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How multiculturalism or egalitarian beliefs of teachers influence the type of cultural information gathered about English language learners

Anna C. Kim
James Madison University

How Multiculturalism or Egalitarian Beliefs of Teachers Influence the Type of Cultural

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Anna C. Kim

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Abstract

English Language Learners (ELLs) represent the largest growing student body population in schools, yet among the lowest performing students in the United States with high dropout and grade retention rates (Waxman, Rivera, & Powers, 2012). Teachers are central in the process of improving academic success for English language learners; however, there is minimal information on teacher cultural belief systems in the educational context and about how their attitudes, views, and belief systems affect immigrant students (Hachfeld et al, 2011; Vedder et al., 2006). This current study sought to investigate how teachers' cultural belief systems, whether multicultural or egalitarian, influences how they view their students and the type of information they would like to know about their students, particularly English Language Learners. Forty-four teachers participated in this study to see their thoughts and questions regarding fictitious students in four scenarios that increased in cultural distance. The participants were divided into two groups: Multicultural or Egalitarian. Data was analyzed using means and conducting independent t-tests to make comparisons between multicultural and egalitarian teachers. Results revealed no significant differences between multicultural and egalitarian teachers and the amount of cultural, personal, and academic questions asked about students. Teachers of both cultural belief systems asked more personal questions about the child such as interests, hobbies, family background, etc. than academic related questions (i.e. test scores, reading level, etc.) and culture related questions (i.e. language, religion, etc.). Information emerged from this study will help aid school psychologists with consultation. Implications of this study and recommendations for further research are included.

How Multiculturalism or Egalitarian Beliefs of Teachers Influence the Type of Cultural
Information Gathered about English Language Learners

Introduction

Statement of Problem

Schools are becoming more culturally diverse, particularly in Western countries,

and as immigration continues to rise globally, diversity in schools will continue to

increase (Hachfeld, Hahn, Schroeder, Anders, Stanat, & Kunter, 2011). Therefore,

English language learners (ELL) represent the fastest growing population of students in

schools in which non-English speaking students are the fastest growing group of students

in the U.S., increasing by 10% each year (LeClair, Doll, Osborn, & Jones, 2009).

Unfortunately, research indicates that English language learners are among the lowest

performing students in the United States with high dropout and grade retention rates

(Waxman, Rivera, & Powers, 2012). It has been alleged that schools have difficulty

addressing the needs of this group of students, and one of the major educational

challenges today is providing for their needs that are necessary for academic success

(Hachfeld et al., 2011). The fundamental goal is to improve the learning outcomes of

English Language Learners and to reduce the achievement gap between students with an

immigrant background and with students without an immigrant background (Hachfeld et

al., 2011). Given their significant role in educational practice, teachers are central in the

process of improving academic success for English language learners (Hachfeld et al.,

2011). There is little research about the attitudes, views, and beliefs about cultural

diversity in the educational context, and how those beliefs, views, and attitudes affect

immigrant students (Hachfeld et al, 2011; Vedder et al., 2006). In fact, beliefs play a key role in how teachers respond to cultural diversity they will encounter in their classrooms and will significantly influence how teachers may teach their students (Harrington & Hathaway, 1995; Kagan, D., 1992).

Belief Systems

In this study, I looked at two belief systems that teachers may identify with: Multiculturalism or Egalitarianism. These refer to the attitudes, views, or ideologies that teachers may have about their students with a different cultural background. Both of these beliefs reflect progressive attitudes towards immigration, however; multiculturalism and egalitarianism are different in how they understand and respond to cultural diversity (Hachfeld et. al, 2011). These two beliefs are also conceptually independent. A teacher with a stronger inclination towards one belief may try to use in some degree, some aspects of the other belief in their classroom. Unfortunately, due to the lack of empirical data and limited instruments assessing egalitarian and multicultural beliefs in an educational context, it is uncertain whether multiculturalism or egalitarianism will be more beneficial for students with immigrant backgrounds (Hachfeld et al., 2011). Nonetheless, both belief systems are influential and important for instruction, and the difference in perspectives of teachers may affect how students learn in the classroom, especially for English language learners.

i. *Multiculturalism*

Followers of multiculturalism believe that the different cultural backgrounds of students are important and should be welcomed and viewed as educational. In the educational setting, schools are being challenged to become multicultural in the manner

in which teachers think about planning their lessons, teaching their class, and the learning process of their students; especially as the educational systems are trying to address the needs of the increasing immigrant populations (Schoorman & Bogotch, 2010). In addition, teachers are encouraged to apply "multicultural teaching," which is defined to be an approach to teaching in which teachers take into account their students' personal, cultural, and academic influences (Nadelson et al., 2012). Teachers with this belief system will incorporate different cultures into their lesson plans or curriculum, and therefore, students will be able to identify with their cultural background. Research indicates that students who identify with their cultural background achieve higher than students who do not identify or identify little with their cultural and ethnic background (Sleeter, 2011). In addition, multiculturalism has been shown to focus more on interethnic interactions or student relationships of different cultural backgrounds, more empathy, and a stronger perception and acceptance of diversity (Hachfeld et. al., 2011). Holmes, Rutledge, and Gauthier (2009) stated that teachers who are more responsive to culture, view nonnative speakers as a benefit to their classroom, because they could use the students' knowledge of their culture to develop a richer and more genuine curriculum for all the students in the class. In addition, proponents of multiculturalism, such as Barry McLaughlin, stated that teachers need to be aware of the cultural and individual differences of their students and effective instruction for English language learners or students from a culturally and linguistically different background, and needs a variety of instructional activities that take their diverse experiences into account (1992). Helping students with immigrant backgrounds make connections between the academic contents learned in the classroom and their own knowledge about their cultural background can

help build academic competency and help take a step forward closing the achievement gap.

ii.   Egalitarianism

Similar to the belief system of multiculturalism, egalitarianism is also positive towards immigration and cultural diversity, but it stresses the importance of treating everyone the same or equally (Hachfeld et al., 2011). Egalitarianism involves finding similarities and commonalities of all students from different backgrounds, regardless of their cultural and ethnic backgrounds. In addition, egalitarianism is closely related to the "color-blind" perspective and proponents of this belief argue that labeling or classifying people on the basis of their ethnicity or culture is one cause for discrimination, and therefore should be avoided. Proponents of "color-blindness" or egalitarianism look at all people or students as equals and the same, regardless of the different backgrounds they come from. In the school setting, teachers with a stronger inclination towards egalitarian beliefs tend to emphasize treating students equally and will look at students' commonalities than paying attention to their cultural backgrounds. Moreover, teachers from an egalitarian perspective will be less likely to include their students' cultural background into their lesson planning and will favor more in a common curriculum. Teachers with a stronger inclination towards egalitarianism will favor materials and curriculum to be "color-blind" and that those should be taught the same way for all students, regardless of background history. In addition, an egalitarian perspective may have good intentions, in which the focus is on equality, where everyone is viewed the same regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Egalitarianism decreased in-group

favoritism and also decreased levels of expressed stereotypes (Wolsko et al., 2000).

English Language Learners

According to Virginia's definition of English Language Learners, they are defined as "students whose first language is other than English and who are in a special program for learning English" (Virginia Department of Education). As mentioned above, there is an achievement gap between English language learners and other students. An approach to address low performance on achievement within English language learning students was for schools to consider strengthening their language support measures; due to students with immigrant backgrounds who do not speak the language of instruction at home, tended to perform lower than their non-ELL peers (Stanat & Christensen, 2006).

   i.   Language Acquisition

Most people in the United States do not speak one language, but they come to school speaking more than 149 different tongues (Holmes, Rutledge, & Gauthier, 2009). English language learners will learn a new language as they go through school and their language acquisition is affected by many factors, in which one are teachers' belief systems. The matter of perspective, whether multicultural or egalitarian, for which the materials, curriculum, and overall classroom routines are based around, may impact and influence how English language learners learn and how it may bolster language acquisition. In fact, research in language acquisition leans more positively towards the multicultural teaching in the schools than egalitarianism. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) reported that students of immigrant backgrounds might face different challenges due to acclimating to a new culture, which may in fact interfere with

their learning; therefore, it was strongly suggested for teachers to use culturally relevant materials in their curriculum (National Council of Teachers of English, 2008).

    ii.   *Social, Emotional, and Cultural Factors*

A variety of social, emotional, and cultural factors also affect learning and language acquisition for students with immigrant backgrounds (National Council of Teachers of English, 2008). Students learn languages differently depending on their cultural background and social influences. Barry McLaughlin (1992) described that for some students and their culture, they are used to learning from their peers more than from adults, because it is learned that they must stay quiet in the presence of an adult. For other students, they can learn language more quickly or slowly than others because of their personality. Research supports that social and emotional factors within the classroom influences school success. Whether teachers have a multicultural or egalitarian belief system, it is important for teachers to have an open, empathetic and a student-oriented attitude to have positive student-teacher relationships (Hatchfeld et. al., 2011). The perception of students of their classrooms (i.e. classroom environment, teachers, peers, etc.), particularly non-English speaking students, may affect their academics. Research revealed that both English language learners and their English-speaking peers generally perceived their classroom in a positive manner; however, English language learners endorsed lower levels of academic efficacy and also rated their peers of higher levels of behavioral self-control. Research indicated that perceptions of English language learners on school-belongingness and relationships within the classroom were not significantly different from their peers (LeClair, Doll, Osborn, & Jones, 2009).

Research Aims/Hypotheses

There is limited research that looked into teachers' cultural belief systems in an educational context and also a lack of empirical data that looked to see whether culturally diverse students are more successful in a classroom of a teacher with a multicultural background or in a classroom with a teacher who has an egalitarian belief. Nonetheless, both perspectives are important and influences how students learn in the educational setting. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) stated that it would be beneficial for English language learners if their teachers were aware of the students' backgrounds, their prior school experiences, and their knowledge (2008). This current study aimed to look further into this statement by the NCTE, to see teachers' awareness of their students' background and history, by looking at teachers' thoughts and questions asked about students from different cultural backgrounds and locations. This study aimed to see the differences of awareness or types or categories of information teachers who were multicultural or egalitarian would like to know about their students, particularly English language learners. This study will also aim to see whether the locality of where a student may come from will affect the type of information inquired by a teacher. Depending on the beliefs, perspective, or how the teachers view their students, the type of information teachers would like to know about their students would be different. Understanding and having knowledge about students' cultural backgrounds, school experiences, etc., may help foster learning and academic success.

Hypothesis 1: It was hypothesized that teachers with a stronger or higher multicultural belief system would ask questions that are more culturally based (e.g. country of origin, traditions, etc.) than egalitarian teachers.

Hypothesis 2: It was hypothesized that teachers with a stronger or higher egalitarian belief system would ask questions that are more academically related (e.g. test scores, etc.) than multicultural teachers.

Hypothesis 3: It was hypothesized that both Multicultural and Egalitarian teachers would want to know about socio-emotional aspects of their ELL student (e.g. peer relationships, school-belongingness).

Hypothesis 4: It was hypothesized that as the location and distance of the student in the given scenarios increases, the number of cultural questions would increase for both multicultural and egalitarian teachers.

Method

Participants

Forty-four elementary school teachers (K-5) from one elementary school in Virginia, participated in this study to assess how their belief system (e.g. multicultural or egalitarian) may influence questions asked about their students, particularly about English Language Learners (ELLs). There were 43 women and one man in the sample (N = 44). Of these, 2.3% (N = 1) was "Asian/Pacific Islander," 4.5% (N = 2) was identified as "Hispanic/Latino," 90.9% (N = 40) was "White/Caucasian," and 2.3% (N = 1) was identified as "Other" and self-described as Portuguese. In addition, from the sample, one had been teaching at an elementary level (K-5) for 1-3 years, six had been teaching for 4-6 years, three had been teaching for 7-9 years, and three had taught over 10 years at an elementary level. Participants were recruited through two procedures: an e-mail soliciting participation of teachers at the researcher's assigned elementary school (N = 10) and

directly asking teachers before or after school, to participate in the research study (N = 34).

Materials/Instruments

Participants completed a two-page questionnaire, gave written responses to four fictitious scenarios, and completed the Teacher Cultural Beliefs Scale (TCBS[1]).

i.   *Questionnaire*

The questionnaire (See Appendix A) consists of two pages of basic demographic questions such as gender and racial/ethnic identity. In addition, the questionnaire asked whether or not a teacher taught in another school district, state, or country, the number of years taught at an elementary school level (K-5), and the highest degree earned.

ii.   *Scenarios*

The two-page form consists of four scenarios about fictional students, which require a written response for each situation (See Appendix C). Instructions indicate for the participant to write questions or thoughts that first come to mind about each student in the scenario. All characters and situations in the four scenarios are fictitious and any apparent resemblance between any character and any living person is entirely coincidental. Each scenario describes a student that had moved from one area (i.e. district/county, state, country, etc.) to the participants' school district and is in their classrooms. Next, the participant is asked what he/she would like to know about that particular student in the condition. The scenarios increase in "cultural distance" from scenario to scenario. Within this research study, "cultural distance" is described as the increase of location (i.e. district/county, state, country) and the increase of "cultural

status" (i.e. ethnic identity, perceived level of acculturation) from scenario to scenario.
The first scenario describes a student who moved from a neighboring county/district. The
second scenario describes a student who is from an immigrant background who moved
from a different state. The third scenario describes a student with an immigrant
background who moved from a different country, but had some level of acculturation.
The fourth scenario is considered to be the highest level of "cultural distance" among the
scenarios, for which it describes a student who had recently moved to the United States
from another country.

    iii.   *Teacher Cultural Beliefs Scale (TCBS[1])*

The TCBS[1] (See Appendix B) was developed by Hachfeld, Hahn, Schroeder,
Anders, Stanat, and Kunter (2011), to assess teachers' multicultural and egalitarian
beliefs about cultural diversity within their classrooms. The scale that was developed was
a "first step toward a better understanding of how teachers are responding to and dealing
with the increasing cultural heterogeneity of their classrooms" (Hachfeld et al., 2011, p.
958). The researchers used a multi-step procedure to develop items that tapped into
multicultural and egalitarian belief systems. The researchers indicated that the
multiculturalism subscale was designed to measure how strongly participants endorsed
the idea that the cultural background of students and their families should be taken into
consideration in their teaching practice (Hachfeld et al., 2011, p. 988). The egalitarianism
subscale was designed to measure how strongly participants looked at cultural similarities
and how they endorsed the belief that all students should be treated equally, regardless of
their cultural background. The researchers created a ten-item scale based on their
construct definitions of multiculturalism and egalitarianism. The TCBS consists of six

items that were designed to measure multicultural beliefs and four items designed to

measure egalitarian beliefs. Responses were given on a six-point scale ranging from 1

(Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree), (Hachfeld et al., 2011, pp. 988-989).

Hachfeld et al. (2011) conducted two studies to test for reliability and construct

validity of the TCBS. In the first study, Hachfeld et al. (2011) hypothesized that a

confirmatory factor analysis would show a positive correlation between the two

independent constructs (i.e. multiculturalism and egalitarianism) and that the two-factor

structure would provide the best fit for the data. Results from the first study indicated that

the two-factor model was in fact a good fit, as it was supported by the latent correlation

between multiculturalism and egalitarianism, which was moderately high ($r = .63$). In

addition, the results as indicated by Hachfeld et al. (2011), determined that the two scales

could be reliably assessed as the reliabilities were considered to be satisfactory

(Cronbach's $\alpha = .75$ for multiculturalism; $\alpha = .78$ for egalitarianism). In the first study,

the researchers also tested for measurement invariance and group comparisons for

beginning teachers of different cohorts (i.e. different stages of their education) and in

different school types (i.e. vocational-track and college-track). Results confirmed

measurement invariance due to equal factor loadings and equal intercepts (Hachfeld et

al., 2011).

In the second study, the researchers aimed to test the construct validity of the two

subscales of the TCBS by investigating how multiculturalism and egalitarianism

correlated with prejudices and the motivation to control prejudiced behavior, attitudes

toward pluralism and acculturation, and authoritarianism. Results indicated that both

subscales implied "favorable attitudes toward immigrant students, which reflected in a

motivation to control prejudiced behavior and a general appreciation of pluralism"

(Hachfeld et al., 2011). Overall, the two studies supported the idea that teachers' beliefs

directly impacts their teaching practices and that the TCBS is a valid and reliable measure

to assess teachers' multicultural and egalitarian belief systems.

Procedure

Participants were first asked to complete the two-paged questionnaire. Upon

completion, the questionnaire was collected and each teacher was next distributed the

form with four scenarios requiring written responses. The researcher recorded any

comments made from the teacher regarding the scenarios and followed-up with responses

that were vague or needed clarification. Finally, teachers filled out the Teacher Cultural

Belief Scale.

Data Analysis

For this study, data was analyzed based on grounded theory. Forty-four

participants volunteered to participate in this study. The teachers first completed a basic

questionnaire, in which responses were analyzed for qualitative and descriptive data (i.e.

gender, race/ethnic identity, etc.). The participants were divided into two groups, either

multicultural or egalitarian, based on their ratings of the Teacher Cultural Beliefs Scale

(TCBS). On the TCBS, six items (1-6) measured the multicultural subscale, and four

items (7-10) measured the egalitarian subscale. A total was calculated for each subscale.

A multicultural score was computed by summing up the ratings for items one through six.

The scores for the egalitarian subscale were reversed coded and an egalitarian score was

computed by adding up the reverse coded items; items seven through ten. Each

participant received an overall single score for the TCBS by summing up the totals of the

subscales. The TCBS favored multiculturalism, therefore, participants with the highest scores (≥40) were grouped as the "high multicultural" group (N = 22) and the others were grouped in the "High egalitarian" group (N = 22). After dividing the participants into two groups, their responses to the scenarios were examined and were categorized into any of the four groups: Cultural, Personal, Academic, or Other. Questions or thoughts that teachers wrote down that were categorized into the "Cultural" group were defined as anything that related to culture (i.e. language, traditions, beliefs, etc.). "Personal" was defined as anything that related to the child (i.e. hobbies, interests, family background, behavior, medical history, language proficiency etc.). "Academic" was defined as anything related to academics or achievement (i.e. reading level, test scores, math level, etc.). The "Other" category was defined as anything that was not placed in any of the three groups (i.e. types of support/services, transportation, etc.). Each category was given a numerical score that was based on the number of responses within that category for each of the scenarios. In addition, the total number of questions asked for each category, from each of the four scenarios, was calculated. Three independent t-tests were conducted to analyze the difference between multicultural and egalitarian beliefs and the types of questions or responses asked. In addition, the average amount of total questions asked in each category was compared to see what types of questions were asked more, specifically personal questions. Also, the mean or average amount of cultural questions asked for each scenario was compared to see if the number increased as the "cultural distance" increased for both multicultural and egalitarian teachers.

Results

Hypothesis 1:

An independent *t*-test was performed to understand whether the number of cultural questions asked about a student differed based on a cultural belief system (i.e. multicultural or egalitarian), to investigate the first hypothesis which stated that teachers with a multicultural belief system would ask more culture-based questions. Interestingly, contrary to the stated hypothesis that multicultural teachers would ask more cultural questions than egalitarian teachers, results indicated that the mean scores, or the average number of cultural questions asked about a student by multicultural teachers (N = 22, M = 3.23, SD = 2.76) was not significantly higher than the average number of cultural questions asked about a student by a teacher with an egalitarian belief system (N = 22, M = 3.27, SD = 2.83). On average, participants who were egalitarian asked more questions about culture than teachers who rated themselves more multicultural. However, the difference was not significant, (t (42) = -.054, p > .05).

Hypothesis 2:

To look at the second hypothesis which stated that egalitarian teachers would ask more academic-related questions, an independent t-test was conducted to understand whether the number of academically related questions (i.e. dependent variable) asked about a student, differed based on a cultural belief system (i.e. independent variable). The data indicated that there was no significant difference between the average number of academically related questions among egalitarian and multicultural teachers. Participants who were egalitarian (N = 22) did ask more questions relating to academics and

achievement (M = 4.64, SD = 4.90) than multicultural teachers (N = 22, M = 4.55, SD = 3.69); however, the difference was not significant, (t (42) = -.069, p > .05).

Table 1

Total Number of Questions Asked Across Categories

Mean Total Number of Questions Asked

Teacher Belief System	Total number of cultural questions	Total number of academic questions	Total number of personal questions
Multicultural	3.23	4.5455	11.5455
Egalitarian	3.27	4.6364	12.3636
Total	3.25	4.5909	11.9545

Hypothesis 3:

An independent *t*-test was conducted to measure the third hypothesis in which it was hypothesized that both multicultural and egalitarian teachers would ask more personal questions. Results from the test revealed that there was no significant difference between multicultural and egalitarian teachers and the number of personal questions asked about their students, (*t* (42) = -.362, p > .05). Egalitarian teachers did not ask significantly more personal questions (M =12.36, SD = 8.68) than multicultural teachers (M = 11.55, SD = 7.96). In addition, the means of total number of questions in each category was compared to see what type of question was asked more by both multicultural and egalitarian teachers. Results indicated that both types of teachers asked more personal questions (M = 11.95) than the other categories (*See Table 1).*

Table 2

Mean Number of Cultural Questions Asked Across Scenarios

Mean Cultural Questions

Teacher Belief System	Scenario 1: county/district	Scenario 2: state	Scenario 3: country	Scenario 4: new country
Multicultural	.05	.05	1.14	2.00
Egalitarian	.27	.36	1.09	1.55
Total	.16	.20	1.11	1.77

Hypothesis 4:

It was hypothesized that as the location and distance of the student in the scenario increases, the number of cultural questions will increase for teachers. To investigate this, the mean or average amount of cultural questions asked for each scenario was compared to see if the number increased as the "cultural distance" increased for both multicultural and egalitarian teachers. The scenarios were in order from least amount or closest cultural distance to the most distant, with the first scenario being the least distant to Scenario four being the most distant. Data analysis suggests that as the distance increased, both egalitarian and multicultural teacher asked more cultural questions ($M = 1.77$). (See Table 2 and Figure 1). Further analysis indicated that multicultural teachers tended to ask more cultural questions as the cultural distance of the scenarios increased ($M = 2.00$).
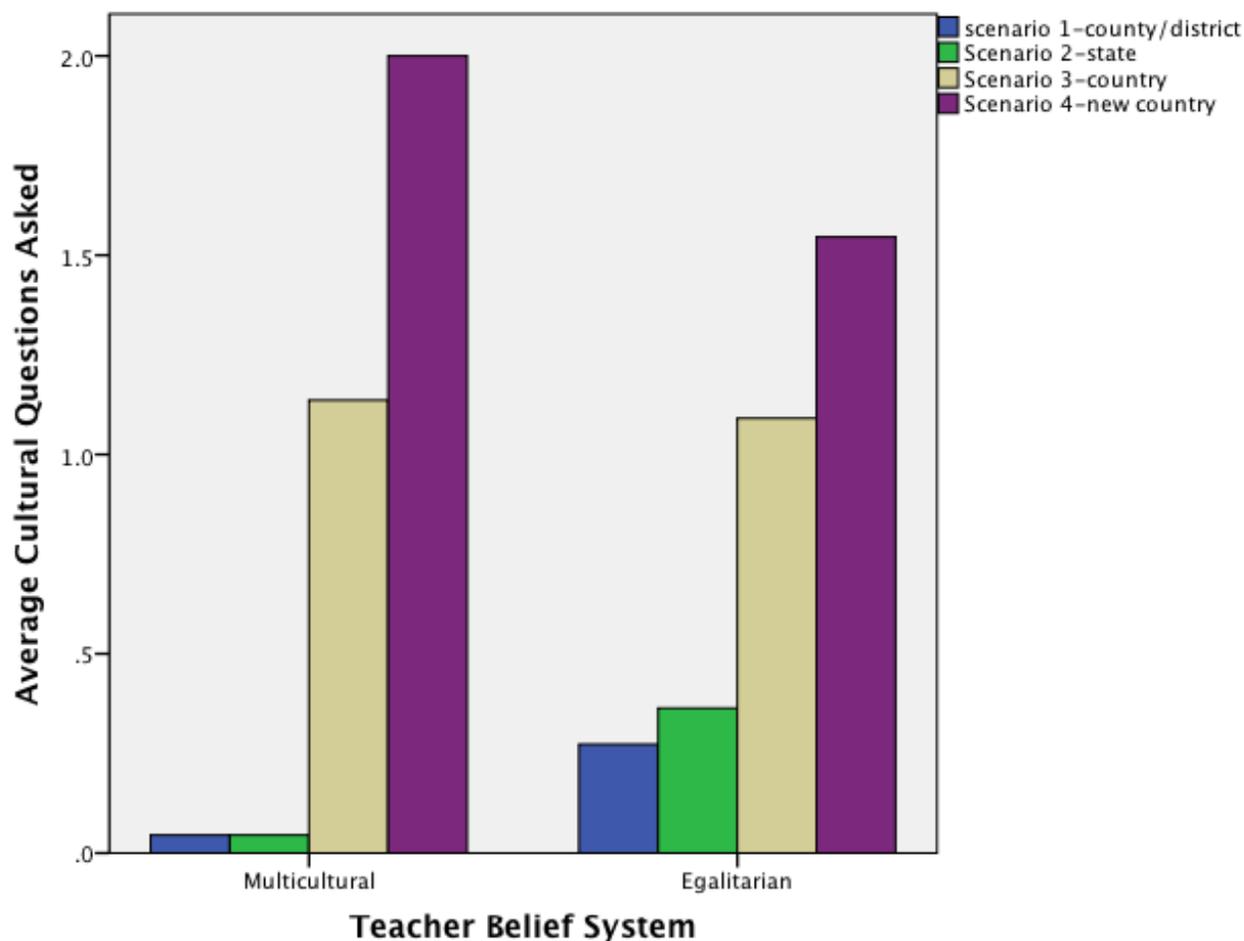
Figure 1. Average Number of Cultural Questions Asked Across Scenarios

Discussion

A review of literature indicated that teachers who invest more time to be more aware of their students' backgrounds, school experiences, etc., would be more beneficial for English language learners (NTCE, 2008). Therefore, this study sought to look at the awareness of teachers of their students' background and history by measuring or looking at the type and number of questions asked and thoughts about students from different cultural backgrounds and locations. The aim of the present study was to investigate whether teachers with egalitarian or multicultural belief systems would influence the

types of questions, particularly cultural questions, asked about their students, specifically English Language Learners.

Hypotheses and Implications

Hypothesis 1: It was hypothesized that teachers with a multicultural belief system would ask more questions that are culturally based than egalitarian teachers. Results revealed that this was not the case. It is important to note that results should be interpreted with caution as the sample size of this study was small, and data were based on one elementary school in Northern Virginia. Nonetheless, from this study, the data indicated that both multicultural and egalitarian teachers equally asked cultural questions about their students. The population of the elementary school in which the sample was gathered for this study may have been influential and may have impacted the types of questions asked. Due to the nature of the school, this may have impacted teachers who were more egalitarian to be more aware of the different cultures and diversity as they encounter students with immigrant backgrounds within their classrooms.

Hypothesis 2: It was hypothesized that teachers with a stronger egalitarian belief system would ask more questions that were academically related than multicultural teachers. The results for this hypothesis was also interesting, in which, according to the data, both egalitarian and multicultural teachers equally asked the same amount of questions relating to academics. It was implied within the hypothesis that teachers with a stronger multicultural belief would ask fewer academically related questions about their students than egalitarian teachers. Teachers may have an understanding of culture and may agree with differentiating instruction for minority students; however, they may still have to be egalitarian due to standardization of tests in which all students are treated as

equals (e.g. Standards of Learning exams). It may be that in a culture or environment where standardized tests are more emphasized, even though a teacher may identify more with multicultural beliefs, a teacher may be accustomed to egalitarian ideals (e.g. reading level, test scores, etc.).

Hypothesis 3: It was hypothesized that both multicultural and egalitarian teachers would want to know more about socio-emotional aspects of their students, particularly with English Language Learners. In this study, socio-emotional aspects were categorized in the "Personal" group. Results revealed that teachers were more aware and therefore asked more questions that centered around understanding or getting to know students on a personal level (e.g. interests, hobbies, family background, etc.). Teachers of both cultural belief systems asked more personal questions than culture or academics. Many teachers explained to the researcher during this study that more than cultural background information about a child, they were more interested in, and believed that understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the student, what their interests and hobbies are, and getting to know the student is more beneficial and better help understand who they are as a learner, which was apparent in the data.
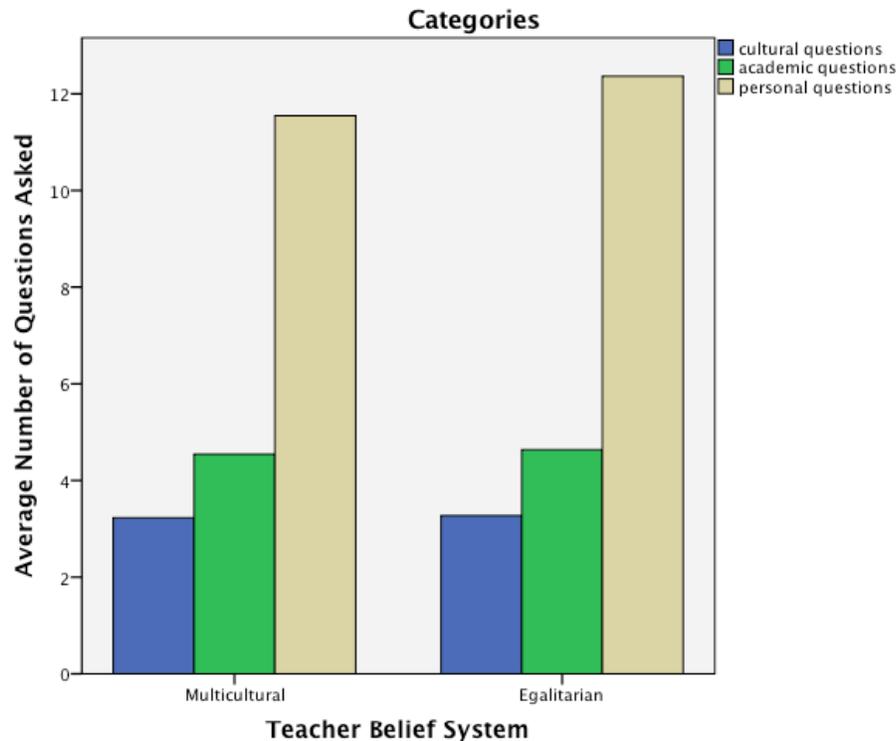
Figure 2. *Average Total Number of Questions Asked Across Categories*

Hypothesis 4: It was hypothesized that as the location and distance of the student in the scenarios increased, the number of cultural questions increased as well for both multicultural and egalitarian teachers. Results revealed that both teachers asked more cultural related questions as the cultural distance increased. Moreover, multicultural teachers asked more cultural questions than egalitarian teachers. However, there was no significant difference in the number of questions asked as the cultural distance increased for the teachers. Egalitarian and multicultural teachers were similarly interested in cultural aspects of a student, especially if a student had very little time of acculturation.

Role and Implications for the School Psychologist

School psychologists may use the information collected from this study to help with consultation. As a consultant to teachers, parents, and administrators, it is important

for school psychologists to be aware of the cultural diversity and background among teachers, students, and families to foster a safe learning environment. According to the research available, whether the teachers' cultural belief systems lean stronger towards multiculturalism or egalitarianism, it greatly influences the learning environment for students, especially for English language learners. By better understanding different cultural backgrounds and understanding where teachers are at in their knowledge or awareness, school psychologists can collaborate with teachers to think of strategies and recommendations that will increase academic success for English language learners. In addition, from the data collected, the school psychologist may provide in-service training for teachers and building administrators to foster growth and knowledge in different cultural backgrounds.

Future Research

This research study was limited due to the number of participants and due to the environment of the school. Future research may wish to gather more data from more participants for generalizability of the study. In addition, further research may wish to investigate the difference between elementary school teachers and secondary level teachers (i.e. middle school or high school). Further investigation into this may reveal a difference with personal related questions, in which teachers may be more inclined to ask more about academics and achievement than understanding or getting to know a student. Also, it may be beneficial to investigate whether there would be a difference in the amount of culture related questions in a less diverse school. Nevertheless, research on the implications of multiculturalism and egalitarianism within the educational context is very limited, even more so with how teacher beliefs' manifest themselves in the classroom

(Hachfeld et al., 2011); therefore, further research on this topic would help to increase and understand more and effective methods to help support students, especially students of a minority background.

Appendix A: Questionnaire

<u>Gender</u>

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Other _____

<u>Racial/Ethnic Identity</u>

☐American Indian/ Native American

☐Asian/ Pacific Islander

☐Black/African American

☐Hispanic/Latino

☐White/Caucasian

☐Other _____

<u>Teaching Background/ Location</u>

Have you taught in another school district before? Please Circle one.

　　　　　Yes　　　No

If Yes, Please list/explain:

Have you taught in another state? Please Circle one

　　　　　Yes　　　　No

If Yes, Please list/explain:

Have you taught in another country? Please circle one.

Yes   No

If Yes, Please list/explain:

Years of teaching experience at an elementary level (K-5)
☐1-3
☐4-6
☐7-9
☐10+

Highest Degree Earned
☐BA/BS
☐MS/MA
☐Specialist
☐Doctorate
☐Other

Appendix B: Teacher Cultural Beliefs Scale[1]

Directions: Please read each item and using the scale below, circle one that best represents your belief about each statement.

1. In the classroom, it is important to be responsive to differences between cultures.

    1   2   3   4   5   6

    Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

2. It is important for children to learn that people from other cultures can have different values.

    1   2   3   4   5   6

    Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

3. Respecting other cultures is something that children should learn as early as possible.

    1   2   3   4   5   6

    Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

4. In counseling parents who have a different cultural background than I do, I try to be considerate of cultural particularities.

    1   2   3   4   5   6

    Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

5. When meeting with parents of different cultural backgrounds, I spend more time trying to understand and empathize with their perspective.

    1   2   3   4   5   6

    Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

6. Dealing with cultural diversity should be taught in teacher training courses.

       1   2   3   4   5   6

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

7. Schools should aim to foster and support the similarities between students from different cultural backgrounds.

       1   2   3   4   5   6

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

8. In the classroom, it is important that students of different origins recognize the similarities that exist between them.

       1   2   3   4   5   6

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

9. When there are conflicts between students of different origins, they should be encouraged to resolve the argument by finding common ground.

       1   2   3   4   5   6

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

10. Children should learn that people of different cultural origins often have a lot in common.

       1   2   3   4   5   6

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

[1]Teacher Cultural Belief Scale

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[1] Scale adapted from "Assessing teachers' multicultural and egalitarian beliefs: The teacher cultural beliefs scale," by A. Hachfeld, Hahn, Schroeder, Anders, Stanat, & Kunter, 2011, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27, p.989. Copyright 2011 by Elsevier Ltd.

Appendix C: **SCENARIOS**

Directions: Write your questions or thoughts that first come to mind. Do not think too much on your answers. There are no right or wrong answers.

Scenario 1:

Joseph Parker is in fourth grade. He recently moved to your school district from Herndon, VA. What would you like to know about Joseph?

Scenario 2:

Samuel Lee is in the fifth grade. He recently moved to Virginia from California. What would you like to know about Samuel?

Scenario 3:

Alejandra Ramos is from Mexico. She has been living in your county's school district for three years. She is in the third grade. What would you like to know about Alejandra?

Scenario 4:

Gabriele Kazlauskas is from Lithuania. She recently moved to the United States and is enrolled at your school. She will be in your classroom. What would like to know about Gabriele?

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