sense that connection with their lower SES students would be essential for educational gain. These adaptations correspond with earlier urban studies by Cooper (2003), Hermes (2005), and Love and Krueger (2005).

For the middle-class participants, curriculum drove instruction and practices, not the students. The middle-class participants were also less flexible with adjusting to their students, which Lightfoot (2004) found in her studies of how teachers view students of lower SES's as deficits or obstacles, and not as opportunities. This finding seems to suggest teachers from middle-class backgrounds are more likely to translate their concerns for student achievement into more intense focus on curriculum standards and measures than on adapting instructional approaches, while working-class teachers may be inclined to take more liberties with the written curriculum in the interest of finding ways to help their students connect better and achieve more with the curriculum.

The working-class participants were miffed at times by the curricular constraints and devised means to meet the needs of their children and adapt the curriculum to what was locally important and relevant. It appears as though the working-class participants adapted their practices at an intuitive level. This fits with what Berliner (2004) described in his teacher stage development theory. The working-class participants' intuitive teaching places them as either proficient or expert stage. The middle-class participants

were more methodical and thought about their practices, which fits into Berliner's competence stage.

The descriptions of the teacher practices suggest that rural teachers who originate from indigenous settings and experienced middle-class childhood backgrounds hold beliefs and expectations more aligned to Tonnies' (1887/2001) *Gesellschaft* ideals. Urban studies of teachers from cultures or economic classes different from the urban community had similar findings about external middle-class teachers (Evans, 2004; Hermes, 2005; Lockhart, 2002). Studies found when students perceive that the teachers' socioeconomic status differ from their own, it creates dissonance between the students and the teachers (Nash, 1977; Payne, 1996). Overall, the findings suggested that middle-class rural participants paralleled middle-class teachers in poor urban schools (Evans, 2004; Lichter & Crowley, 2002; Love & Krueger, 2005).

#### *Purpose V: Summary/Comparisons*

An overall comparison prescribed in purpose five provides the impressions and overall essence of the participants by category. It captures the ambiguity of comparisons through the indigenous/external lens. It also captures the essential differences between working-class childhood backgrounds and middle-class childhood backgrounds.

No one theme addressed the fifth purpose of comparing beliefs, origins of beliefs, and expectations of and for their students. The overall reflection on participant experiences was made by comparing indigenous and external participants and, then, reshaping the comparison based on whether a teacher participant in this study self-categorized as either working-class or middle-class. When reclassified as working-class

participants, this new classification consisted of both indigenous and external participants. The working-class participants accepted the *Gemeinschaft* ideals of communal common good, a sense of personal pride, and helping others in need (Tonnie, 1887/2001). The middle-class participant group was also comprised of both indigenous and external participants. Their responses aligned more with a non-rural and/or middle-class culture associated with *Gesellschaft* ideals of individualism, consumer consumption, and personal gain to attain upward mobility (Tonnie, 1887/2001). The responses from middle-class teachers that disparaged life style and choice were similar to those found in a study done by Hufton, Elliott, and Illushin (2003).

The working-class participants also approached their practice with methods Anyon (1980, 1981) and Finn (1999) described as promoting individual opportunities to flourish. The middle-class participants utilized practices and approaches that were reminiscent of how to train people for a task. This latter approach falls into the lower echelon of instructional practices described by both Anyon and Finn. While the working-class participants encouraged their students and differentiated their instructional approaches, the middle-class participants' approach remained steadfast in adherence to training students to follow rules, learn routines, and master lower level tasks. The working-class participants were about making learning fun, while the middle-class participants were about getting it done, or as one middle-class participant said, "I make every minute count."

The overarching ideal behind the study's purposes was to describe the teachers' experiences with their rural poor students. A surprising number of responses focused, instead, on the participants' views about parents shirking or falling short of fulfilling their

role in preparing their children's cognitive and affective school readiness. This coincides with Clarke (1993), who found parents were doing less preparation because they felt schools were accountable for their child's learning. This deflection of focus away from the interactions and interplay between themselves and their students seems to suggest both an acknowledgement of the important role parents play in their child's learning experience and a certain ambiguity about how that parent role impacts the teacher role. While both working-class and middle-class teachers both made this issue a central theme of their responses in this study, the ambiguity is evident in the different ways that they respond to their concern for what students either do or do not bring to the classroom by way of parent support. Working-class teachers seem to see deficits in what parents provide as a call for more creativity, flexibility, and adaptability on their part while their middle-class colleagues seem to see the same perceived parenting deficits as constraints upon both what they can achieve and how they might achieve it with students.

Frequently, the participants' responses discussed parents' non-attendance at school functions, or not being available to meet or talk with the teachers during school time. The middle-class participants may not be considering that school hours do not coincide with most parents' work schedules. As many rural poor parents lack adequate financial resources, it is difficult to take time (often unpaid) from their job to attend to the school's needs. In fact, taking time off from work may place the family more at risk than not attending parent-teacher meetings or returning phone calls during school hours. They may be looking at the big picture and making choices that benefit the whole family versus choices that benefit only a single member of the family. This exemplifies the *Gemeinschaft* ideals of not risking resources that do not benefit the common good

(Tonnies, 1887/2001). When the benefit cannot be guaranteed, it is unwise to accept the risk (meaning to take unpaid leave from their jobs for school related issues).

The findings continued to reinforce Banks' (2001) typology of cross-cultural teaching. Although Banks developed his typology based on urban cross-cultural experiences, the typology provides a means to understand the experiences of the teachers of poor rural students. The fact that people could change allegiance and align themselves with values and beliefs of a culture different from their childhood town's beliefs and culture was one of the special findings of this study. It appears that for teachers and how they relate to their students and parents, middle class is middle class, whether experienced in an urban, suburban, or rural setting, while growing up in a working-class household equally transcends across community types.

A working-class external teacher reared in a large suburban community made that change in allegiance to the rural community's culture. Although five externals participated in the study, only one was considered as an external-insider (see Appendix A) because of her responses indicating knowledge, understanding, and practices honoring her students' culture. Of the six indigenous participants, three came from working-class childhoods and three from middle-class childhoods. Three indigenous participants from working-class childhoods espoused *Gemeinschaft* ideals. The other three indigenous participants from middle-class childhoods had responses that indicated a lack of knowledge, understanding, or employment of practices honoring the rural poor students' culture. For each participant, the indications are that a participant's socioeconomic background was more important than the locale in which one's childhood occurred.



## Implications

This study found no important differences between the indigenous and external participants. Thus, the concept/theory suggesting the geographic place where one was reared as a child would be an important difference in the origins of participants' beliefs and their beliefs was not supported for this population of teachers who work in small, rural, lower SES schools. The study's original lens also viewed participants beyond their belief origins and beliefs, engaging them around their expectations of and for the students they serve in small, rural, lower SES schools. Again, no consistent differences based on the teachers' upbringing, using the external/indigenous lens, emerged from the data. This again dispelled the idea that the type of community where teachers were raised holds much importance in either their values and beliefs about teaching or their orientation to their students.

The study's emergent second lens, based on whether the participant experienced a working-class or middle-class childhood, did, however, provide comparison and contrast between the groups. As teachers, the working-class childhood participants believed and practiced as ones who were members of the community culture. The middle-class childhood participants believed and practiced as teachers who were visitors, not part of the community culture, nor did they demonstrate much understanding of rural *Gemeinschaft* ways. This finding suggests that there may be a predisposition for teachers to interpret differently the importance of understanding or acknowledging or honoring students from less fortunate socioeconomic backgrounds based on the teacher's own socioeconomic background as a child.

If current pedagogical terminology to describe general patterns is strictly applied to the findings of this study, no participants were associated with either pure working-class *Gemeinschaft* ideals nor pure middle-class or *Gesellschaft* ideals relating to how they understand and relate to their students; however, viewing the descriptors for these two classifications of ideals as ends of a continuum, the participants with working-class childhoods would fall more toward the descriptors under the *Gemeinschaft* ideals. The participants with the middle-class childhoods would fall more toward the descriptors under the *Gesellschaft* ideals. All middle-class participants had numerous responses that would have easily been identifiable as *Gemeinschaft* responses, but the majority of each participant's responses from the middle-class childhoods fell toward the *Gesellschaft* descriptors.

The findings in this study suggest that, while it may be difficult to pigeon hole teachers as purely aligning with either end of the ideals continuum, tendencies to one end of the continuum or the other might be isolated and associated with both a teacher's socioeconomic upbringing and tendencies regarding how they view students and parents, and adapt their teaching practice to align with those views. This supports Gloria Ladson-Billings' (2006) findings regarding how middle-class teachers find it difficult to overcome middle-class egocentrism. She concluded that was because middle-class values and beliefs are the norms from which they judge other non-white middle-class groups. This study's participants' responses paralleled the "norm" Ladson-Billings described.

These findings suggest one's childhood socioeconomic experiences may hold more importance to one's beliefs and expectations than the locale of the childhood and may be an important element shaping the world view that a teacher brings to his or her

work. Since this study suggests that teachers' childhood experiences as members of either a middle-class or working-class family may predispose them more to one end of the continuum of either *Gesellschaft* or *Gemeinschaft* ideals, it may be important to examine deeper how people come to favor one end of the spectrum or the other in framing their world view and how that colors the lens through which they see the work of a teacher. This raises some interesting implications for teacher recruitment, preparation, and professional development, as well suggesting that a "one-size-fits-all approach" may not account for the diversity of backgrounds and strongly held world views that individuals may bring to the work of teaching.

Higher education cultural diversity programs may need to evolve and include rural and rural socioeconomic conditions along with ethnic and urban issues as part of the necessary awareness, knowledge, and understanding. This could assist prospective educators how to understand what who they are shapes them as teachers, and how they might draw from both who they are as people and who their students and parents are to make better connections with their students. In rural communities, the traditions and culture are often intertwined with the lower socioeconomic conditions prevalent in rural America (Lichter & Crowley, 2002; Provasnik et al., 2007), so exploring diversity as comprised of multi-layered and multi-textured elements in both students' and teachers' lives might produce more thoughtful examination of these issues in the earlier stages of teacher formation as well as throughout a teacher's career.

On a practical level, educators are encouraged to differentiate lessons for their students on an individual (or close to individual) basis. Much of the policy level and practitioner level discourse emphasizes the technical and strategic aspects of the goal to

more effectively personalize learning for greater individual results while ignoring the fundamental assumptions and inherent belief systems that may guide how a teacher understands, interprets, and actually carries out the concept of differentiation with students. Maybe government agencies could provide an example of how this works by also differentiating educational policy between suburban, urban, and rural communities and between the social, interpersonal, and technical aspects of teaching. Relationships are an equal, if not more than equal part of the educational process, yet most educational policy frames do not explicitly address how teachers' understanding of, orientation to, and relationship with students plays a critical role in student achievement.

Honoring students' cultures is a powerful means to building relationships, but what that looks like in practice is left to the interpretation of individual teachers. Depending on their world view and their assumptions about themselves and their students or students' parents, teachers can express very different ideals regarding "best or important" practice which may or may not reflect the best practice for any given student or population of students. The experiences of this study's participants reinforce the need to improve educators' training regarding students' cultures. At the same time, this study raises the point that it may be equally important to raise teachers' and prospective teachers' understanding of how their own cultural experiences shape who they are and create a lens that may obscure what they need to understand and appreciate about the students with whom they work.

To illustrate this point, many of this study's participants felt that there was no time for the little things that might help them in developing meaningful relationships with their students through fun activities. These teachers express conviction that they must

render unto one-size-fits-all accountability policies, even when that rendering runs counter to their training, their professional development, or their intuition regarding the differentiation of instruction. While these teachers recognize that government accountability policies are not themselves good examples of how to differentiate for the learning needs of individuals or special populations or of how to honor any community's culture, they feel compelled to put those policies above their students. This study suggests that teachers may be even more inclined to ignore how students' cultural differences require instructional adaptation when the teacher comes from a middle-class background and the students come from a working-class background.

A teacher's middle-class background may color their world view in ways that interpret any conflict between the circumstances and needs of students and the policies and protocols that shape the norms of their teaching as obstructions or deficits rather than signposts for the need to find another route that capitalizes upon the unique character of individuals and their cultural backgrounds. Robertson (2007) suggests that one-size-fits-all leads to sameness, and sameness leads to mediocrity. Education will stagnate if we fail to recognize and promote differences as valuable commodities. This study suggests that a teachers' socioeconomic upbringing may play an important role in their ability to see the constraints of one-size-fits-all approaches as an important obstacle to student success rather than the differences in the lives of the students themselves.

### Recommendations

The first recommendation is to replicate and expand upon this study. The study should include a design that would consider each participant's students in regard to the

students' yearly academic gain and develop or find appropriate scales for examining both teacher participants' affective and relationship skills and their instructional practices. This would help provide additional data to compare students' perceptions of their relationships with their teachers and teachers' affective skills, with profiles of their teacher's classroom management and instructional practices and students' academic achievements.

In addition, further study should attempt to probe deeper into whether or not working-class teachers who understood and honor their economically poor students' culture connect more effectively to the students than do the middle-class teachers who do not understand or honor the students' culture. This replication study should include multiple participant interviews, observations, and examination of artifacts (students' academic scores). Observations would provide opportunities to validate whether espoused practices closely parallel practices implemented. Additional considerations should consider including parent interviews about their own experiences as students and their current experiences as parents with their own children's teachers, and their overall experiences with the school.

A final recommendation for further study would focus on how rural administrators, who are faced with a small pool of candidates, determine if their pool of teaching candidates will respect or honor the community's traditions and culture. Do administrators know the difference, and is this an important consideration when the rural administrator considers the best candidates to fill teaching positions in their school?

In summary, this study raises a broad spectrum of issues for potential further study. The findings illustrate how teachers' assumptions about their students' unique characteristics and the ways they interpret those assumptions and translate them into

teaching decisions is an area deserving further investigation within the rural schools setting. Clearly student characteristics are a strong reference point for teachers regardless of their own background and upbringing. At times, teachers interpret the ways in which their students' backgrounds differ from their own as obstacles or deficits. In this study, this was particularly true for how teachers from middle-class backgrounds viewed characteristics of their students relating to parenting and parent involvement. For teachers who self-categorized their own childhoods as being "working-class," these differences translated more into implications for how they might need to adapt to their students. While these teachers acknowledged the differences in what their students were able to provide as problematic, they were more ready to translate the "problem" into a need for some different response from themselves.

These issues get at the heart of differentiation and personalized learning for all students. The match or mismatch between how teachers see themselves as educators, see their students as people, and view the need to translate differences into differentiation is so central to the challenge of high proficiency for all students, that it bears further examination and attention by educational researchers and practitioners alike. This study confirmed this researcher's belief that differentiation is a critical concern for students in all school settings (urban, suburban, and rural) and that the factors that impact a teacher's predisposition toward and practices associated with meeting individual student needs are multi-faceted, complex, and relevant to all stages and phases of a teacher's formation and subsequent career.

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Appendix A

Summary of Banks' Typology of Cross-Cultural Teachers

*Summary of Banks' Typology of Cross-Cultural Teachers* (Banks, 2001, pp. 242-244)

<b>Type of Teacher</b>	<b>Description</b>
<i>Indigenous-Insider</i>	This teacher endorses the unique values, perspectives, behaviors, beliefs, and knowledge of his or her indigenous community and culture and is perceived by people within the community as a legitimate community member who can speak with authority about it
<i>Indigenous-Outsider</i>	This teacher was socialized within his or her indigenous community but has experienced high levels of cultural assimilation into an outside or oppositional culture. The values, beliefs, perspectives, and knowledge of the teacher are identical to those of the outside community. The indigenous-outsider is perceived by indigenous people in the community as an outsider.
<i>External-Insider</i>	The external-outsider is socialized This teacher was socialized within another culture and acquired its beliefs, values, behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge. However, because of his or her unique experiences, the teacher questions many of the values, beliefs, and knowledge claims within his or her indigenous community and endorses those of the community in which he or she teaches, The external-insider is viewed by the new community as an "adopted" insider.
<i>External-Outsiders</i>	The external-outsider is socialized within a community different from the one in which he or she is teaching. The external-outsider has a partial understanding of and little appreciation for the values, perspectives, and knowledge of the community in which he or she is teaching and consequently often misunderstands and misinterprets the behaviors of students, parents, and others within the community.

Appendix B  
Administrator's Letter



### Street  
City, State Zip  
XXXX XX, 2008

Mr. Joe Leader, Sup't.  
Local Public Schools  
1234 Address  
Some town, MI 49330

Dear Mr. Superintendent,

I am currently completing my 37<sup>th</sup> year as a teacher and completing my PhD requirements at Western Michigan University's Department of Educational Leadership. I am contacting you because I am seeking your permission to solicit volunteer teacher participants from your district for my doctoral research study about rural teachers. My research topic is Rural Teachers' Life Experiences, Beliefs, and Expectations.

The purpose of the study is to describe, compare, and discover the essence of Indigenous (homegrown) and External (non-indigenous) rural teachers' life experiences, beliefs, and expectations. This is a qualitative study and data will be collected by utilizing one-on-one semi-structured confidential interviews requiring 45-60 minutes of a participant's time, plus responses to three electronic reflections from prompts similar to the interview questions, which will be sent to them via email.

All volunteer participants' information and data collected from interviews will remain confidential, and there will be no identification of teachers or the district in the study, beyond generic terms describing the district's elementary population such as rural, and over 40% free and reduced lunch. All data will be kept under lock and key for five years in the office of my advisor as required by HSIRB rules.

In 7-10 days, I will follow up on this communication with a phone call to answer any questions or concerns you may have and to ascertain your answer to my request. I look forward to talking with about permission to solicit volunteer participants for my study.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you wish to contact me, I can be reached via email at [rhf1949@yahoo.com](mailto:rhf1949@yahoo.com), or work phone, 269-521-3910 or home 269-375-8346.

Respectfully,

Richard H. Fowler  
PhD candidate WMU  
Bloomingdale HS Sped. Teacher

Appendix C

Principal's Letter Requesting Site Permission

Mr. /Mrs. Principal  
Town Elementary  
Town Public Schools

Dear Mrs. Principal,

I have been granted permission by Mr. /Mrs. Superintendent to use Yourtown Public Schools as a site to solicit volunteer teacher participants for my doctoral dissertation study. To complete my dissertation I will need permission from you to solicit teachers from your building. The study will need a total of 6-12 elementary teachers across several West Michigan rural districts.

Volunteers will need to commit to (1) a face-to-face one-time 45-60 minute interviews, and (2) a weekly email response to specific prompts for only 3-4 weeks. I am selecting teachers based on either of two criteria: (1) those reared in rural communities similar to the one in which they are employed, and (2) those reared in larger non-rural or suburban-urban communities dissimilar to the community of their employment.

The study's purposes are to describe the teachers' life experiences, how their beliefs form their interactions with their students, and the teacher's expectations FOR and OF their students. A comparison of the two groups will be examined for similarities and differences within and between the two groups.

Interviews will be unobtrusive and not interfere with the educational functions of your staff or students. All interviews will be arranged at the convenience of the participants, but generally after school hours. All volunteer participants' information and data collected from the taped interviews will remain confidential, and there will be no identifying information of teachers or the district in the study, beyond generic terms. All data will kept under lock and key for five years in the office of my advisor as required by HSIRB rules.

I would appreciate it if I could present my study briefly (less than 5 minutes) at a staff gathering or meeting, and then hand out a non-binding volunteer information form. I have included the form as an attachment.

Reply by email would be greatly appreciated. My email address is [rhf1949@yahoo.com](mailto:rhf1949@yahoo.com). If email is not convenient or you have questions, I will contact you via phone to answer questions or concerns and ascertain if permission is granted. Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to hearing from you in regard to my request.

Sincerely,  
Richard H. Fowler  
Bloomingdale HS Teacher  
WMU PhD. Candidate

Appendix D  
Volunteer Participant Information

## Volunteer Participant Information

**Study Title:** *Comparing Indigenous and External Rural Teachers: Beliefs, Origins of Beliefs, and Expectations.*

**Study Focus:** Teacher's lived experiences, beliefs they hold, and expectations of and for their students. A comparison of rural indigenous and external teachers within and between the categories will be described.

**What Teachers:** A minimum of 4-6 teachers in each category: (1) Indigenous or homegrown rurally raised teachers (2) External or non-rurally raised (suburban/urban raised) teachers.

**Study Guarantees:** Participant names will not be used nor will the district be identified. No information will be used or viewed by any person not associated with the study and bound by an oath of confidentiality. All information and data will be kept under lock and key for 5 years by.

**Study Data Collection Techniques:** There are three parts to the data collection: **ALL CONVERSATIONS WILL BE DIGITALLY TAPE RECORDED.** **A)** A 45-60 minute one-on-one open response interview (with possible probes for clarification and explanation), **B)** For 3-4 weeks, a weekly reflective response to a prompt via email

**Participant Commitment:** I will need you for from 45-60 minutes depending on the depth and length of your responses (the average has been about 45-50 minutes). In addition, weekly time to respond to the written reflective prompt to be at your choice for length and depth. **Time will be arranged around your schedule and at your convenience and at a location of your choice.**

**Participant Benefit:** There can be no reward or remuneration to entice you as per university regulations. You will be adding to the knowledge to an understudied population in education – rural schools, the students and especially the teachers. Long range it is hoped that from the data will emerge information useful in teacher preparation, professional development, and possibly public school policy.

If you would like to be considered for the study, please provide the requested information and sign **THIS IS AN UNBINDING offer** to participate.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Years Taught \_\_\_\_\_

School email \_\_\_\_\_ School Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix E

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board  
Participant Consent Form

**Consent for *Comparing Indigenous and External Rural Teachers: Beliefs, Origins of Beliefs, and Expectations*.** Western Michigan University, Department of Educational Leadership

Principal Investigator: Dr. Walter L. Burt

Student Investigator: Richard H. Fowler, M.A. EdLd & Sp Ed.

I am invited to participate in a research project entitled *Comparing Indigenous and External Rural Teachers: Beliefs, Origins of Beliefs, and Expectations*. This research is intended to examine six to sixteen rural elementary teachers from several school districts and describe the teacher's beliefs, origins of their beliefs, and expectations of and for rural students.

The interview will last 45-60 minutes and the electronic written responses will be at my discretion as to duration. During the one-on-one interview (4-5 questions), I may be asked probing or follow-up questions to clarify responses or comments made during the interview. As in all research, there may be unforeseen risks to the participant. If an accidental injury, appropriate emergency measures will be taken; however, no compensation or treatment will be available to me. My participation in this study may allow me to explore my experiences influencing my general beliefs about rural life and rural student's educational needs.

All of the information collected from me will be confidential. My name will not appear on any papers or tapes on which information is collected or recorded. The tapes and forms will all be coded, and the student researcher will keep a separate master list with the names of the participants and the corresponding code numbers. Once the data are collected and analyzed, the master list will be destroyed. Fictitious names will be used to protect the identity of the participants during the reporting process. All other forms will be retained in a lock file for the duration of the research project in the student investigator's home office. All data collected will be used for this the study as fulfilling the department and university requirements, and future scholarly articles, publications, or presentations.

I may refuse to answer any question or to participate, and I may quit at any time during the study without prejudice or penalty. If I have any questions or concerns about the study, I may contact Dr. Walter Burt ([walter.burt@wmich.edu](mailto:walter.burt@wmich.edu)) or Rich Fowler ([rhf1949@yahoo.com](mailto:rhf1949@yahoo.com)) at 269-375-8346. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (387-8293) or the Vice President for Research (387-8298) if any questions or problems arise during the course of the study. This project has been registered as a PhD project with the Human Subject Institutional Review Board.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year. My signature below indicates that I have read and/or had explained to me the purpose and requirements of the study and that I agree to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature  
Consent obtained by \_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's initials

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Appendix F  
Interview Protocol



Interview Protocol Project: Comparing Indigenous and External Rural Teachers:  
Beliefs, Origins of Beliefs, and Expectations

**Interview**

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Experience: years = \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: M F Ethnicity: C B  
 H A O  
 Type of Community Reared R N-R SES REARING L LM M UM U  
 Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Opening Statement/Question:** 1. Tell me About how you decided to become a teacher.  
 2. Tell me about the community/town where you grew and what it was like growing up in that community.

**Question 1. What were some of the influences in your life?** **Field Notes**  
 (Probes = family, friends, school, events,  
 media, other experiences)

**Question 2a. Tell me about the values you learned growing up  
 that is still a part of your make up?**

**Question 2b.**  
**How have they changed over time?**

**Questions 3a.** **Field Notes**  
**Now that you have been teaching rural students  
 what do you expect of them?**

**Question 3b.**  
**What has influenced your expectations of them?**  
 (probes = values, motivation, intelligence,  
 SES, poverty, family, community, etc.)

**Question 4a.**  
**For their rural students, what do you expect FOR them?**

**Question 4b.**  
**Tell me about experiences that lead you to feel/believe that?**  
 (Probes= elicit views on affective (socio-emotional),  
 relationships, jobs, future, legal entanglements, connectedness,  
 motivation, locale (PLACE), etc.)

Appendix G  
Reflective Journal Prompts

## Email Reflective Journal Prompts

Week 1:

A. Reflect back on, people, events, etc. that shaped you into the person you are today: Tell me about something that pops up but you don't think of is as too important, yet it occasionally is in your mind (can be a dream, aspiration, memorable event either positive or not so positive), or anything that helped shape your thoughts, words, actions, deeds, values, or beliefs?

Week 1:

B. Reflect for a minute on what is valuable to you and how it became valuable: Tell me about any values or beliefs that you were confirmed or changed because of your teaching experiences.

Week 2:

A. Tell me about any students who cause heartache or great joy: What is about them that brings those emotions or feelings to your mind and thoughts?

Week 2:

B. Tell me what you believe the future holds for students from this school: Consider how will they really end up when they move into middle & high school and even beyond high school?

Appendix H

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board  
Letter of Approval

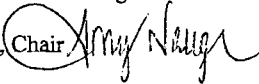
## WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Date: December 17, 2008

To: Walter Burt, Principal Investigator  
Richard Fowler, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair 

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 08-12-14

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "Comparing Indigenous and External Rural Teachers: Beliefs, Origins of Beliefs, and Expectations" has been **approved** under the **expedited** category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may **only** conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: December 17, 2009