Perceptions of cultural competency skills among professional housing and residential life staff at postsecondary institutions

William Washington III

Follow this and additional works at: http://commons.emich.edu/theses

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation
http://commons.emich.edu/theses/778

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses, and Doctoral Dissertations, and Graduate Capstone Projects at DigitalCommons@EMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master’s Theses and Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@EMU. For more information, please contact lib-ir@emich.edu.
Perceptions of Cultural Competency Skills Among Professional Housing and Residential Life Staff at Postsecondary Institutions

by

William Washington III

Dissertation
Submitted to the Department of Leadership and Counseling
Eastern Michigan University
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

Educational Leadership

Dissertation Committee:
Raul Leon, Ph.D., Chair
Jaclynn Tracy, Ph.D.
Andrew Beachnau, Ph.D.
Chastity Bailey-Fakhoury, Ph.D.

September 6, 2017
Ypsilanti, Michigan
Acknowledgments

I have worked hard during this journey and am proud of the work that has been accomplished. This dissertation would not have been accomplished without the help and support of family and friends. I first give honor to God from whom my blessings come.

I thank Dr. Zamani-Gallaher. You started me on the journey and instilled in me the belief that I could do it. You encouraged me when I thought that it was too much. I have carried your encouragement with me through the end of this journey.

I thank my committee: Dr. Raul Leon, Dr. Andy Beachnau, Dr. Jaclynn Tracy, and Dr. Chastity Bailey-Fakhoury. I appreciate the critiques, honesty, and encouragement. Dr. Tracy and Dr. Beachnau, you both gave me encouragement and support to keep me going through all of my challenges. Dr. Leon, you took on the responsibility of being my chair with enthusiasm and showed the commitment to get me through with a quality product. Dr. Bailey-Fakhoury, as my methodologist, you pushed me to understand statistics. I am truly a better researcher because of this. I thank you all!

This process was a challenge that would not have been completed without the help of my family. I appreciate all of my family for their support and patience. A special thanks goes to Nikkia Washington and Marcia Ratliff, you went out of your way to make sure that I could get away to research and write. Without complaint or hesitation, you both ensured that I could be diligent with my work. I pursued this degree and topic with my children in mind. Sydney, Cameron, and William, I want you to know that understanding and celebrating differences is an important part of maturing as a person. Daddy loves you!

I thank ACPA, GLACUHO, and Dr. Mueller for supporting my research. Dr. Mueller, you graciously allowed me to utilize the MCSA-P2 in my research. The consultations with Dr.
Jahr prior to implementing my survey was invaluable. The survey went out smoothly and the follow-up that was provided was excellent because of Emily Glenn. I also like those members of GLACUHO who participated in this research.

Finally, I thank my friends and colleagues for their words of encouragement and support. My Grand Valley State University colleagues, Dr. Gaines, and the Statistical Consulting Center for helping with my methodology. Also, to all my other friends and future doctors, it has been a blessing to have people in my life who are of a like mind and support me in attaining my goals.
Abstract

Student demographics on college campuses continues to change. The globalization of the student population brings challenges to providing optimal services from staff throughout higher education and particularly from professional housing and residential life (HRL) staff, who may be the first level of support for many students. The purpose of this quantitative study was to understand HRL staffs’ perceptions about their ability to support diverse students. Responses to the Multicultural Competence for Student Affairs Preliminary 2 scale (MCSA-P2) survey instrument provided a basis to compare the level of cultural competence of HRL staff across six demographic variables: gender, age, ethnicity, professional status, international experience, and formal development.

Findings revealed that HRL staff participants perceived themselves to be culturally competent and that the majority of HRL staff take opportunities to increase their cultural competency awareness, knowledge, and skills through formal education. Future studies could expand on the limited research in the exploration of multicultural issues to strengthen the curriculum in preparation programs for student affairs careers and in the broader academic curriculum.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................ ii

Abstract ...................................................................................................................... iv

List of Tables ................................................................................................................. viii

List of Figures ............................................................................................................... x

Chapter 1: Introduction .................................................................................................. 1

  Statement of the Problem ......................................................................................... 1

  Purpose Statement ................................................................................................ 6

  Guiding Research Questions ................................................................................... 8

  Significance of the Study ......................................................................................... 9

  Conceptual Framework .......................................................................................... 12

  Limitations of the Study ........................................................................................ 16

  Delimitations of the Study ..................................................................................... 17

  Definition of Key Terms ......................................................................................... 18

Chapter 2: Review of Literature ................................................................................... 20

  Cultural Competency ............................................................................................. 20

  Variables Related to Cultural Competence ............................................................. 26

  Cultural Competency of HRL Staff ...................................................................... 28

  Related Research on Cultural Competency ............................................................ 32

  Professional Standards of Cultural Competency .................................................... 36
Appendices........................................................................................................................................... 122

Appendix A: Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs (MCSA-P2) Permission 123

Appendix B: UHSRC Approval............................................................................................................. 125

Appendix C: Request to ACUHO to Distribute Study ................................................................. 126

Appendix D: Student Affairs Social Attitude Scale Preamble ..................................................... 127

Appendix E: First Invitation to Participate in the Study................................................................. 129

Appendix F: Second Invitation to Participate in the Study ............................................................ 130

Appendix G: Dissertation Approval Form........................................................................................... 131
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1.</td>
<td>Sample Population</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.</td>
<td>Age Summary</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.</td>
<td>Ethnicity Summary</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.</td>
<td>Institutions Summary</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5.</td>
<td>Professional Status</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6.</td>
<td>Mean of Cultural Competency for Study Participants</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 7.</td>
<td>Mean of Cultural Competency by Age</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.</td>
<td>Mean of Cultural Competency by Ethnicity</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 9.</td>
<td>Mean of Cultural Competency by Gender</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 10.</td>
<td>Mean of Cultural Competency by Languages Spoken</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 11.</td>
<td>Mean of Cultural Competency by Interactions Outside Own Ethnic Group</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 12.</td>
<td>Mean of Cultural Competency by How Knowledge Was Gained</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 13.</td>
<td>Mean of Cultural Competency by Formal Development Activity</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 14.</td>
<td>Standard Deviation and Mean of Cultural Competency for Participants</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 15.</td>
<td>Values for Independent Variables</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 16.</td>
<td>ANOVA Table Using GLM Model</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 17.</td>
<td>Round 1 Significance by Variable</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 18.</td>
<td>ANOVA Table for Final Analysis</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 19.</td>
<td>Significance by Variable</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 20.</td>
<td>Parameter Estimates for Significant Variables</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 21.</td>
<td>Mean of Cultural Competency for Formal Learning</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 22.</td>
<td>Mean of Cultural Competency Components in Formal Education</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 23. Mean of Cultural Competency for Components of Cultural Experience ............................ 93

Table 24. Mean of Cultural Competency Components for Experience ....................................... 94

Table 25. Significant Variables Summary ..................................................................................... 95
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Awareness, skills, knowledge (AKS), the Basis of the Conceptual framework.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Cultural map of HRL staff relationships and student activities.</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>F tests—Linear Multiple Regression.</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>Mean by Age Group Boxplot.</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Frequency by Ethnicity.</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>Frequency of Respondents by Gender.</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td>Means Comparison for Languages Spoken</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8</td>
<td>Mean of Respondents Who Have Not Studied Abroad.</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9</td>
<td>Mean of Respondents Who Have Studied Abroad at Least Once.</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10</td>
<td>Mean Comparison for Studying Abroad vs. Not Studied Abroad.</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 11</td>
<td>Means Comparison for Interactions.</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 12</td>
<td>Means Comparison for Formal Education.</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 13</td>
<td>Means Comparison for Workshops and Training.</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 14</td>
<td>Means Comparison for Conferences.</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 15</td>
<td>Mean Comparison for Formal Development Activity.</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The days of traditional students, known by the student affairs profession, are gone. The characteristics of students in higher education today are very different than they were 10 or 20 years ago. Hale (2004) shared concern that the numbers of ethnic and racial groups on the university campus have accelerated far beyond similar populations in earlier generations. The label of diversity is no longer associated only with race and ethnicity, even though those characteristics may be the most discussed. Even as the label has expanded, the growing needs of ethnic minority and international students on the campus must still be addressed directly.

A comparison of U.S. and college enrollment by race/ethnicity. Snyder, de Brey, and Dillow (2016) noted that in 2014 the U.S. population included 62.6% White, 17% Hispanic, 12.4% Black, and 5.3% Asian/Pacific Islander (p.19). Cuyjet, Howard-Hamilton, and Cooper (2011) acknowledged that by the year 2050 Latinos/Latinas will be responsible for 60% of the nation’s population growth; Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) constitute 4.6% of the U.S. population and will have doubled. The authors further note the percentages of these populations that are enrolled in two- and four-year colleges. The breakdown of the populations enrolled in college in 2014 were White, 68.8%; Hispanic, 59.8%; Black, 56.7%; and Asian/Pacific Islander, 80.1%.

Percentages of increase and/or decline in campus populations by race/ethnicity. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2017), between 2000 and 2010, all ethnic populations on college campuses increased—Black by 73%, Asian/Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native by 29%, and White by 21%. Most notably, between 2000 and 2015, the Hispanic population doubled. However, NCES statistics showed
that between 2010 and 2015, student populations of American Indian/Alaska Native declined by 26%, followed by both Black and White students, each at slightly more than 10%. During that period, the Asian/Pacific Islander population remained constant.

Seurkamp (2007) urged the higher education community to assume greater responsibility to meet the growing needs of a more diverse student population. The growing population of ethnic minorities in higher education requires university officials to assist minorities and the majority group as they acclimate to college and to each other. Doing so requires that staff and faculty in higher education understand their students and the cultures that the students represent. Hainline, Gaines, Long Feather, Padilla, and Terry (2010) concurred, explaining that traditional lectures and tests failed to prepare students for the critical and creative thinking required in today’s world. The authors urged an integration of various disciplines.

Further, faculty roles are evolving to include mentor and adviser to facilitate active, cooperative learning, including interaction in cyberspace, wherein students take charge of their learning. According to Hainline et al. (2010), innovation by faculty may become a factor in tenure and promotion decisions and teaching effectiveness may be linked assessment of outcomes.

Sawyer (2012) discussed the role of the housing and residential life (HRL) profession and the mission that is linked to the university to engage and retain students, to contribute to student satisfaction, and to increase graduation rates. Williamson (1961) described the role of student housing personnel in the areas that also include maintenance of standards for health, safety, and behavior in the various on-campus and off-campus venues for student living. The duties of the student housing staff may also include residential counseling and motivating
students to share in the governance and administration of housing areas. Blimling (2003) shared that the “administration of college residence halls is usually organized into three major units: residence life programs, housing operations, and room assignments” (p. 341). The focus of this research was on the residence life unit, as it relates to work responsibilities, student interactions, and multicultural competence. Blimling elaborated, “The purpose of residence life programs is to provide educational programming, nonclinical counseling, and support for student learning” (p. 341). HRL staff are then focused on the general well-being of the student, community building among the students, and increasing student learning.

Institutions must attend to the trend of changing demographics and how it affects enrollment and services at the college and university level. To achieve successful relationships and desired outcomes for all students, many institutions convey a commitment to inclusion and diversity and delineate mission statements and institutional goals that support diversity and differences. As policy is created around inclusion and diversity, the commitment to the policy manifests in preparation and practice. Several issues contribute to the complexity surrounding the work and relationships among HRL staff and diverse populations on college campuses.

**Minimal research relates to the preparation of multicultural competence of HRL staff and professional practices.** Pope, Mueller, and Reynolds (2009) suggested that multicultural research directly related to practice can begin to add to the body of knowledge by documenting the phenomenon of the increasing diversity on campus and understanding the interaction between campus personnel and students who historically have been underserved and underrepresented on campus. While the research continues in regard to cultural competency, the need to extrapolate the information that informs practice within
HRL is paramount. HRL staff will encounter many of the students described immediately upon the students’ arrival at the institution, and it will be the responsibility of HRL staff to nurture, support, and enhance the students’ educational experience (Blanshan, 2007; Blimling, 2003; Haggerty, 2011).

As the populations shift in institutions, the HRL staff must be mindful of their skill levels as they relate to cultural competency and the ability to engage students different from themselves. Pope and Reynolds (1997) described cultural competency as “the awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary to work effectively and ethically across cultural differences” (p. 270). Although there is an understanding of the need for culturally competent staff in higher education, Sawyer (2012) noted limited research, as it specifically relates to HRL staff. King and Howard-Hamilton (2003) and Franklin-Craft (2010) posited that achieving cultural competency goals is often complicated because of limited discussion about knowledge, skills, and attitudes that constitute cultural competence and the dearth of related research about achievement. Sawyer (2012) concurred, pointing out the need for cultural competency skills among HRL staff as the young profession continues to fulfill its role in the context of higher education.

Blanshan (2007) and Sawyer (2012) suggested that success for many students will depend on HRL staff being culturally competent. The HRL staff is familiar with the students in their communities and aims to help students navigate any obstacles that may arise at the university. HRL staff is intentional in ways that help provide a quality education for students. Programs, including social activities and resource sharing, help students acclimate to the school (Blimling, 2003).
Razek and Chong (2013) emphasized the importance of residence halls as the site for students to experience group living and to acquire a sense of community. Residence hall staff responsibilities do correlate to specific duties such as advising a community council within a hall, adjudicating a conduct process for the community, or individual advising of students. Taub (1998) noted,

Student affairs professionals such as college counselors, residence life staff, student organization advisors, and others have worked at the task of community-building through outreach, teaching and training, and consultation. They perform these activities in a variety of contexts, including leadership development, community service, and learning communities. (p. 413)

All of these activities will require the HRL staff to ascertain the student’s development level. Shaffer (2009) commented on the significance of HRL staff work, saying that they are “educated and trained as educators; their role in providing academic intervention should be viewed as legitimate when partnering in the delivery of academic and personal support intervention” (p. 45). The work of HRL staff is important as it relates to student academic success and graduation. It should be viewed as an integral part of the academic experience of a student.

The HRL staff will have to be able to connect with the student through communication despite the student’s background or ethnicity. The staff will also have to create interventions to motivate good behavior or behavioral change, all requiring an ability to reach a student on a personal and intellectual level. The work of the staff requires the ability to find any disconnects with the environment, groups, or community to make it better for the student. In many ways, it is most important that the staff person has the ability to
eliminate personal bias about situations or persons. Cooper, He, and Levin (2011) agreed that educators need to reflect critically upon their own cultural understanding and knowledge of themselves and the influences in their environment to increase academic achievement for all students.

**Improved and intentional graduate preparation and training is needed for HRL staff.** To be effective at cultivating a new multicultural campus culture, professionals must be intentional in providing access to development and training in the area of cultural competency. HRL staff may not have the ability to demonstrate theoretical and culturally responsive pedagogy based on multicultural competence without the proper preparations and training (Harris, 2010).

Higher education leaders must think about the product and service that is being shared. The student demographic and communities have changed significantly, and our practices do not always reflect a consistent way of changing to meet the needs of our constituents, stakeholders, and partners. Although the demographics of our student population are changing, Mueller (1999) and Liang and Sedlacek (2002) noted that the student affairs profession remains predominantly White. Mueller and Pope (2001) affirmed that higher education administration continues to be approximately 80% White, whereas the numbers of students of color increase. This limited racial diversity of staff and faculty adds to the complexity on campus. These data support the need for cultural competency among HRL staff.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to understand HRL staffs’ perceptions about their ability to support diverse students. The researcher used a quantitative survey
approach to gain insight into the perceptions of staff working in the HRL field. The researcher examined perceptions because of the difficulty to study actual skill sets. Minimal extant research relates to cultural competency or proposes consistent standards for cultural competency (Blanshan, 2007; Craft, 2010; Howlett, 2006). In this study, responses to the Multicultural Competence for Student Affairs Preliminary 2 scale (MCSA-P2) instrument provided a basis to compare the level of cultural competence of HRL staff across six demographic variables: gender, age, ethnicity, professional status, international experience, and formal development. The examination of background characteristics were important to this study because it was hoped to possibly identify characteristics that contribute to the cultural competency of HRL staff.

The final purpose of the research was to summarize the relationships that may support or diminish cultural competency among HRL staff. Because research is limited, roles of variables have not been conclusively vetted (Franklin-Craft, 2010). Summarizing information allows readers to extrapolate significant information from the study quickly and align it with the current literature. The accessible information expedites a more seamless transition to action for the practitioner. As student affairs professionals, HRL staff have several responsibilities and obligations to the university, division, and department as they relate to cultural competency.

The role of HRL staff as educators to preparing students for productive and successful integration within a multicultural society is very important. Sawyer (2012) believed that “with the changing philosophy and expansion of the residential experience, exploring the identity of the HRL professional can ensure that the diverse programs, initiatives, and services provided are focused on central issues as defined by the larger
profession” (p. 6). This becomes even more crucial based on the opinion of Pope et al. (2009) that “despite the significant role that student affairs has assumed for multicultural issues, the literature supporting and guiding these efforts has been, arguably, rather scant” (p. 640). This research examined and described the level of cultural competency perceived by HRL staff, and those aspects of HRL demographics and activities that are cited as contributing most to their cultural competency were summarized.

The dependent variable for this study is the cultural competency level of HRL staff described by Pope and Reynolds’ (1997) as “awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary to work effectively and ethically across cultural differences” (p. 270). The research examined the perception of cultural competency through the relationships of six demographic characteristics to determine implications for HRL staff: gender, age, ethnicity, professional status (entry-level, middle-management, and senior-management), international experience (multiple language facility and study abroad), and formal development.

**Guiding Research Questions**

At many institutions, the HRL staff may be the first line of support for most students living on campus. The HRL staff may be the start of the process of lifelong learning for residents. This study examined the awareness, knowledge, skills, experiences, and perceptions of several HRL staff members regarding their level of cultural of competency and the development thereof.

This research was guided by four questions regarding the levels of cultural competence among HRL staff:

Q. 1. To what extent does HRL staff perceive themselves as being culturally competent?
Q. 2. Are there any significant relationships between age, ethnicity, gender, international experience, professional status, formal development, and perceived level of cultural competence?

Q. 3. How has HRL staff gained knowledge or experience with cultural-competency?

Q. 4. What is the likelihood that age, ethnicity, gender, international experience, professional status, or formal development will impact cultural competence?

Research by several authors has informed the research questions and hypotheses about cultural competency for student affairs staff (Blanshan, 2007; Franklin-Craft, 2010; Sawyer, 2012). A goal of this study was to contribute to the literature concerned with the cultural competency of HRL staff, comparing, contrasting, and providing further evidence that could illuminate what we know about cultural competency. Applying these questions through research to the HRL staff population adds information to the literature about cultural competency. The findings from the research was attributed to a different population of HRL staff or subgroup of student affairs staff than previous research. This new information aims to provide more insight, regarding supporting or contradicting, current research on cultural competency.

Significance of the Study

This research augmented the literature on the interrelations of multicultural education, experiences, racial identity, and multicultural competency of HRL staff and examined the relationship of selected variables to multicultural competence (Mueller & Pope, 2001, 2003). This research further examined the concept of cultural competence and described the most likely indicators of cultural competency. Understanding the relationships among cultural competency and the demographic variables revealed characteristics or activities most likely
to predict cultural competency of HRL staff, confirmed successful strategies, and provided a rationale for improving practice.

This research also built upon research conducted by Howlett (2006) that specifically focused on chief housing officers in the HRL field and by Blanshan’s study (2007) on hall directors. The aforementioned research is not a finite list but a foundation that informed this research. Sawyer (2012) noted that the literature on the cultural competency of HRL professionals is limited, which limits the ability to compare results to similar studies. Examining multicultural competence within a different subset of student affairs professionals adds to the base of knowledge about factors relative to multicultural competence of HRL staff. This particular view of HRL and student affairs work will share staff perceptions of cultural competency within the Association of College and University Housing Officers International (ACUHO-I), a specific population about whom very little or no literature has been shared.

This research focused on the theoretical base of cultural competency and contribution to the literature as applied to HRL staff. Pope et al. (2009) noted the significance of multicultural competence research:

This research could move beyond assessing campus climate and satisfaction to more fully assessing the impact of learning and living in a diverse environment (e.g., residence halls, classrooms), examining the impact of diversity programming on student attitudes towards diversity and the ability of multicultural training to enhance the multicultural competence of student affairs staff. (p. 653)

This study supplemented the research that bridges theory to practice with the student affairs profession and HRL; specifically, to gather data that can be used to improve the work
that is being done in the area of housing and residential living to benefit university students. Mueller and Pope (2005) believed “that more work must be done to ensure that every student affairs professional achieve and maintain a basic level of multicultural competence rather than rely solely on multicultural experts within the profession” (p. 687). Professionals must be able to understand their own cultural competence and biases to be able to address situations individually. Every student is different and will need a personal understanding by a professional to help the student through their challenge. Pope et al. (2009) recognized the need to provide research that speaks to the practice. Perceptions of HRL staff were revealed in their self-identified level of cultural competency as it relates to practice in their field. This is even more important due to the gaps in knowledge and practice of addressing issues of multiculturalism, according to Mastrodicasa (2004). This study looks to contribute to the extant scholarship on HRL staff cultural competency and practice.

A quantitative approach is best when the research is testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables (Creswell, 2014). The research adds to the literature regarding the reliability and validity of the Multicultural Competence for Student Affairs-Preliminary 2 scale (MCSA-P2), utilized to assess the multicultural competence of student affairs professionals (Pope & Mueller, 2005; Mastrodicasa, 2004). Utilizing a quantitative approach for this research supported the purpose and contributed to the significance of this research. This approach allowed the findings to be aligned with previous research that has utilized the MCSA-P2 tool. The researcher highlighted similar variables through the same numbered data, using statistical procedures (Creswell, 2014)

In this nonexperimental research, a correlational design described and measured the relationships between the six variables—gender, age, ethnicity, professional status (entry-
level, middle-management, and senior-management), international experience (multiple language facility and study abroad), and formal development as those variables related to cultural competency of HRL staff.

The information shared identified strengths and weaknesses of the personnel being studied and offered opportunities to improve their professional practices. This research was objective in nature and aimed to promote a greater understanding of the way things are and why. Further, the research attempted to highlight the concepts and characteristics of a culturally competent staff person who works in HRL.

In summary, this research contributed specifically to the principles of ACUHO-I and competency development for HRL professionals within ACUHO-I. The research also helped to inform organizations that have collaborative efforts with ACUHO-I in providing research for best practices in student affairs. The insights gained in this research informed conversations by professionals within the workplace and contributed to improvements in training of staff. Findings of this study illuminated the importance of advancing multicultural competency throughout the university community.

**Conceptual Framework**

Pope and Reynolds (1997) noticed that, despite the urgency, there is still a lack of specificity regarding multicultural competencies. The authors compiled research and developed an alternate and expanded list of competencies for student affairs, the first effort to apply multicultural competence to student affairs. The research was grounded and derived from the multicultural counseling psychology field of study. Pope and Reynolds (1997) developed seven competency areas needed for student affairs professionals.

1. Administrative, management, and leadership skills
2. Theory and translation skills
3. Helping and interpersonal skills
4. Ethical and legal knowledge and decision-making skills
5. Training and teaching skills
6. Assessment and evaluation skills
7. Multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills (p. 267)

For the purposes of this research, multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills (AKS) was the base of the conceptual framework. Pope and Reynolds (1997) deemed that student affairs practitioners must have at least basic multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills to work effectively with a diverse population of students. Although Pope and Reynolds avowed that although awareness is listed as a separate and equal competency, the concept is an integral part of all of the competencies. There is a fluid relationship between all of the competencies that should be maintained and continuously revisited.

This model was selected because of the correlations to many of the tasks of HRL staff in regard to the need to work with students. The competency areas reflect skillsets needed for the many roles of HRL staff, such as teaching courses and presiding over campus conduct hearings. Because HRL staff do more than just work within the confines of housing, this conceptual framework also supports HRL staff as they advance in their careers and expand their abilities to interact with people on a broader scope.

**Cultural awareness.** Cultural awareness requires the individual to examine his or her own background. An example of awareness is “a belief that differences are valuable and learning about difference is necessary and rewarding” (Pope & Reynolds, 1997, p. 271). This empowers the individual by being able to identify their own biases, assumptions, and any...
cultural impositions that they may place on others. If HRL staff are not aware of their own biases and beliefs, they will not be able to assist students with issues that they may face. Razek and Chong (2013) asserted that racial and ethnic sensitivity may heighten challenges for students in international residence halls, especially in predominantly White institutions. Fantini (2000) affirmed “awareness (of self and others) as the keystone on which effective and appropriate interactions depend” (p. 28). Constructive interactions are built on a basic understanding of self and the student(s) that staff are working with.

**Cultural knowledge.** Cultural knowledge suggests that individuals must strive for increasing their knowledge and broaden their understanding of diverse cultural and ethnic groups. Pope and Reynolds (1997) offered examples of this attribute as “knowledge of diverse cultures and oppressed groups” (p.271). The author further elaborates the on the need to understand how values and behaviors change for individuals. The author also suggests that there is basic understanding of oppressions, multiple identities, and within-group differences.

**Cultural skill.** Cultural skill necessitates that individuals have the ability to assess clients’ needs based on relevant cultural data and the current situation. HRL staff will have to be able to identify and address issues of prejudice or interactions that may be perceived as such due to lack of knowledge. Razek and Chong (2013) pointed out that minority students who perceive racial-ethnic prejudice may experience negative effects on transition and adjustment to campus life and their sense of belonging. Being the leaders of the residential communities, HRL staff has a major role in ensuring that all within are respected, understood, and celebrated. Professional HRL staff would demonstrate abilities to facilitate discussions of cultural differences, show empathy and concern for all individuals, and gain the trust and respect of individuals in the campus residence (Pope & Reynolds, 1997).
Pope and Reynolds (1997) also created an inventory of expected behaviors for awareness, knowledge, and skills, which were presented to peers for review and critique. The final inventory list was supported by student affairs professionals throughout the field and allowed professionals to be able to self-evaluate and to contribute to the further development of competency measurement tools.

The competencies developed must be supported by training and education of staff at all levels to be effective. Pope and Reynolds (1997) noted the importance of the training programs to be competency-based and not just curriculum-based. The curriculum-based approach is noted in preparation programs and is content-focused. A competency-based approach would focus more on behavioral outcomes resulting from the exposure to multiple content areas and activities. This approach would also need to be followed by opportunities for continuing education or additional training.

With the foundation of constructs that have been reviewed---awareness, knowledge, and skills---the present study attempted to describe the perceptions of HRL staff about cultural competency. Participants responded to questions designed to determine their level of comfort in each construct area that has been determined to best fit the work of the awareness, skills, knowledge (AKS) model shown in Figure 1, which shows the relationships of awareness, knowledge, and skills as applied to the work of HRL professionals.
Figure 1. Awareness, skills, knowledge (AKS), the basis of the conceptual framework.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations or constraints that were beyond the control of the researcher affect all research studies. With all survey instruments, the validity depends on the honesty of the audience; there was an assumption that the audience would be forthright with the information submitted. Because participants were self-reporting, there was not an independent source of corroboration. There also was the possibility of participant bias and underrating or overrating their answers.

Participants may not have been familiar with the concept of cultural competency. If the participants were not knowledgeable about the theories and concepts relative to this topic, their responses may have been very ambiguous.

Time and access were also a limitation due to the periods of excess workload throughout the year, such as opening and closing of housing operations. Further, the commonly used quantitative statistical procedure to analyze data in this study determined only correlation among variables but not causation.
Delimitations of the Study

Boundaries established by the researcher delimit the study, making it manageable. The objectives, research questions and variables, the target population, and site as well as the theoretical and conceptual framework and choice of a survey instrument describe the scope of the study. The final product was not a critique of the responses or the responders but a report the findings as summaries of the participants’ responses.

Further conditions that may have influenced responses to the survey chosen included the following:

1. This study was limited by the choice of a self-report survey instrument to gather data and focus of the study on HRL staff to the GLACUHO region, which limited the generalizability of findings to that region of ACUHO-I.

2. The survey instrument used in this study was sent via email to respondents. There was no assurance that the intended participant was the person who responded.

3. Further, some respondents may have misunderstood survey items or interpreted items differently (Isaac & Michael, 1995).

4. Forced-choice questionnaires are vulnerable to the existence of a "response set, the tendency of an individual to continually respond in a particular way" (Gay & Airasian 2003, p. 134).

5. The self-report questionnaire asked respondents to honestly indicate their attitudes and values about multicultural issues. Self-report instruments that seek to measure some form of affect are vulnerable to respondents reporting their perceptions of a socially acceptable or desirable response as opposed to answering honestly to each item (Gay & Airasian 2003).
6. The survey developed, the MSCA-P2, was not shown to be vulnerable to social desirability effects. Further, responses to self-report instruments are vulnerable to completely unrelated factors such as the disruption of a major life incident or ill health present at the time the respondent completes the survey. Such a life event may impact the respondent's overall affect and bias answers either positively or negatively.

7. Mueller and Pope (2000) noted that the model of the MCSA-P only represented a one factor model instead of a three-factor model. The prompt statements did not differentiate between the overlapping domains of awareness, skills, and knowledge. King and Baxter-Magolda (2005) shared that the MCSA-P2 only assessed attitudes, whereas Miklitsch (2005) noted that the tool’s focus is ethnicity.

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are defined in the context in which they are used in this study:

- **Cultural Awareness**---the attitudes, beliefs, values, assumptions, and self-awareness necessary to serve students who are culturally different from oneself (Pope & Reynolds, 1997).

- **Cultural Competence**---the awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary to work effectively and ethically across cultural differences (Pope & Reynolds, 1997).

- **Cultural Knowledge**---the process of seeking and obtaining a sound educational foundation about diverse cultural and ethnic groups (Campinha-Bacote, 2002).

- **Cultural Skills**---abilities that allow for effective and meaningful interaction, such as seeking consultation as necessary with people who differ from them culturally (Pope & Reynolds, 1997).
• Development---the growth that occurs within the individual through learning. The individual becomes able to integrate and act on many different experiences and influences.

• Learning---gaining knowledge, understanding, or a skill through study, instruction, or experience (Bloland, Stamatakos, & Rogers, 1996).

• Student Affairs---those offices or units within a college or university setting primarily responsible for the out-of-class experience and learning of students (Franklin-Craft, 2010).

• Multicultural Experiences---may include, but are not limited to, experiences that broaden one’s worldview and enhance one’s level of multicultural competence over a lifetime. Within the work setting, experiences may involve supervision and discussion on/around multicultural topics. Furthermore, it incorporates personal interactions, exchanges, and events that inform individuals about other cultures such as reading literature/journals that are culturally oriented, self-teaching, and engaging with persons culturally different in community settings (Miklitsch, 2005).

• Multicultural Education---may include, but is not limited to, instruction or participation in educative efforts (including non-classroom experiences) aimed at increasing one’s multicultural competence. Education, in this context, is targeted at enhancing the knowledge and awareness of one’s culture and of cultures other than one's own. It may involve course work, workshops, supervision, in-service training, conference meetings, professional development, and intercultural exchanges that teach one about culturally diverse populations and concerns (Miklitsch, 2005).
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This chapter includes an overview of research pertinent to the cultural competency of housing and residential life (HRL) staff as well as traditional theories and literature in student development and cultural competency. The themes include (a) cultural competency, (b) variables that may affect cultural competency, (c) related research on cultural competency, and (d) professional standards, guidelines, and expectations.

Cultural Competency

Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2009) noted the need for more research on multicultural competence in the areas of measurement and predictors of competence. Pope and Reynolds (1997) described cultural competency “as the awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary to work effectively and ethically across cultural differences” (p. 270). As noted, awareness, knowledge, and skills are the core areas that a person will need to be proficient in to be culturally competent. These areas will need to be researched further as well as looking into ways to measure these constructs.

Pope and Reynolds (1997) formally introduced the concept of cultural competency to student affairs. Since then, several studies have used their original model of multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills as the framework for research (King & Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Mueller & Pope, 2003; Pope et al., 2009; Blanshan, 2007). Pope and Reynolds (1997) thought that a counseling psychology model used in many other fields, including health care, was appropriate for exploring cultural competency within student affairs. Pope and Reynolds (1997) contended that “Multicultural competency has become a requisite core competency area for ethical and efficacious practice” (p. 275). Pope et al. (2009) asserted that “without a foundation of multicultural awareness and knowledge, it is difficult to make culturally
sensitive and appropriate interventions” (p. 15). Further, it is understood that the development of multicultural competence is a lifelong learning commitment.

**Relevance of cultural competency within higher education.** King and Howard-Hamilton (2003) shared that “many institutions of higher education now strive to achieve goals related to diversity and multiculturalism, including student outcome goals such as being culturally competent in a diverse society and work force” (p. 120). Institutions are now looking to measure how students are growing in order to be contributors within this global society. To create culturally competent students, institutions are creating measureable goals to monitor their progress and growth. Nearly a decade later, Kerby (2012) reinforced those ideas adding that learning in a diverse environment encourages collaboration and that positive outcomes will include higher academic achievement and improved intergroup relations. Kerby noted that less than half of children born today are White and that by 2050 racial and ethnic statistics will show no racial or ethnic majority in the U.S.

HRL staff is charged with overseeing residents within the community; they are also charged with co-curricular activities. As students look to HRL staff for leadership, advising, mentoring, and support, HRL staff must be equipped with the skills and abilities to engage the students. This requires leadership that can relate to the diverse population and evolve with the student population. Offermann & Phan (2002) propose culturally intelligent leadership as a concept offered for leaders of a diverse group:

We suggest that culturally intelligent leadership with diverse followers requires a three-pronged approach: 1) understanding the impact of one’s own culture…, 2) understanding the other(s), and their comparable values, bias, and expectations; and
3) being able to diagnose and adaptively match appropriate leadership behaviors and expectations to specific cross-cultural situations. (p. 191)

As student affairs professionals, HRL staff have an obligation to the students to be the resource or support persons when called upon. This requires that they be able to connect and dialogue with the students who are in their community. These abilities and attributes become even more important as HRL staff work with the students as they develop and matriculate through the institution.

Student development theory is the foundation of the work that is done throughout student affairs and housing. The problem, that Brown (1994) noted, is higher education’s inability or unwillingness to change in order to utilize its full potential for helping students develop. Mastrodicasa (2004) believed that historically campus administrators did not have the knowledge and/or the desire to assist incoming minority students. A conscious manipulation of the environment that coincides with the changing characteristics of students is needed to facilitate the developmental growth of students.

Brown (1994) affirmed that professionals must not fail to align the purposes with meaningful and operational functions to meet the needs of a variety of students on a particular campus. This statement about the student affairs profession translates into a need for adaptation. For higher education to provide the best environments for student development, student affairs and HRL professionals must know and adapt to the students. With supportive environments, common themes correlate with skills needed to be culturally competent. Supporting, caring, and involvement with students are a few concepts that seem to suggest the need for staff to understand the nuances of diversity among the students. Boyer
idea of creating communities that are open to dialogue, celebrative of differences, and purposeful aligns with HRL staff responsibilities of building community.

Haggerty (2011) observed that “residence life professional staff facilitates programs and services in anticipation of, and in response to, the developmental and educational needs of the students they are working with” (p. 1). This engagement elevates the intellectual commitment of the students and encourages the students to think about their own values and future plans. When students use staff and faculty, their learning is enhanced because there is a team effort. The sharing of feelings and ideas with the staff and faculty helps to sharpen students’ thinking and deepens their understanding. Respecting diverse talents and ways of learning creates an environment in which students will more readily learn and grow.

Administrators need to not only realize but also develop a system that recognizes that students learn differently. Mastrodicasa (2004) contended that “student affairs professionals are an important part of creating the cultural interventions that bring people together into a community” (p. 28). Students must be afforded an opportunity to show their talents in ways that best work for them. No two students are the same, and no two students will perform in the same way under the same circumstances (Chickering & Gamson, 1991).

**Cultural competency for faculty and preparation curriculum.** Mueller and Pope (2005) predicted that no matter what training, education, or experiences faculty related to multicultural issues, faculty are going to be responsible for the multicultural education and training of future student affairs professionals. Brown (1994) pointed to possible purposes and potential responsibilities of development educators: (a) assessing behaviors a student has developed, (b) fostering student growth within the context of the student’s own cultural background and encouraging the appreciation of other cultural backgrounds, (c) integrating
concurrent experiences outside the classroom, and (d) modifying existing behaviors that block further growth of the student. These responsibilities play out as HRL staff advise students, build community, and adjudicate negative behavior. As these responsibilities are at the core of HRL work, Belch and Mueller (2003) understood that having professional staff with sufficient credentials, training, and experiences is critical for ensuring the success of residential programs.

Relating to graduate preparation programs, Mastrodicasa (2004) identified that “to create a multicultural perspective in student affairs curriculum, faculty must be educated about diverse student populations and environments” (p. 37). Further, due to the role that student affairs professionals have, it would be powerful to have multiculturalism permeating through graduate preparation programs (Pope et al., 2004). Faculty of the preparation programs would potentially be able to shape the culture of new student affairs professionals through their values, knowledge and experiential base. Pope and Mueller (2005) extended that thought to say that “faculty members who do not identify themselves as members of an oppressed group may need to engage in learning opportunities to deepen their understanding of people unlike themselves, as well as their understanding of oppression and their role in maintaining it” (p. 685). For some faculty to get the idea, they may need to do more to actively learn about people different from themselves and understand them.

Pope and Mueller (2005) advised that the issues of diversity must be a consistent and effective aspect of training for student affairs practitioners. Sleeter and Grant (2007) also advocated for a curriculum that represent conceptual experiences and contributions of diverse groups. As the field of student affairs matures, most staff in the field have attained master’s degrees, and many have degrees in student affairs programs. Many programs offer some
form of cultural training to prepare students to work with diverse populations (King & Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Pope & Mueller, 2005). Pope and Mueller (2005) further posited that although some programs integrate multicultural issues, data are limited regarding the extent of those issues in the curriculum for the preparation of student affairs personnel. Therefore, the graduates of these programs may or may not be required to take courses that support multicultural competence growth, or they may only be required to take a specific number of courses. King and Howard-Hamilton (2003) also noted that faculty and staff practitioners who teach in these programs might, themselves, be not fully versed in cultural competency.

Student affairs scholars believe that preparation programs are not doing a good job of preparing graduates to be effective in multicultural environments (Liang & Sadlacek, 2002; Pope & Reynolds, 1997). The culture of our institutions has changed and continues to change dramatically; the academic preparation for student affairs professionals must change as well. Savicki (2008) shared, “Accreditation agencies are requiring more substantial attention to intercultural competence and its definition and measurement” (p. 15). Educators frequently talk about diversity and multiculturalism to open students’ minds to accept people different from themselves. No specific or correct term has emerged to label this movement; it has been referenced in various ways depending on the viewpoint of those involved in the discussion. Just as any other professional collective, the subgroup of student affairs, housing, and residence life, must keep their skills and information fresh to be ready for the next student:

Faculty in preparation programs and staff members who supervise students’ experiential learning will be better able to educate students about multicultural issues if they can clearly articulate their expectations regarding the knowledge and skills that
students need to learn in this area and have a better understanding of the process leading to multi-cultural competence. (King & Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 131)

The lack of guidelines for what is highlighted within diversity or multicultural education limits the ability of educators to teach students. The faculty of different programs may not teach the same tenets of multicultural competence without consistent expectations. Based on their level of cultural competence and experiences, the lens through which cultural competence is taught varies. With the variance in understanding and teaching, future administrators will be at a disadvantage learning the knowledge and skills leading to cultural competence.

**Variables Related to Cultural Competence**

Pascarella (2006) discussed why cultural competence is important by sharing that “interactions with a diverse spectrum of people, ideas, values and perspectives that are different from one’s own and challenge one’s assumed views of the world have the potential for important developmental impacts during college” (p. 511). King and Howard-Hamilton (2003) noted that “it may be that self-knowledge (e.g., understanding and affirming one’s own racial identity) is a precursor to understanding the cultural practices and identities of others” (p. 131). Understanding one’s own racial identity is important as a person seeks to understand the identity of others. Understanding one’s self is important in many aspect of learning about people. As the learner understands more about others, the knowledge builds on their own understanding of them self. This building up of knowledge of self and others creates the building blocks of cultural understanding.

The awareness, skills, knowledge (AKS) model shows the elements of cultural competence to which an HRL staff member would aspire. Cooper, He, and Levin (2011)
offered several attributes of a culturally competent educator that support the theoretical framework:

(1) Culturally responsive educators are not color-blind. (2) Culturally responsive educators attempt to negotiate the cultural conflict that their positions of power often represent. (3) Culturally responsive educators reject the myth of meritocracy. (4) Culturally responsive educators reject deficit-based thinking. (p. 158-159)

More students are in a better place to be successful when the responsibilities of HRL staff are coupled with cultural competency. The areas that make a person culturally competent are the factors involved in the relationship of culturally competent HRL staff, students, and the community. The value of citizenship, value of service, and value of differences are important to the building of community. HRL staff must examine their own background and understand any cultural impositions that they may place on people. They must also strive to increase their knowledge and understanding of others and their backgrounds. Some of the specific factors to inform and understand these relationships are race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, religion, disabilities, and sexual orientation. This list is not exhaustive and can go on or change based on the focus of research efforts. These factors, supply information that must be taken into consideration when communicating and building relationships with people. It is important that persons are not judged on their appearance or that assumptions are not made on how a person speaks. HRL staff will have information about the geographic origins of students and will need to be aware of any bias that they may have about an area, region, or country.
Cultural Competency of HRL Staff

The roles of student affairs professionals and HRL staff specifically often include the responsibilities for co-curricular activities, academic support, and building a vibrant campus community. Miller (1996) elucidated the need for student affairs professionals to expand their roles to create educational environments outside of the classroom. In theory, student affairs professionals have moved from student development being extracurricular to co-curricular (Shaffer, 2009). In theory, student affairs is not separate from academia, but functions collaboratively to help the student. In a sense, student affairs professionals should be considered student development educators. In this contextual role, student affairs professionals would constantly reexamine the nature of student development within the educational and societal communities at universities. Taub (1998) argued, “Building community on campus has long been central to the work of student affairs professionals” (p. 415).

Taub (1998) highlighted the role of student affairs professionals in building campus community within the residence halls through their work with natural groups. Some of the groups discussed by the author were “residence halls, clubs and organizations, classes, and service learning” (p. 411). The author shared two reasons why it is important for student affairs professionals to be culturally competent leaders:

In learning to create community and to live in a state of community on our diverse campuses of today, students learn that it is possible to live in community with others who may be very different from themselves. Further, Learning the meaning and value of citizenship, the role of service, and the experience of community provides today’s
college students with the foundation for building community in the multicultural and
globally interdependent society of which they will be citizens and leaders. (p. 425)

The usual structure of professional positions in the residence life unit are resident
assistants, hall directors, area coordinators, and a director (Blimling, 2003). In some cases,
residence life units may also have graduate assistants on staff and potentially assistant or
associate directors who report to the director of housing and residence life. For purposes of
this research, the HRL staff refers to the non-student, professional staff members; hall
directors, area coordinators, assistant directors, associate directors, and directors are all
within the scope of this research. The hall director, sometimes called a resident director, is
usually a position for a person who lives in the residence hall or on the campus close to the
area for which they are responsible.

The work that often falls under the direction of residence life staff would be, and
would not be limited to, staff development, student counseling, educational programming,
enforcement of institutional policies, academic advising, supervision, and facilities
management (Blimling, 2003; Franklin-Craft, 2010). Depending on the size of the system,
additional duties that may be shouldered by residence life staff include staff selection, staff
training, crisis intervention, student counseling, and security personnel. Shaffer (2009) noted
that it is commonplace for residence life staff to function outside the residence halls. Expanded roles would cast student affairs professionals into the worlds of both formal and
informal education. Roles that HRL staff sometimes have outside of housing such as class
instructors and campus conduct officers were noted by Shaffer (2009) and Blimling (2003).

Shaffer (2009) asserted that residence hall staff are student affairs professionals and
educators who spend most of their professional and personal hours living among students;
they develop important relationships, provide academic intervention, and know the students better than most other campus entities, thus becoming legitimate partners with others in the university in the delivery of learning and personal support.

There is no determination for the best ways to prepare HRL staff to work with culturally diverse students. There also is no consistent framework or structure for developing HRL staff in the area of cultural competency. In the fields of counseling, social work, and health care, however, a significant amount of research relates to cultural competence (Campinha-Bacote, 2002). Cultural competency and theory, as it relates to higher education and student affairs, was first presented by Pope and Reynolds (1997). The literature on cultural competency within student affairs continues to be built upon the earlier studies because very little research is extant overall, and even less relating to HRL specifically, as posited by Sawyer (2012) and Blanshan (2007).

Figure 2 shows the way that relationships and activities are important in cultural competency. Students bring demographic and cultural information that inform who they are. HRL staff need to be open-minded and observant of each student and their circumstances to help them acclimate to the institution and the community. HRL staff are responsible for building community while navigating, understanding, and celebrating differences. The goal of HRL staff is to ensure that students feel included, contribute to the community, and are retained through graduation. Challenges to positive outcomes may include extreme circumstances or barriers to the relationship between the student and HRL staff. Students may choose not to talk or connect with staff, and unforeseen issues at home may arise for a student.
Figure 2. Cultural map of HRL staff relationships and student activities.
Related Research on Cultural Competency

Cultural competency theory provided a basis for the conceptual framework of this study. Student development theory offered additional conceptual support to this important area of research for student affairs professionals. In addition to the work of Pope and Reynolds (1997) regarding cultural competency for student affairs, significant findings of related studies have contributed to the discussion.

Since the introduction of the AKS model to student affairs, studies conducted by King and Howard-Hamilton (2003), Mastrodisaca (2004), Pope and Mueller (2005), and Blanshan (2007) have utilized the model as a conceptual framework within student affairs work.

King and Howard-Hamilton (2003) examined multicultural competency level of three groups: college student personnel program students (CSP), student affairs staff, and diversity educators. Overall, a total of 131 students, staff, and diversity educators from four campuses completed assessments regarding multicultural competence using the Multicultural Competency Questionnaire (MCQ). Using a “5-point scale, from 1 (early) to 5 (advanced) levels to indicate their own multicultural knowledge, skills, awareness, and an overall assessment” (p. 125). The demographic variables examined in this study were gender, racial/ethnic background, and degrees earned. Some of the significant findings were (a) students of color scored higher than White students and staff members; (b) participants of color reported much higher frequency of intercultural contact, both within and outside the collegiate setting; and (c) staff and students scored within .01 of each other on overall multicultural competence and diversity educators scored higher than all groups.

The study presented by Mastrodisaca (2004) assessed the impact of a diversity course in student affairs graduate programs by examining the level of multicultural competence of
The study also examined the relationship between multicultural competence, race, and years of experience in surveys of 211 student affairs professionals from the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). Some significant findings included the following:

- Members who took a diversity course had a higher score.
- The majority of respondents had not taken a course and this was attributed to the age and years of experience.
- People of color and those of different sexual orientations are more cognizant of multicultural issues.
- People of color and those of a different sexual orientation scored higher than Whites and heterosexuals.
- The years of experience had a slight significant correlation with cultural competence.

Mueller and Pope (2005) examined the state of multicultural competence in faculty, staff, and the curriculum in student affairs programs. The authors looked at faculty and staff teaching in these programs and the amount of training and multicultural education they had received. They also looked into the level of multicultural competence among the participants. The study included 147 student affairs preparation program faculty at 81 institutions. The demographic variables examined in this study were age, gender, race, and identification with a socially marginalized group (e.g., LGBT). The significant findings included the following: (a) there was no relationship between age and multicultural competence, (b) female faculty scored higher than male faculty, and (c) faculty of color scored higher than White faculty.
The experience variables examined in this study centered on training, development experiences, and experience with multicultural interventions. The significant findings were (a) that there was no significant relationship between multicultural competence and the amount of multicultural education and training provided in their graduate preparation programs, (b) there was a significant relationship between multicultural competence and teaching on multicultural issues, and (c) current engagement with multicultural issues are strongly related to multicultural competence.

Blanshan’s (2007) descriptive study of multicultural awareness of hall directors spoke directly to the work of HRL staff. The study utilized the model of multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills posed by Pope and Reynolds (1997). The study was conducted in the California system of colleges and universities, where the study was aligned with the research being presented on the perceptions of HRL staff on multicultural competency. This study also recognized the need for practitioners within HRL to be culturally competent to service the changing demographics of students.

The research of Holcomb-McCoy (2005) examined the perceived multicultural counseling competence of 209 professional school counselors. The study was focused on school counselors’ perceptions of their own multicultural counseling competence. Five factors were examined in the research: multicultural knowledge, multicultural awareness, multicultural terminology, knowledge of racial identity development theories, and multicultural skills; thus, the study was aligned with the AKS model of multicultural competence (i.e., awareness, knowledge, skills) that is used for this current research. The Holcomb-McCoy study offered implications for future research related to multicultural competence in “a) cultural experiences (e.g., experiences in diverse schools, living in another
country), b) diversity training beyond coursework in a graduate program, c) ethnicity, and d) adherence to stereotypical beliefs about groups of people” (p. 420). This research offers implications for training, graduate programs, and experiential learning opportunities for faculty and student affairs professionals. These areas noted would contribute to the strengthening of professional standards and consistency within instructional programs.

Chao and Nath (2011) conducted research with college counselors. The study involved 313 participants between ages of 20 and 68, with 269 females and 44 males. The research examined the role of ethnic identity, gender, and training in the counselors’ multicultural counseling competence. This research also utilized the framework of the AKS model as it relates to multicultural competency. Some of the significant findings included (a) a strong link between multicultural competence and the level of ethnic identity and gender role development; (b) a positive relationship between multicultural training and awareness, skills, and knowledge; and (c) training is also directly related to multicultural competency. This finding reaffirmed that multicultural training needs to continue throughout the professional tenure and that attending such training does have an impact on multicultural competency.

Other results in the Chao and Nath (2011) study indicated that college counselors with higher levels of ethnic identity awareness and higher levels of gender roles awareness were more likely to report increased involvement in multicultural training. The authors believed that “to meet the many challenges of increased diversity on campus, college counselors urgently need multicultural competencies to effectively counsel diverse clients” (p. 62). The multicultural competencies are developed through multicultural training. This
research reported an increased level of multicultural competence compared to those who did not attend trainings.

**Professional Standards of Cultural Competency**

As a profession, higher education and student affairs does not have a long formal history of standards for practice. Little research on HRL staff in particular is extant. This is partly due to the profession being young compared to other professions such as teaching, accounting, or medicine. Standards for practice and responsibilities in student affairs began to form as early as the 1930s and continue to evolve to this day, as more information is attained about the student learning and the work being performed by student affairs professionals. A review of the literature exploring the tenets of diversity work and cultural competency revealed that those topics are part of the mission and vision of several organizations that guide the field today.

As the HRL profession grew, organizations were formed to offer structure and guidance to align HRL functions with the student affairs profession and university functions. The Association of College and University Housing Officers International (ACUHO-I) serves as the most prominent resource for housing and residence life work. ACUHO-I aligns its concepts and competencies with the Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education (NASPA) and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) competency areas for student affairs professionals (Cawthon & Schreiber, 2012). ACUHO-I establishes standards for HRL work and highlights the commitment to diversity. Six principles set the course for HRL practice that embraces the diverse demographics of college and university campuses.

1. Understand the value of diversity, the integrity of equity, and the benefit of inclusive practice.
2. Identify the elements of association members’ work that can be leveraged to make a difference.

3. Model inclusive practice in all of the associations work.

4. Connect cultural competence to performance outcomes.

5. Build the association’s capacity to assist its organizational members by offering relevant education and professional development.

6. Assess progress toward achieving goals for diversity. (Von Stange, 2014)

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) offers an overarching guide for all of higher education. CAS “was founded as a profession-wide entity to establish standards to guide practice by student affairs, student development, and student support service providers employed by institutions of higher learning” (Miller, 2001, p. 11). First published in 1986, CAS moved forward to set standards that represent the “best practices that any college or university program of quality can achieve” (p. 3). For purposes of this research, the researcher highlighted the areas that speak to cultural competency and the work of the HRL staff.

Prior to outlining the professional standards, CAS highlighted guiding principles used in addressing diversity and multiculturalism. Miller (2001) noted two principles that must be embedded throughout the standards. The first principle stated that “recognizing the ubiquitous nature of human diversity, institutions are committed to eliminating barriers that impede student learning and development, attending especially to establishing and maintaining diverse human relationships essential to survival in a global society” (p. 12). The second principle noted, “Justice and respect for differences bond individuals to community; and thus, education for multicultural awareness and positive regard for differences is
essential for the development of a health engendering society” (p. 12). These principles permeate through all of the standards and guidelines stated for the functional areas of higher education. The author further delineated the specific standards for practice in the area of diversity for HRL staff: “Within the context of the institution’s unique mission, multi-dimensional diversity enriches the community and enhances the collegiate experience for all; therefore, the housing program must nurture environments where similarities and differences among people are recognized and honored” (p. 147). The next standard stated that “the housing and residential life program must promote cultural education experiences that are characterized by open and continuous communication, that deepen understanding of one’s own culture and heritage, and that respect and educate about similarities, differences and histories of cultures” (p. 147). Finally, CAS shared that “housing programs and services must address the characteristics and needs of a diverse population when establishing and implementing policies and procedures” (p. 147). These standards set forth by CAS dictated that a standard of practice for HRL staff is to nurture, promote, and address changes in diversity within the context of the institution’s mission. The researcher understands that these standards do not convey the day-to-day responsibilities of HRL staff, but that these standards provide a backdrop for the rationale for culturally competent HRL staff within the context of their work.

The Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) and the College Student Educators International (ACPA) came together to create competency areas for student affairs. This publication delineates professional competencies and standards for functional areas in the field as well. Both organizations are members of CAS. The work from ACPA and NASPA will help to inform the next revision of CAS standards; thus, the
organizations work together to provide solid foundations for the work. The ACPA and NASPA publication *Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Practitioners* shares definitions for each functional area “followed by a listing of knowledge, skills, and attitudes practitioners are expected to demonstrate” (Bresciani et al., 2010). It also divides the information into levels to show basic through advanced abilities. This allows practitioners the opportunity to gage their skill levels against the professional standards. The competency area of equity, diversity, and inclusion will help to inform this research:

The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) competency area includes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to create learning environments that are enriched with diverse views and people. It is also designed to create an institutional ethos that accepts and celebrates differences among people helping to free them of any misconceptions and prejudices. (p. 10)

This competency statement by ACPA and NASPA sets a base for what culturally competent student affairs administrators should strive to attain. By creating a learning environment that accepts and celebrates differences, it conveys the product of culturally competent staff working with students.

This competency area and information contribute to the tenets of the conceptual framework of this research. Some of the basic abilities that a practitioner should employ include the following:

- Identify the contributions of similar and diverse people within and to the institutional environment;
- Integrate cultural knowledge with specific and relevant diversity issues on campus;
• Assess and address one’s own awareness of EDI, and articulate one’s own differences and similarities with others;

• Demonstrate personal skills associated with EDI by participating in activities that challenge one’s beliefs;

• Facilitate dialogue effectively among disparate audiences;

• Interact with diverse individuals and implement programs, services, and activities that reflect an understanding and appreciation of cultural and human differences;

• Recognize the intersectionality of diverse identities possessed by an individual;

• Recognize social systems and their influence on people of diverse backgrounds;

• Design culturally relevant and inclusive programs, services, policies, and practices;

• Demonstrate fair treatment to all individuals and change aspects of the environment that denote fair treatment; and

• Analyze the interconnectedness of societies worldwide and how these global perspectives affect institutional learning. (Bresciani et al., 2010, p. 10).

These skills speak directly to the work of HRL staff and enumerate only some of the basic skills and traits of a culturally competent HRL staff person. They align to the actual daily tasks such as programming, communication, creating community, advising, training, monitoring conduct, and being a resource for students. These tasks are what HRL leaders are being asked to do with our students. The many tasks of HRL staff will require that “leaders
are and will be, increasingly called upon to be the champions of diversity, the models of skillful cross cultural behavior, and the mediators of cross-cultural conflict” (Riggio, Murphy, & Pirozzolo, 2002, p. 189). Being an example and avatar of cross-cultural behavior will be important as HRL staff ask students to step out of their personal comfort zones to engage in cultural dialogue and activities.

Summary

Cultural competency as a skill set has yet to be clearly and consistently defined within student affairs and the work of HRL staff. As the landscape of higher education and HRL have changed with the student population, so has the need for culturally competent educators. Much of the theory that drives cultural competency development has come from several other professional fields, but has to be fully realized in higher education. “Interest in Cultural Competency in the workplace seems to have been triggered by US federal governmental regulations regarding minority populations, particularly in relation to public health and education” (Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006, p. 526). Employers may consider this notion of cultural competence a needed life skill. As noted by Sawyer (2012), there is not much research on cultural competency as it relates specifically to housing and residence life staff. To overcome the lack of information, the researcher builds on what is known in housing and residence life, and student affairs and supplements it with data from other fields such as health care, teaching, and business, which have research to support the concepts of cultural competency and offer a framework for further study. Several professional fields understand the need to have culturally competent staff.

Although higher education has recognized the need to support a diverse demographic student population, little has been done to train faculty and staff on multicultural issues.
Mueller and Pope (2005) noted limited research in the exploration of multicultural issues in curriculum and the multicultural competence of faculty and staff and further stated that the exploration of multicultural issues in student affairs preparation programs is one of the developing areas of research in the field. This research examined several variables and their relationships to cultural competency to contribute to the current literature. Important themes found throughout the review of literature related to multicultural competency included the following.

**Identity/ethnicity.** Much of the noted research identified ethnicity and identity as a variable that has significant relationships to multicultural competency (Chao & Nath, 2011). King and Howard-Hamilton (2003), Mastrodicasa (2004), and Pope and Mueller (2005) reported significant findings that people of color scored higher than their Caucasian counterparts. They further stated that “there is also the assumption that these individuals have a greater investment and skill in these issues” (p. 686). King and Howard-Hamilton (2003) posited that “even though students of color are understandably uncomfortable at being cast in the role of ‘diversity experts’ on college campuses, these data suggested that they do have greater expertise in this area, perhaps because they draw from a broader range of multicultural experiences” (p. 130). This poses a significant challenge to HRL professionals to be even more prepared to be able to service a population that may be more versed in multicultural competency.

**Gender.** Throughout the research, there was consistency with the significance of gender and its positive relationship with cultural competency (Chao & Nath, 2011; Franklin-Craft, 2010; Miklitsch, 2005). Pope and Mueller (2005) also found a significant relationship between female gender and increased cultural competency.
Exposure to cultural experiences and training. People who are exposed to multicultural issues or have experienced other cultures through travel, language, or immersion (Franklin-Craft, 2010) would perceive themselves to be more culturally competent than those who have not. This exposure may occur through different means such as study abroad, working abroad, cultural immersion, and learning different languages. Franklin-Craft (2010) suggested that activities such as those listed influence the development of awareness, knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Mueller and Pope (2005) posited that “there is support for the notion that those individuals with teaching, research, administration, and training experience with multicultural issues have more well-developed multicultural competence than those without these experiences” (p. 687). The research conducted by Chao and Nath (2011) also supported the thought that there is a significant relationship between recent experiences with training and development on multicultural issues and multicultural competency. Mueller and Pope (2005) posited that “whether practitioner, scholar, or teacher, it appears that multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills are enhanced when diversity issues are a significant aspect of one’s duties or interests” (p. 686). A person’s cultural competence appears to be at a higher level when diversity issues have touched them personally or because of what they do professionally.

Years of experience. Mastrodicasa (2004) and King and Howard-Hamilton (2003) noted a significant relationship between years of experience and cultural competency. Thus, in terms of professional status, the expectation is that more years of experience will relate to a higher professional status and a higher perceived level of cultural competence. Professionals will gain more experience over time, as they encounter more people from
various backgrounds (Mastrodicasa, 2004; Franklin-Craft, 2010), and this experience has been shown to have a positive relationship to the levels of multicultural competency.

**Cultural experience, contact, and engagement.** The final theme highlighted in the review of literature was that people exposed to different experiences through engagement, immersion, or international travel may have higher levels of cultural competency (Franklin-Craft, 2010; King & Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Holcomb-McCoy, 2005). Research also demonstrated that individuals for whom multicultural issues are made particularly salient through work or personal interest have higher levels of competency (Franklin-Craft, 2010). This inherently would mean that these interests would create greater opportunities for exposure.

Pope and Mueller (2001) found that greater exposure to multicultural issues was highly related to multicultural competence. The ability to adapt to varied cultural contexts is critically important because emotional cues are symbolically constructed and transmitted within a culture as noted by Franklin-Craft (2010). The implication is that engagement in ongoing learning and dialogue about difference and or with individuals different than one's self influences the development of multicultural understanding, knowledge, skills and abilities.
Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of housing and residence life (HRL) staff as they relate to cultural competency. Additionally, several demographic characteristics were examined to explore their relationship to the HRL staff’s perceived level of cultural competence. The proposed methods employed and details of the research design, participants, instruments, and data processes are included in this chapter.

Research Design

A quantitative approach explored the perceptions of HRL staff regarding cultural competency. The researcher chose to utilize an online survey within this design to carry out the research. “Survey research designs are procedures in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people in order to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population” (Creswell, 2005, p. 354). The researchers’ interest in a survey research design is twofold: (a) to examine the perceptions of cultural competency amongst HRL staff and (b) to examine the individual characteristics of HRL staff members and their relationship to the perceived level of cultural competence in HRL staff. Use of an online survey may expedite the return of information from the participants.

Creswell (2014) identified several indicators that dictated use of a quantitative approach. First, the quantitative approach is best for testing objective theories by examining the relationships among variables, where the variables are measured using statistical data. Second, the quantitative approach is more effective when the research is nonexperimental and correlational statistics will be used to describe and measure the relationship between two or more variables. Third, data collected by use of a survey is best analyzed by quantitative
methods when numeric descriptions of opinions of a sample of a population are used to generalize information learned. Finally, the quantitative approach to research looks to create an understanding of the best predictors of outcomes as well as the identification of factors that influence an outcome.

**Participants, Settings, and Sample**

Approval of the Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Review Committee (HSRC) was sought to conduct an online survey through the Association of College and University Housing Officers–International (ACUHO-I); (see Appendix A). Once obtained, the approval letter from the UHSRC (See Appendix B) was sent to ACUHO-I with a request to do research with the members of their organization and to request their support and participation in the study (see Appendix C). ACUHO-I was chosen as the conduit for this research due to the researcher's familiarity with ACUHO-I resources and access to HRL staff.

An ideal attribute of this organization is their commitment to advancing academic scholarship within the field of HRL. The intent of ACUHO-I to integrate academic learning and community living was shown in print materials that described the residence hall as a residential learning community “organized to provide formal and/or informal educational opportunities such as courses, seminars, tutorials, or presentations” (n. p.).

The researcher asked ACUHO-I to perform a sort function of the membership to select participants in the Great Lakes Association of College and University Housing Officers (GLACUHO) region of ACUHO-I. The researcher’s target population for this study was GLACUHO institution members in good standing with ACUHO-I at the time of the study. More specifically, the sample included professional employees of these institutions who work within the HRL department and are members of GLACUHO. The GLACUHO
region members were chosen because of the size of the region, the number of institutions in the region, and the researchers’ familiarity with many institutions within the region. Once the membership list was determined, ACUHO-I sent invitation emails directly to the selected group with a link to the online survey. The invitation letter included verbiage that informed the members that participation in the study was voluntary, anonymous, and approved by the UHSRC and ACUHO-I.

The purpose of this study was to understand HRL staffs’ perceptions about their ability to support diverse students at institutions of higher education. Including participants from all professional levels of the HRL staff, from entry level, middle management, and senior level provided data from the broadest array of experience and the work that is being done. The aim of this study was not only to study the perceptions of professional levels of staff in comparison to each other, but also to determine whether a comparison of professional levels warrants further research. The aggregate information regarding the perceptions of cultural competency and possible relationships with various demographics was an initial goal. It was not necessary to limit this study to smaller groups within the GLACUHO region because the proposed population provided appropriate data to meet the purpose of the study.

The general population of names from GLACUHO shared by ACUHO-I provided an accessible population from which the researcher selected a representative sample. Graziano and Raulin (2010) shared that a representative sample “adequately reflects population characteristics,” important if the researcher “wants to generalize their findings” (p. 183). For this research, the ACUHO-I national office confirmed that the accessible population was 1,599 members. Statistically, the findings of the sample may be represented in the same proportions in the broader target populations.
From the representative sample, a random selected group equal to half of the members were chosen to participate in an online survey: “Random sampling from a population involves drawing the samples so that (1) every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected, and (2) the selections do not affect each other, but instead are independent” (Graziano & Raulin, 2010, p. 184). This sampling method supported the research design based on the total population and the needs for ensuring reliability.

The survey received by each participant via email included a cover letter that provided the following key components in educational research: the purpose and importance of the survey, accurate disclosure, anonymity and confidentiality, and protection (Mertler & Charles, 2008). The cover letter included a web link to a survey where each member could complete the survey anonymously. Creswell (2005) recommended a follow-up with two reminder notices to non-respondents after distribution of a questionnaire.

**Instrumentation**

With permission of the authors, the data for this research were collected using the Multicultural Competence for Student Affairs Preliminary 2 scale (MCSA-P2) instrument (see Appendix D). The survey was based on the concepts created by Pope and Reynolds (1997) and is an adaptation of the Multicultural Competence for Student Affairs Preliminary scale (MCSA-P). The MCSA-P2 form provided questions to evaluate each of the areas of awareness, knowledge, and skills. The 34-item instrument was designed to measure multicultural competence in student affairs practice; respondents used a 7-point Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from 1 (not at all accurate) to 7 (very accurate). MCSA-P2 shows a satisfactory level of internal consistency with an alpha coefficient of .91 (Pope & Mueller, 2005, p. 681). The MCSA-P2 was designed to assess levels of multicultural
competence of student affairs professionals. This tool aligns with the tenets of cultural competence that have been outlined within the conceptual framework of this research. It quantifies the tripartite set of the AKS model—awareness, knowledge, and skills (Pope & Reynolds, 1997; Pope & Mueller, 2001; Pope et al., 2004).

Participants were asked to complete the MCSA-P2 survey online through the Survey Monkey program, which was administered and licensed through the Grand Valley State University Statistical Consulting Center. Providing the tool online was the most convenient way to attain information and save costs for the researcher. This tool was utilized to acquire the data on the perceptions of cultural competency by HRL staff. The survey utilized the MCSA-P2 questions to distinguish whether a member feels culturally competent or not culturally competent as well as to assess their level of ability in the areas of awareness, knowledge, skills, and desire to be culturally competent.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The researcher offered incentives for participants to take the survey in order to reach the desired number of participants for this study (see Appendices E and F). The researcher offered a $25 visa/Master card gift card to eight randomly selected participants who completed the survey. Initially, the survey was available for 6 weeks with no more than two reminders to non-respondents to complete the survey. This length of time was specifically due to the culture of work within HRL. The survey was released during the summer of 2016. Traditionally, this time of year is when the work of HRL staff is slower. Many HRL staff take time away from work, shift responsibilities, or transition to new positions. The researcher believed that this time frame would allow HRL staff the time and opportunity to engage the study.
The HRL work culture posed two challenges for acquiring responses to the survey. The first challenge was that many staff may not have been connected to work emails during the time of the survey launch due to the reasons mentioned. The second was that the ACUHO-I listserv of GLACUHO members may not have been the most accurate or were outdated due to professional transitions and the fluid nature of staff moving around within or out of the HRL field. After the initial 6 week time frame, the researcher had not received a significant number of responses; thus, the researcher had to revisit the plan for the survey dissemination and participant engagement.

Several additional steps were taken to increase the respondent rate for the study. The first step involved sending the survey to the remaining half of the representative sample, with hope that, despite the challenges, the survey would reach as many people as possible and potentially get to the remaining HRL staff that were still active with GLACUHO and ACUHO-I. Further, the researcher creating awareness of the research through strategic interactions with GLACUHO member institutions, explaining the research and asking members to consider completing the survey online. The outreach extended to other individual HRL directors within the region of GLACUHO-I, HRL department leadership at state colleges and universities of Michigan, and attendance at several meetings throughout the State of Michigan to encounter HRL department leadership. The leadership at these institutions then shared the information with colleagues and staff to acquire more respondents.

In the final step, the researcher shared the research on several social media professional listservs groups related to the HRL professional. Throughout these additional steps, the researcher emphasized the importance of this research and the lack of information
within the GLACUHO region. The need to contribute for the betterment of practice within the region and nationally was also highlighted with the hopes that it encouraged professionals to take the survey.

At the close of the data collection period, the researcher reviewed and entered all survey responses into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 18.0 (SPSS) for data analysis. Prior to any statistical analysis of the survey responses, a power analysis determined the level of participation needed to highlight any relationships between the independent and dependent variables with a level of confidence of 95%. This test provided the minimum number of 166 participants required to reasonably account for biases out of the total sample size (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007).

Because this research explores several factors underlying multicultural competency, the researcher calculated the Cronbach’s alpha or internal consistency reliability coefficients for the instrument, which determined whether the independent variables affected the dimensions (awareness, skills, knowledge) of cultural competency.

To determine what demographic factors affected the total multicultural competency score using multiple linear regression assuming a medium effect size, alpha = .05 and power = .80, the desired sample size was 166, as shown in Figure 3. Despite the researcher’s repeated attempts to solicit participants from the target population, 97 responded. Of those, only 80 submissions were included in the study. The procedures and solutions utilized to arrive at the final number of participants will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Ten predictors had a total of 23 levels: The number of levels corresponded to the number of choices minus one because one of the choices becomes the baseline and a dummy
variable in the multiple linear regression model will not be made. Explanations of the levels are as follows:

- How many languages do you speak: 1,2,3+ = 2 levels
- How many times have you studied abroad: 0,1,2,3+ = 3 levels
- What is your professional status: Entry, Middle, Senior Management/Director = 2 levels
- Have you gained knowledge or experience with cultural competencies in the following areas: Yes/No = 1 level
- What ethnic or racial groups outside of your own do you socialize with:
  African American, Caucasian, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islanders = 3 levels
- How often have you engaged in a formal development activity in the last 2 years to enhance ….: 0,1-2,3-5,6 or more = 3 levels
- What is your gender: Male, Female, Transgender = 2 levels
- What is your age: = 1 level
- What is your ethnicity: White/Anglo, Black/African-American, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native = 4 levels
- Type of institution where employed? Community college or tech. school, 4 yr. public, 4 yr. private = 2 levels
Figure 3. F tests—Linear Multiple Regression.

The first step of analyzing the participant responses included compiling descriptive statistics of the GLACUHO members who responded to the survey. Descriptive statistics (i.e., central tendency, variability, and relative standing) were used to summarize overall trends or tendencies in the data (Creswell, 2005). According to Mertler and Charles (2008), descriptive statistics involve and are associated with “numerical indices that help to clarify data from samples” (p. 157). Descriptive statistics, applied to data gathered to answer Research Question 1 about the extent to which study respondents perceived themselves to be culturally competent, are displayed in the text and in figures and tables. Data collected for Research Questions 2 and 4 were analyzed with the general linear model (GLM) and, specifically, a regression analysis to determine correlation of participants’ individual characteristics and perceptions of cultural competency. The data for Research Question 3 about how HRL staff has gained knowledge or experience with cultural-competency were analyzed by using descriptive statistics, and chi-square tests.

Chi-square tests were also run to test whether a significant relationship existed between independent and dependent variables (Nardi, 2006). More specifically, chi-square...
tests “measure how independent your two variables are and asks whether what you found (observed) is significantly different from what you would have expected to get by chance alone” (p. 157). The researcher chose the aforementioned methods to help identify any relationships between the dependent and independent variables. This information is important, as the researcher discusses factors that influence cultural competence as well as those that do not influence cultural competence.

Six categorical variables in the research included gender, age, ethnicity, professional status, cultural experience, and formal development. The dependent variable for this research is the score of cultural competency. Knowledge about how HRL staff perceives cultural competency and the relationship of those perceptions to the variables outlined was shaped through the “data, evidence, and rational considerations” (Creswell, 2005, p. 7) provided through the analysis of the survey data.

**Explanation of Variables**

According to Nardi, (2006) independent variables are used to explain or predict the variation in the dependent variable. In the proposed study, the outcome variables or dependent variables are the perceptions of cultural competency. The major independent variables used in the study to predict the outcome variables (Nardi, 2006) are demographic characteristics: gender, age, ethnicity, professional status (i.e., entry, middle management, and senior management), international experience (i.e., multiple languages and study abroad), and formal development (i.e., training, research, conferences).

Based on previous research that utilized the MCSA-P2 survey tool, these characteristics had significant implications for the findings. Gender was shown to have a significant relationship to cultural competency, according to Pope and Mueller (2005). Age and professional status expressed in terms of experience appeared to also have a significant
relationship with cultural competency. Mastrodicasa (2004) noted that student affairs professionals gain experience over time because they come in contact with more people from various backgrounds, and this has shown to be related to the levels of multicultural competency. Ethnicity showed a significant relationship with cultural competency in the research of Pope-Davis and Ottavi (1994) and King and Howard-Hamilton (2003). International experience showed a significant relationship with cultural competency as cited by King and Howard-Hamilton (2003) and that participants of color reported higher frequency of intercultural contact in and out of college settings. Mueller and Pope (2001) also found that greater exposure to multicultural issues was highly related to multicultural competence.

**Validity and Reliability**

Validity and reliability have implications for the value of the research and the quality of the conclusions drawn from the research. Without significant steps to show validity and reliability, research could become subjective and meaningless. Consideration for validity and reliability was evident in the research design and throughout the process of data collection.

**Validity.** Accuracy, authenticity, and trustworthiness are terms associated with validity, which is concerned with whether the tests applied to the data measure what was intended. In a survey, face validity may be assumed if the questions appear to produce the information sought.

Internal validity, according to Anfara, Brown, and Mangoine (2004), “is concerned with how trustworthy the conclusions are that are drawn from the data and the match of these conclusions with reality” (p. 33). It is important to document each step in the research procedure.
As noted in Anfara, Brown, and Mangoine (2004), “The worth of any research endeavor is assessed by a variety of audiences—peers, editorial review boards, publishers, grant reviewers, and dissertation committees” (p. 28). A dissertation committee has monitored this research and reviewed information therein. Findings of this research will be presented at the ACUHO-I and GLACUHO professional conferences.

In this study, validity is enhanced by the value of the MCSA-P2 instrument, which was designed to assess levels of multicultural competence of student affairs professionals and has shown a satisfactory level of internal consistency with an alpha coefficient of .91 (Pope & Mueller, 2005, p. 681). This tool is aligned with the tenets of cultural competence that has been outlined within the conceptual framework of this research (Pope & Reynolds, 1997; Pope & Mueller, 2001; Pope et al., 2004).

According to Anfara, Brown, and Mangoine (2004), “external validity refers to how well conclusions can be generalized to a larger population” (p. 33). Conclusions derived from this research has been compared to previous conclusions drawn from similar research utilizing the MCSA-P2 tool. Conclusions drawn from the findings of this research included similarities and contradictions of the research based on what is reality for the participants. Further, the findings of the proposed study could acquire a formative validity if applied to other forms of outcomes assessment as part of future studies.

**Reliability.** Consistency is the central concept in addressing the reliability of research and whether the findings are generalizable beyond the present study. Cronbach’s alpha or internal consistency reliability coefficients were conducted for the survey instrument used in this research, which determined if the independent variables affected the dimensions (awareness, skills, knowledge) of cultural competency. This research may be conducted with...
other populations based on the information examined and delineated. Careful consideration of research approach, design, sample selection, and documentation appropriate statistical tests applied to the data in the present study will bolster confidence that studies following the same procedures could expect similar results.
Chapter 4: Findings

This study comprised three goals: (a) to understand perceptions of housing and residential life (HRL) staff about their ability to support diverse students, (b) to provide a basis to compare the level of cultural competence of HRL staff across six demographic variables, and C) to summarize the relationships that may support or diminish cultural competency among HRL staff. In addition to documenting perceptions of HRL staff, this research examined the awareness, skills, knowledge, and experience of study participants as they related to their levels of cultural competency.

The variables in this study are gender, age, ethnicity, professional status, cultural experience, and formal development. The variable of cultural experience was measured by a summary of items including languages spoken, times studied abroad, and socializing with people different than self. The variable of formal development was measured by a summary of items including curriculum/fieldwork, workshops/training, and conferences attended. The examination of background characteristics was important in identifying factors that may contribute to the cultural competency of HRL staff.

The following research questions guided this study:

Q 1. To what extent do HRL staff members perceive themselves to be culturally competent?

Q 2. Are there any significant relationships between age, ethnicity, gender, international experience, professional status, formal development, and perceived level of cultural competence?

Q 3. How has HRL staff gained the knowledge or experience with cultural competencies?
Q 4. What is the likelihood that characteristics of age, ethnicity, gender, international experience, professional status, or formal development will impact cultural competence?

This chapter begins with a brief review of the survey instrument used in this study and an initial data analysis, followed by an analysis of the relationship between demographic variables and cultural competence, and concludes with a discussion of findings related to each research question.

**Initial Data Analysis**

The MCSA-P2 survey instrument developed by Pope and Miller (2000) measured the general cultural competence of HRL staff. Demographic and questions related to the independent variables were added to the end of the 34 questions in the MCSA-P2 survey. In total, participants answered 48 questions. To conduct the data analysis, the reliability of the MCSA-P2 survey instrument was first determined based on the sample size of the participants. Using a one-factor model for measurement of cultural competency (Mueller, 1999; Pope & Mueller, 2000), Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to determine reliability for the MCSA-P2. The reliability coefficient with this sample was .938. Although the sample size of 97 participants was significantly smaller than the anticipated sample size of 166, the instrument reliability was still strong with this sample size. The data were distributed normally because the variables are generally falling within a one standard deviation of the mean (Field, 2013).


**Description of the Sample**

Table 1 highlights the number of study respondents. Of the total of 97 respondents, 17 respondents did not complete the survey. Clerical staff were excluded from the study. Five respondents who self-identified as clerical staff were thanked for their time and directed away from the survey. For reasons unknown, 12 other respondents started the survey but did not finish it. The remaining 80 HRL respondents were included in the analysis of data for this study, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Sample Population*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Included</th>
<th>Excluded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>82.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Age of the respondent.** Ages of the 75 participants who responded to this demographic question were collapsed into age groups due to the small numbers for individual ages reported. Age categories are shown in Table 2 and include the case breakdown by age. The table shows that most of the respondents were between the ages of 25 and 44. This would account for approximately 70% of the respondents. Although all age groups considered themselves culturally competent, data in Table 2 show that the age group of 35 to 39 had the highest mean score of all age groups.
Table 2

*Age Summary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Mean of Cultural Competency</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Missing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>5.51</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 29</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 34</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 39</td>
<td>5.97</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 to 44</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 49</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 to 54</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 and Over</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>92.0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ethnicity of the respondent.** The descriptive statistics in Table 3 shows the ethnic makeup of the 77 valid participants who responded to the question. The large majority of White/Anglo were followed by about 17% Black/African-American, and relatively few participants representing Hispanic, Asian/Pacific, and Other cultures.
Table 3

*Ethnicity Summary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White/Anglo</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>74.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African-American</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other+</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>77</td>
<td>99.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gender of respondent.** Of the 77 respondents, 50.65% were female and 49.35% were male. No respondents identified themselves as transgender. This data was excluded from the data analysis.

**Type of institution where respondent was employed.** Of the 77 participants who replied to this question, more than half (74%) reported their employment at a 4-year public institution, 18% were from a 4-year private institution, 1% identified a community college or technical school, and 2% for other school types. Table 4 shows the summary of institutions of the respondents.
Table 4

Institutions Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions where employed</th>
<th>Valid Cases</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-Year public institution</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Year private institution</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community college or technical school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other types of institutions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Professional status.** Of 77 total respondents, 75 cases were valid. HRL middle management staff comprised the largest group with 36%, senior management staff made up 25% of the group, and 19% of respondents were entry level employees. Table 5 shows the cases summary for professional status.
Table 5

Professional Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment level</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Valid N</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Missing N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry Level</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Management</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Management/Director</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Study Variables

Several of the 80 participants did not answer every question in the survey. However, the data of those participants were retained. Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) noted that “if only a few data points, say 5% or less, are missing in a random pattern from a large data set, the problem is less serious” (p. 630). The data of those participants were retained for two reasons: (a) although the missing data does affect the mean of the sample group, the missing data was not significant enough to be detrimental to the research; and (b) with the small sample size, the aggregate data analysis may have been negatively affected more if those entire records had been excluded because of a few omitted questions. In this study, deletion of cases could mean substantial loss of subjects and further distortion of the sample (Tabachinick & Fidell, 2007). Thus, the data analysis included the 80 participants in total.

It would appear from the findings shown in Table 6 that the sample population is more than likely culturally competent with a score of 5.56. The standard deviation of .757
and standard error of .085 conveys that the scores are close to the average and may present an acceptable representation of the population.

Table 6

*Mean of Cultural Competency for Study Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean of Cultural Competency Components For Study Participants</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Included</td>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Age of the respondent.** Table 7 presents the mean by respondents’ age. Most of respondent’s ages were between the 25 and 44. Figure 4 presents the mean by age within a boxplot. The data show a decline in the mean for respondents in the 40 to 44 age range, then the mean score rises again in the following 5 years, only to decline again to the lowest points after age 49.
Table 7

*Mean of Cultural Competency by Age*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>5.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 29</td>
<td>5.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 34</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 39</td>
<td>5.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 to 44</td>
<td>5.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 49</td>
<td>5.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 to 54</td>
<td>5.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 and Over</td>
<td>5.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4. Mean by age group boxplot.*
Ethnicity of the respondent. The categories included in the analysis are White/Anglo and All Others; the categories of Black/African American, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native and Other were collapsed due to the relatively small number of respondents in each of those categories. Table 8 shows a slightly lower mean score of White HRL staff compared to the combined mean scores for all others. Overall, the scores for the two groups are close, supporting earlier data (see Table 6) that found a consensus of cultural competency among all participants.

Following the table, Figure 5 shows the distribution by ethnicity and the concentration of respondent scores within a range. This histogram shows a normal curve and supports the assumption of normality for the variables analyzed.

Table 8

Mean of Cultural Competency by ethnicity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Dev</th>
<th>Std Err</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White/Anglo</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>0.755</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>6.53</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All others</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>0.795</td>
<td>0.1776</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>6.88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diff (1-2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.2868</td>
<td>0.765</td>
<td>0.1988</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5. Frequency by ethnicity.

Mean of respondents by gender. Table 9 shows the mean and descriptive statistics by gender. These data support earlier finding that high perceptions for cultural competency are held by all participants. It would appear from the findings (Standard Deviation .512) that women scores will be closer together and supports the higher mean of the group. Following Table 9, Figure 6 displays the mean scores in relation to the normal curve and demonstrates that the scores of women are closer in frequency.
Table 9

Mean of cultural competency by gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Dev</th>
<th>Std Err</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>0.512</td>
<td>0.0855</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>0.954</td>
<td>0.157</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6. Frequency of respondents by gender.

Languages spoken by respondent. Of 77 total respondents, 80.52% spoke only one language. Of the remaining respondents, 16.88% spoke two languages and 2.60% spoke three or more languages. For the purposes of the data analysis, the last two options were collapsed.
due to the small number of respondents. Table 10 shows the analysis of 62 respondents who spoke one language and 15 respondents who spoke more than one language. The findings in the table would appear to show that HRL staff who only speak one language have an overall higher cultural competency mean score than staff that speak more than one language. In Figure 7, the boxplot shows that the 62 respondent scores are very close together. The information presented was based the researcher collapsing subgroups due to the low numbers of respondents. The subgroups of two languages (n = 13) and 3 or more languages (n = 2) were collapsed. With this in mind, the researcher must note that although speaking more than one language has a lower mean, when the subgroups are separated out, those that speak three or more language have a mean cultural competency score of 5.79. The mean cultural competency score of those that spoke two languages was 5.04. The average mean of the groups were 5.56.

Table 10

*Mean of cultural competency by languages spoken.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Languages Spoken</th>
<th>Valid N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Std Dev.</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>0.591</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Than One</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>0.313</td>
<td>1.211</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 7. Means comparison for languages spoken

**Times that the respondent had studied abroad.** Of 77 total respondents, nearly two-thirds (64.94%) responded that they had never studied abroad. About one in five (19.48%) had studied abroad one time, 11.69% twice, and 3.90% three or more times. For the purposes of the data analysis, the last two options were collapsed due to the small number of respondents. For purposes of this analysis, the model included those who have studied abroad at least once and those who have not studied abroad. Figure 8 shows the frequency distribution of means for those respondents who have not studied abroad. The spread of the mean scores support findings that those who have not studied abroad have a slightly lower level of cultural competency.
**Figure 8.** Mean of respondents who have not studied abroad.

Figure 9 shows the frequency of those who have studied abroad once or more. The histogram shows the concentrated higher cultural competency mean scores for this group that supports the higher mean score of .562.
Figure 9. Mean of respondents who have studied abroad at least once.

Figure 10 highlights the mean scores of the both groups in a histogram. Notice that for those that have not studied abroad, the standard deviation of .721 is lower and scores are more concentrated, indicating that those with more travel abroad experience may have a higher level of cultural competency.
Figure 10. Mean comparison for studying abroad vs. not studied abroad.

Reported cross-racial/inter-ethnic socializing. Participants were asked to indicate the other racial or ethnic groups with whom they generally socialize. The choices were African American, Caucasian, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islanders. Respondents could choose all groups with whom they socialized and identify groups that were not offered as an option. Of the 73 respondents, 62.67% socialized with African Americans, 57.33% with Caucasians, 49.33% with Hispanics, and 38.67% with Asian/Pacific Islanders. Fourteen respondents added another group with whom they socialized, including Native American, most prevalent as well as international, multiracial, African, Middle Eastern, Black/Caribbean, and Appalachian. For this question, many respondents did not answer the question as the researcher intended it to be answered. Many respondents included their own identity as well as choosing identities different from themselves. This created an
exaggeration of the data and required a reorganization of data for a more accurate analysis. Thus, the respondents were grouped the respondents by their interactions to capture data to about participants’ experiences of socializing with those different from themselves. Table 11 shows the summary information for the respondents based on their interactions. It would appear from the findings presented in the table that HRL staff who have had no interactions with different ethnic groups have a higher cultural competency mean score than HRL staff who have interacted with different ethnic groups. Following the table, Figure 11 displays the findings of the mean score comparison in a boxplot. The findings show the high concentration of scores around the mean and are consistent with the findings of the HRL staff without interactions having a higher cultural competency mean score.

Table 11

Mean of cultural competency by interactions outside of own ethnic group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Competency Mean Scores Regarding Socializing with Others</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you socialize with others different than yourself</td>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std.</td>
<td>Std</td>
<td>Min</td>
<td>Max</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacted</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Error</td>
<td>Dev.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>96.00%</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>0.129</td>
<td>0.897</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Interaction</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>92.60%</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>0.086</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Knowledge or experience with cultural competencies gained in formal education, workshops and training, and/or conferences. Of the 75 participants who responded, slightly more than three-fourths, 78.76%, reported having been involved in formal education. Regarding workshops or training, and conferences, nearly all the 77 respondents who answered those questions confirmed attendance (96.10% and 92.21%, respectively). For those respondents that gained formal education through curriculum, practicum, or fieldwork, there was a participation rate of 79%. Table 12 shows the summary of the respondents for how they gained their knowledge. It would appear from the table that HRL staff who have had formal education around cultural competency have the highest mean score of 5.71. The next highest cultural competency mean score, 5.64, appears to come from HRL staff who
have attended conferences to gain knowledge or experience around cultural competency.
Furthermore, HRL staff who have gained knowledge or experience around cultural competency through formal education, training and workshops, and/or conferences have higher mean scores than their HRL counterpart who have not. Following Table 12, the box plot in Figures 12 shows the means mean comparison for formal education, Figure 13 shows the mean comparison for workshops and training, and Figure 14 shows the means comparison for those who attended conferences.

Table 12

*Mean of Cultural Competency by How Knowledge Was Gained*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean of Cultural Competency Components</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Valid N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Std Dev.</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal Education</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>0.081</td>
<td>0.619</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>0.294</td>
<td>1.099</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops/Training</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>0.732</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>0.873</td>
<td>1.512</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.734</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 12. Means comparison for formal education.

Figure 13. Means comparison for workshops and training.
Formal development activity to enhance understanding of cultural competency in the last two years. Of the 77 respondents, about half (45.45%) engaged in a formal development activity one to two times a year, and 37.66% engaged three to five times a year. Only 15.58% reported participation in a formal development activity more than six times a year. One respondent never engaged in any formal development activity. For the purposes of the data analysis, these responses were collapsed and analyzed by those who participated in all the categories (56.70%), and those who did not participate in at least one activity (43.30%). It would appear from the findings presented in Table 13 that HRL staff who participated in all of the categories of participating in a formal development activity in the past two years had a higher cultural competency mean score than staff who did not participate in at least one activity. The findings in Figure 15, show the mean comparison based on the how the questions were asked on the survey tool. This figure shows that HRL
staff who participated in six or more activities in the last two years have a higher cultural competency mean score than staff who engaged less than six times.

Table 13

*Mean of Cultural Competency by Formal Development Activity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal Development Activity</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Participate in At Least One</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>6.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in All</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>6.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 15. Mean comparison for formal development activity.*
Answers to Research Questions

**Research Question 1.** To what extent do HRL staff members perceive themselves as being culturally competent? Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data shown in Table 14. The possible scores for cultural competency from the MSCA-P2 range from 1 (lowest) to 7 (highest). The mean of the group shows that the group overall is more than likely culturally competent.

Table 14

*Standard Deviation and Mean of Cultural Competency for Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean of Cultural Competency Components</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Coefficient Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.75702</td>
<td>5.5579</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P < .001

**Research Question 2.** Are there any significant relationships between age, ethnicity, gender, cultural experience, professional status, formal development, and perceived level of cultural competence?

The variables of age, ethnicity, gender, cultural experience, professional status, formal development, and the cultural competency score were analyzed through multiple regression using the general linear model (GLM). This method of analysis was chosen because, according to Field (2013) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), the GLM model provided good flexibility for analyzing variables. GLM has the ability to analyze several different types of variables, including categorical and indicator variables. The most important reason for choosing the GLM model was for the function it provided to provide linear regression and ANOVA analysis of data. These analytical tools supported the ability of GLM
to provide measures of strength and association between the variables of age, ethnicity, gender, cultural experience, professional status, formal development, and cultural competency (Field, 2013).

A regression analysis was used for analyzing the data, wherein each analysis the researcher removed the least significant variable. Each iteration of the data also produced a group that had a more meaningful relationship to cultural competency. After eight iterations to produce the variables that are considered significant, the final analysis of data produced the most significant variables. Table 15 shows the initial variables and levels that were involved in the GLM procedure.
Table 15

Values for Independent Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language-Q7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>More Than One Language One Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Abroad-Q8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Have Studied Abroad At Least Once Haven't Studied Abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Status-Q9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Entry Level Middle Management Senior Management/Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal ED-Curriculum-Q10-1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Dev. Activ-Q12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 to 5 Times 6 or More Times Less Than Three Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity-Q15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Black/African-American Other White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender-Q13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Group-Q14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Under 25, 25 to 29, 30 to 34, 35 to 39, 40 to 44, 45 to 49, 50 to 54, 55 and Over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialize Other Ethnicity-Q11-5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interacted with 1 or 2 Other Ethnicities Interacted with 3 or more Other Ethnicities No Interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Dev. Knowledge-Q10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Did Not Participate in At Least One Participated in All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross Cult. Activity-Q12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Participated in 2+ Cross-Cultural Activity Participated in 1 Cross-Cultural Activity Participated in NO Cross-Cultural Activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings in Table 16 indicate that the model’s predictors would account for 48% (R-squared) of the variation in cultural competency, the dependent variable. As noted in Chapter 3, there were 10 predictors with 23 levels. The number of levels corresponded to the number of choices minus one because one of the choices becomes the baseline and a dummy variable in the multiple linear regression model will not be made.

The degree of freedom should be \(1-23 = 22\); thus, the model also appears to be correct because the data showed that the degree of freedom (DF) is 22. The F Value and Pr > F value is important because these values are used to determine whether the independent variables can more than likely predict cultural competency when the Alpha level equals 0.05. The findings in Table 16 also show that the significance level for this round to be .0156 and the mean for this round to be 5.57.

Table 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>M Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Pr &gt; F</th>
<th>R-Sq.</th>
<th>Coeff Var</th>
<th>Root MSE</th>
<th>CULTCOMP Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20.9288752</td>
<td>0.95131251</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.0156</td>
<td>0.479692</td>
<td>12.0999</td>
<td>0.673809</td>
<td>5.568713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>22.70092416</td>
<td>0.45401848</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>43.62979935</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17 shows the data that were analyzed for the first run of the multiple regression using PROC GLM (general linear model). Significance level for this round is .0156 when the Alpha level equals 0.05. The findings show that Language, Ethnicity, and Socialize-Other Ethnicity (other ethnic group) may be predictable variables in determining cultural competency.
Table 17

_Round 1 Significance by Variable_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Type III SS</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F Value</th>
<th>Pr &gt; F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language-Q7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.76716693</td>
<td>2.76716693</td>
<td>6.09</td>
<td>0.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Abroad-Q8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.34298111</td>
<td>0.34298111</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.3889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Status-Q9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.52484527</td>
<td>0.26242263</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.5647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal ED-Curriculum-Q10–1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.02733361</td>
<td>0.02733361</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.8072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Dev. Activ-Q12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.17782571</td>
<td>0.58891286</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.2824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity-Q15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.37739186</td>
<td>1.18869593</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>0.0829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender-Q13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.77910008</td>
<td>0.77910008</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>0.1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Group-Q14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.77614338</td>
<td>0.39659191</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.5339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialize Other Ethnicity-Q11-5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.71016387</td>
<td>1.35508194</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>0.0596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Dev. Knowledge-Q10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.96129978</td>
<td>0.96129978</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>0.1519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross Cult. Activity-Q12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.90548546</td>
<td>0.95274273</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.1333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Pr > F = .0156_

When implementing the second run of the multiple regression model, the least significant variable, in this case Formal ED-Curriculum, was removed. In this process of analysis, the least significant variable will continue to be removed until all the variables that are left are significant. Ethnicity (.1291) was no longer significant after the first run through of analysis, but Language (.0170), Socialize-Other Ethnicity (.0693), and Formal Dev. Knowledge (.0749) appeared to be significant or close to significant. The significance level for this round was .0132 and the mean for this round is 5.575900. The variable that was
removed from the next round of analysis was Professional Status with a significance of .05097.

The third run of the multiple regression model was conducted without Formal ED-Curriculum and Professional Status. The next variable removed was Age. The fourth run of the multiple regression model without Formal ED-Curriculum, Professional Status, and Age. Next, Study Abroad was removed. The researcher continued to take out the least significant variable until all the variables left were significant.

The fifth run of the multiple regression model left out Formal ED-Curriculum, Professional Status, Age, and Study Abroad; the next round removed the variable Formal Development Activity. The sixth run of the multiple regression model left out Formal ED-Curriculum, Professional Status, Age, Study Abroad, and Formal Dev. Activ.; the next round removed the variable Ethnicity. The researcher continued to take out the least significant variable until all the variables left were significant.

The researcher implemented the seventh multiple regression model without Formal Dev. Knowledge, Professional Status, Age, Study Abroad, and Formal Dev Activ., and ethnicity.

The researcher implemented the final run of the multiple regression model without Formal Dev. Knowledge, Professional Status, Age, Study Abroad, Formal Dev. Active, and Cross Cult. Activity. The finding from Table 18 shows that the significance level for the final analysis was .0001 and the mean for this round was 5.560. These data became the final regression model.
Table 18

*Anova Table for Final Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Pr &gt; F</th>
<th>R-Sq.</th>
<th>Coeff Var</th>
<th>Root MSE</th>
<th>CULTCOMP Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.55</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
<td>0.300</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>31.56</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>45.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It could be concluded from the findings in Table 19 with alpha level of 0.05 that the variables of Language (Pr > F = .0042), Gender (Pr > F = .0508), Socialize-Other Ethnic Group (Pr > F = .0839) and Formal Dev. Knowledge (Pr > F = .0008) can reliably predict the dependent variable, cultural competency. These variables would be included in the model that determines cultural competency, and these variables together could reliably predict cultural competency. How the individual variable may predict cultural competency is discussed in the answer to Research Question 4.
Table 19

*Significance by Variable*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F Value</th>
<th>Pr &gt; F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>8.73</td>
<td>0.0042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>0.0508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialize-Other Ethnicity</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.281</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>0.0839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Dev. Knowledge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>12.33</td>
<td>0.0008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pr > F = .0001

Table 20 shows the parameter estimates that have a predictive relationship with the dependent variable. In this research, the dependent variable is the cultural competency score. When the Pr > |t| value of a coefficient is less than Alpha (0.05), then it is statistically significant. The finding shows that in this regression model, speaking more than one language (.0004) and those that did not participate in at least one formal development activity (.0008), are statistically significant because their P-values are less than .05. This confirms that for every unit of increase in each of the independent variables there will be a relative increase in the dependent variable that equals the value in the estimate column (Field, 2013). For every one-unit increase in language (speaking more than one), an increase of .60 in cultural competency is predicted. A similar prediction would occur for formal development activity. For every unit of increase, there would be a .0008 increase in cultural competency predicted.
Table 20

Parameter Estimates for Significant Variables

| Parameter                          | Estimate  | Standard Error | t Value | Pr > |t| | 95% Confidence Limits |
|------------------------------------|-----------|----------------|---------|------|---|----------------------|
| Intercept                          | 5.74976622| B 0.15378544   | 37.38   | < .0001 | | 5.44234 6.05562 |
| Language: More Than One Language   | -0.597693241| B 0.20225632  | -2.96   | .0042 | | -1.00098 -0.19441 |
| Gender: Female                     | 0.302524462| B 0.15226825   | 1.99    | .0508 | | -0.00109 0.60614 |
| Socialize-Other Ethnicity: 1 or 2 Other Ethnicities | -0.330038046| B 0.19332697  | -1.71   | .0922 | | -0.71552 0.05544 |
| Socialize-Other Ethnicity: 3 or more Other Ethnicities | 0.102090014| B 0.18672396   | 0.55    | .5863 | | -0.27023 0.47441 |
| Formal Dev. Activ: Did Not Participate in At Least One | -0.59615035| B 0.16979855 | -3.51   | .0008 | | -0.93472 -0.25758 |

Research Question 3. How has HRL staff gained knowledge or experience with cultural competencies (i.e., formal education, research, training, conferences, journal articles, cultural interactions, or other means)? Responses to a section of survey questions addressed this question and highlighted the areas that HRL staff may consider as they develop their cultural competency skill set. The data show that respondents have utilized all the opportunities to develop their cultural competency skill sets. The measures used to consider cultural experience were languages spoken, times studied abroad, and socializing with people different than yourself. The measures for the considering the formal development included curriculum/fieldwork, workshops/training, and conferences attended.

The variables that speak to the formal knowledge gained through education, workshops/training, and conferences attended were shown by the data collected to be a
significant predictor of multicultural competency, and it could be concluded that the various activities and training contributed to the higher mean scores. Most of the respondents accepted the opportunity to attend one or more activity. Very few respondents said that they did not utilize these opportunities. Of 69 respondents, only 14 noted that they did not gain knowledge through formal education that included either curriculum, practicum, or field work. Three of 77 respondents noted that they had not attended any workshops or training; five noted that they had not attended any conferences.

The researcher compared the means of HRL staff based on the formal education options. Table 21 shows the case summary review of the 75 respondents included in the analysis. It appears from the findings in Table 22 that the 55 respondents who utilized all the development opportunities had a cultural competency mean score of 5.75. The score drops down to a 5.04 mean score for those who did not have the formal education but attended the workshops/training or conferences. The finding then also shows that respondents who did not involve themselves in any of the formal opportunities for developing their cultural competency understanding had a cultural competency mean score of 4.18. Further examination of the table shows that within each category of formal education, workshops/training, and conferences, respondents who did not involve themselves in a particular development have lower mean scores than their counterparts who did involve themselves in the development.
Table 21

Mean of Cultural for Formal Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean of Cultural Competency Components</th>
<th>Included N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Excluded N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(curriculum practicum or field work)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops and/or training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 22

*Mean of Cultural Competency Components in Formal Education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal education (curriculum practicum or field work)</th>
<th>Workshops and/or training</th>
<th>Conferences</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The means of HRL staff based on the cultural experiences they identified were compared. Table 23 shows the case summary review of the 77 respondents included in the analysis. Findings shown in Table 24 indicate that the average mean cultural competency score for the components of cultural experience was 5.56. The mean score for those who
studied abroad is 5.62 compared to 5.53 for those who had studied abroad. The findings show that respondents who spoke more than three languages had the highest mean score for the languages spoken group at 5.79. The findings also show that the staff who had not interacted with people different from themselves had a higher mean score, at 5.70, than those who had interacted with other ethnicities. The highest mean score is found for respondents who had engaged in six or more cultural activities within the last 2 years. The mean score for this group was 6.0. The data show that the more activities that were engaged in, the higher the mean score of the participants.

Table 23

*Mean of Cultural Competency for Components of Cultural Experience*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean of Cultural Competency Components</th>
<th>Included</th>
<th>Excluded</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times Studied Abroad</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many languages do you speak?</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Development Activities</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ethnic group</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 24

Mean of Cultural Competency Components for Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Times Studied Abroad</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haven't Studied Abroad</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Studied Abroad At Least Once</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many languages do you speak?</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or more</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socializing with others (other ethnic group)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interacted with 1 or 2 Other Ethnicities</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacted with 3 or more Other Ethnicities</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Interaction</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal Development Activities</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less Than Three Times</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 5 Times</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 or More Times</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Mean Components for Experience</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question 4.** What is the likelihood that age, ethnicity, gender, cultural experience, professional status, or formal development will impact cultural competence?

Data were analyzed using the GLM and the regression method. Because this question does not have a binary (yes or no) answer, the researcher used a linear regression method. This was the preferred method because there were no specific hypotheses about the order and importance of the predictor variables. The data highlighted four variables as significant in this research as seen previously in Table 19. The data indicate that Language, Gender,
Socialize-Other Ethnicity, and Formal Dev. Knowledge variables would likely impact cultural competency. The data would suggest that the overall significance of this group of independent variables when used together could reliably predict cultural competency.

The finding from Table 25 show that in the aforementioned regression model, speaking more than one language (.0004) and those who did not participate in at least one formal development activity (.0008) are statistically significant because their P-values are less than .05. Conversely, the data do not support or suggest that age, ethnicity, or professional status are likely to predict or impact cultural competence in HRL staff.

Table 25

**Significant Variables Summary**

| Parameter                              | Estimate | Standard Error | t Value | Pr > |t| | 95% Confidence Limits |
|----------------------------------------|----------|----------------|---------|------|---|-----------------------|
| Intercept                              | 5.74898  | 0.15378544     | 37.38   | <.0001 | | 5.44234 - 6.05562     |
| Language                               |          |                |         |       | |                       |
| More Than One Language                 | -0.59769 | 0.20225632     | -2.96   | 0.0042 | | -1.00098 - 0.194401   |
| Formal dev. Did Not Participate in At Least One | -0.59615 | 0.16979855     | -3.51   | 0.0008 | | -.93472 - -0.25758    |

**Summary**

An overview of the research findings is found in this chapter. The MSCA-P2 survey instrument was used to gather data from HRL staff about their (a) ability to support diverse students, (b) to provide a basis to compare the level of cultural competence of HRL staff across six demographic variables, and (c) to summarize the relationships that may support or
diminish cultural competency among HRL staff. Analysis of the data determined the relationship between demographic variables and cultural competence. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis showed that all variables attained an average cultural competency score of above 5.0 on a scale of one to seven. Findings revealed that HRL staff perceived themselves to be culturally competent and that the majority of HRL staff take opportunities to increase their cultural competency awareness, knowledge, and skills through formal education.
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Implications

Review of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to understand housing and residence life (HRL) staff’s perceptions about their ability to support a diverse student population. The review of literature revealed minimal research on cultural competency as it relates to HRL staff and their practices. The findings of this research offered a deeper understanding of the perceptions of HRL staff in the Great Lakes region of the Association of College and University Housing Officers International (ACUHO-I) about their ability to support diverse students.

This quantitative study utilized the MCSA-P2 instrument and compared the level of cultural competence of HRL staff (the dependent variable), across six variables (the independent variables): gender, age, ethnicity, professional status (entry, middle management, and senior management), cultural experience (languages spoken, times studied abroad, and socializing with people different than yourself), and formal development (curriculum/fieldwork, workshops/training, and conferences attended).

A summary of the relationships that had a correlation with cultural competency revealed that the variables of language, gender, formal development, and ethnic group different than themselves with whom the participant socializes all had a significant relationship with cultural competency. Variables that were found to be not significant were age, professional status, study abroad, engaging in cultural activities, ethnicity, and institution. The research found that the variables ethnicity, professional status, and study abroad did not align with previous research that noted these variables have a significant relationship and are predictors of cultural competency.
Responses to a section of survey questions addressed how HRL staff gained knowledge or experience with cultural competencies through formal education, research, training, conferences, journal articles, and cultural interactions. The data showed that respondents have utilized all the opportunities to develop their cultural competency skill sets.

Students have an opportunity to operate in society more effectively because they understand different people and cultures. The charge for HRL staff then becomes creating and supporting opportunities for students who are interacting with people different than themselves.

It should be a priority for any student affairs professional to make sure that all students acclimate to the university. For this to occur, HRL staff must understand all students and be proactive about reaching that understanding. This means that for this obligation to work, HRL staff must aggressively work for and learn about the students who are being served. Failure to build a rapport or keep the students’ developmental needs in mind will negatively affect a student or the residential community.

**Decisions about combining categories of variables.** Considering the size of the target population, the suggested number of participants for this research was 166. Although more than 1,000 requests for participants were distributed over a 6 month period, the total respondents were 97. Low numbers of respondents required combining data of several subgroups within specific variables. For example, in the variable of ethnicity, the comparison of data was between Caucasian and the combined category of all others. The variable for formal development originally included the subgroups of conferences, workshops, and training. These groups were collapsed due to low numbers of respondents.
The question to the participants about others different than themselves with whom they socialized was misunderstood by many respondents who included their own identity. This required the variable to be reconfigured for analysis. The responses were classified by interactions with others instead of analysis by the ethnicity of those with whom they socialized. The variable was reduced from five levels to two: (a) interacted with people different than yourself and (b) did not interact with anyone different than yourself.

The overall mean of respondents for this study (n = 80) was 5.56. The instrument used a 7-point Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from 1 (Not At All Accurate) to 7 (Very Accurate). The design of the MCSA-P2 survey tool did not provide a threshold for cultural competence. For analysis purposes, the researcher made assumptions about the cultural competency scores. Based on the mean scores, (a) anyone with a score between 5 and 7 were considered more than likely culturally competent, and (b) any respondent with a score below 5 were considered more than likely not culturally competent.

**Purpose of the design.** This study was designed to accomplish the following tasks: (a) to understand perceptions of HRL staff about their ability to support diverse students, (b) to provide a basis to compare the level of cultural competence of HRL staff across six demographic variables, and (c) to summarize the relationships that may support or diminish cultural competency among HRL staff.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

Several conclusions can be drawn from findings. First, all of the ethnic groups were more than likely culturally competent. The mean score for White/Anglo was 5.48, compared to a mean score of 5.77 for all other ethnicities. In this research, people of color scored higher than their White counterparts, a particularly interesting finding, given the predominance of
57 White/Anglo participants and only 20 respondents of other ethnicities. However, studies of King and Howard-Hamilton (2003), Mastrodicasa (2004), and Pope and Mueller (2005) have also shown that ethnic minorities appear to be more culturally competent than are Caucasian participants. Although the previous research of Pope and Mueller (2005) supported the present finding, the general variable of ethnicity was not significant within the model. What are the factors that made this variable insignificant? The number of participants may have driven the mean score up for Caucasian participants. This also speaks to a strong level of competence for the fewer people of color that participated in the study.

The regression analysis used to determine whether there were any significant relationships between the variable of ethnicity and perceived level of cultural competence showed that at the significance level of \( Pr > f = .0002 \), ethnicity had a significance of .1862 and was removed from the regression model during the seventh iteration of the model analysis. Thus, although participants of color scored higher, this research does not support ethnicity as a predictor variable of cultural competency. The basic numbers of respondents based on ethnicity speak to the need of a diverse staff that is engaged in the profession. As the student demographic on campuses continue to evolve, there will need to be more staff of color and generally more staff that are culturally competent. Lynch (2013) wrote about the changing demographics on college campuses and the imbalance of the ratio of White faculty to minority students. As evidence of this disparity, “While nearly 30 percent of undergraduate students around the nation are considered minorities, just over 12 percent of full-time faculty are minorities. That number drops to around 9 percent for full-time professors of color” (n. p). This is important because the research notes that faculty training and curriculum may not be adequate to support cultural competency development in students
as noted by Miklitsch (2005) and Harper (2008). HRL staff must support students outside of the classroom because minority students are not seeing people like themselves in the classroom. This is significant based on the expanded roles that student affairs staff and HRL staff, in particular, have to play in order to create a supportive and inclusive campus community for students (Blanshan, 2007).

Findings in this study supported the work of Chao and Nath (2011), Franklin-Craft (2010), Miklitisch (2005), and Pope and Mueller (2005), who found significant relationships between female gender and increased cultural competency. In this research, wherein the ratio of men and women participants were close to equal, women showed a mean score of 5.72, as opposed to the mean score of 5.42 for men. Although both groups are more than likely culturally competent, this study supported findings of others’ that women may be more sensitive to others and their experiences. Harper (2008) noted the importance of staff being able to exhibit the characteristics of awareness and sensitivity to people different than themselves.

Evans, Forney, and Guido-Dibrito (1998) spoke specifically to work in college student affairs, including cognitive, affective, and behavioral development issues. Caring is a theme that characterizes how women make decisions and includes consideration of others’ feelings as a part of their growth. This is one of the common themes among support of women being more culturally competent than men. The authors cited Gilligan (1982), whose theory of women’s moral development noted change in the accepted roles of women, as they have evolved from a morality of self-denial and sacrifice to an awareness of choice and strength in self-interest:
Then the notion of care expands from the paralyzing injunction not to hurt others to an injunction to act responsively toward self and others, and thus, to sustain connection. A consciousness of the dynamics of human relationships then becomes central to moral understanding, joining the heart and eye in an ethic that ties the activity of thought to the activity of care. (p. 149)

Minority and/or first-generation college students may require additional sensitivity to their needs, the kind of characteristics attributed especially to women. As role models, women in HRL staff positions can model behaviors and attitudes of strength and provide motivation for success.

The results of this study showed that years of experience and age were not significant variables and would not be predictors of cultural competency. Mean scores showed little difference in terms of experience, Entry Level (5.65), Middle Management (5.51), and Senior Management (5.61), and in this study, the variables separately did not produce any significance as it related to cultural competency. Conversely, Mastrodicasa (2004), King and Howard-Hamilton (2003), and Franklin-Craft (2010) noted that more experience had a significant relationship to cultural competency.

Within the regression model used to determine significance, the variables age and professional status were the least significant when Pr > F = .0132 and were removed from the model. In this study, data showed that the older respondents’ scores tended to be lower than their younger counterparts were. However, it must be noted that the number of respondents declined as age increased. Eleven respondents (14%) of total respondents were aged 50 and above. This finding could indicate that as our current professionals age, the mean cultural competency scores of HRL staff would not significantly decline. Notably, the findings of this
study also revealed that the majority of respondents 45 years of age or older had not taken courses as a means of cultural competency development, offering a possible explanation for the decline in cultural competency scores for respondents aged 50 and above.

An unexpected finding of this study showed that the majority of HRL staff reported formal development through education. In contrast, Mueller and Pope (2005) did not find a significant relationship between education and training and cultural competency. The research of Pope (2005) and Miklitsch (2005) spoke to the need for academic preparation programs to be improved to better prepare staff to work on diverse campuses. It is noted by Harper (2008) that faculty through curriculum are in the best position to look into how diversity influences teaching. Faculty will need to be the change agent on campuses and influence cultural competency development through teaching students and staff within the graduate preparation programs.

Through cross tabulations, data showed that 61% of study respondents who participated in formal education did not travel abroad at all. Similarly, 66.2% of those who attended conferences, trainings, and workshops had not studied abroad. These findings indicate that HRL staff engaged in formal education more so than cultural experiences as a means for developing cultural competency.

Mueller and Pope (2001); Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2004; and Harper (2009) all speak on the need for academic programs to offer opportunities for students to engage in cross cultural experiences. Those experiences include studying abroad. Studying abroad allows for a deeper learning experience (Stebleton, Soria, & Cherney, 2013) and is linked to cultural competency. Harper (2008) asserts that interracial contact has the most potential to develop skills in interracial relations. The authors Mueller and Pope (2001) go even further to
say that programs must also offer opportunities for students to explore their own identities, attitudes, and experiences. This exploration occurs through the aforementioned interactions. This finding becomes significant because the literature does not point to formal education as the best way to develop cultural competency. The literature is speaking to a combination of formal education and experiential learning. The findings would show that combination of learning is not occurring with HRL staff.

This is an important area for HRL staff. Exposure to people who are different is important for developing skills for working in a diverse environment and equally as important when helping others to develop cultural competency skills. The data showed that HRL staff members who were involved in a cultural activity more than six times had a mean score of 6. This finding offers some evidence of the value of exposure and support for the idea that curriculum is important, but not the same as experience. The tool box, a publication by the Center for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas (2017), supports the idea that much of what people know about other people comes from interacting with them and that knowing the histories, traditions, and values of others can help to build a sense of community. Emotional cues are symbolically constructed and transmitted within a culture (Franklin-Craft, 2010), and it is important for HRL staff to have the ability to adapt to varied cultural contexts.

**Implications**

**Implication for practice.** The findings of this study support the value of intentional systems for the continued growth and development of HRL staff. Although the sample population was more than likely to be culturally competent at the time of this research, HRL staff must continue to develop in the area of cultural competency in light of increased
diversity on college campuses. An aim might be to emphasize cultural development activities for the youngest staff members to encourage them to achieve the higher cultural competency status shown in the mean scores of the 30–39 aged respondents. Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2009) believe that HRL staff must develop and maintain their motivation. They must also be willing to think of alternative ways to achieve their goals. Then finally, HRL staff must assess their progress toward the goals (Von Stange, 2014). Becoming culturally competent is a process. The findings showcased cultural competency declined as HRL staff got older. These practices will allow HRL staff to continuously develop their cultural competency as they get older.

Supporting the work of Blanshan (2007), the findings of this study also imply a need for an infusion of commitment within the HRL staff to develop cultural competency, which should start during the hiring process for new staff. Haggerty (2001) suggested creating a hiring process inclusive of cultural competency rubrics based on professional competencies from ACUHO-I, NASPA, and ACPA, which would allow, at minimum, an initial assessment of the staff followed by continuous training and engagement opportunities. The author continues by suggesting competency-based training that should be accompanied by standards for evaluating the progress and highlighting the engagement activities. Von Stange (2014) supports the evaluation process by asking for staff to connect cultural competence to performance outcomes. Training for HRL staff should be versed in the concepts and standards of the profession as well as the needs dictated by a diverse campus population. This type of engagement is educationally purposeful (Harper, 2008).

The implications of this study for practice within the HRL department include the need to emphasize the principles for HRL work and cultural competency development
outlined by ACUHO-I, NASPA, and ACPA. Several of the tenets of the student affairs field permeate through the aforementioned organizations and their standards. A few highlighted by Von Stange (2014) are (a) understanding the value of diversity and how inclusive practices are beneficial to our campuses and (b) modeling inclusive practice in all of the association’s work. In addition, HRL staff must be concerned about the cultural sensitivity development of themselves and others (Cooper, He, & Levin, 2011). As the tools are laid out by the professional organizations, HRL staff must use them in the daily practice of building cultural competency. The standards provide a lens by which HRL staff can utilize to view the campus community.

This study emphasized the importance of building skills and knowledge of HRL practitioners through engagement in an inclusive environment to develop cultural competency. Findings implied the need for HRL staff to include the following practices suggested by Bresciani et al. (2010):

1. Articulate one’s own differences and similarities with others.
2. Participate in activities that challenge one’s beliefs.
3. Interact with diverse individuals and implement programs, services, and activities that reflect an understanding and appreciation of cultural and human differences. (p. 10)

These practices may manifest for HRL staff in a few ways. The first would be HRL staff engaging in personal theorizing (Cooper, He, & Levin, 2011) while engaging in the activities that will challenge you. This practice leads to HRL staff developing their pedagogical beliefs that will in turn guide their practice. Cooper, He, and Levin (2011) shared the need for HRL staff to improve practices by undertaking action research. This
would be for staff to construct more information about themselves and certain situations to create better practices for themselves.

**Implications for institutions.** In terms of ethnicity among this study’s participants, the disparity between Caucasian and people of color spoke to the need for a diverse staff to be engaged in the profession to assure the ability of HRL staff to support diverse students. At the university level, as in the HRL department, the changing demographic of students on campuses implies the need to employ more staff of color, a ratio of women more reflective of the population, and generally more staff who are culturally competent.

According to King and Howard–Hamilton (2003), “Many people are uncomfortable talking about multi-cultural issues. Without the skills to engage in intercultural contact, this discomfort may serve as a barrier to learning about diversity issues” (p. 131). Findings in the present research may offer an incentive for higher education to increase opportunities for developing cultural competency for HRL staff through formal education. The data shows that the HRL staff are utilizing the curriculum. It would make sense for institutions to commit to faculty and curriculum development in graduate programs. Graduate students want to learn about multicultural issues but are uncomfortable with people unlike themselves and addressing issues (King & Howard-Hamilton, 2000). Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2009) also noted that the comfort level of faculty is sometimes reflected in the curriculum. Harper (2008) believes “The greater the emphasis an institution placed on diversity, the more prepared faculty report they felt to teach about diversity, regardless of color” (p. 164). When an institution does more around diversity the faculty have more tools to help with teaching the content.
The findings imply a need for an assessment of curriculum and other opportunities for academic programs aimed at development of cultural competency and perhaps a closer alliance between the university and the HRL professional associations that have established standards. When diversity issues were addressed, they were found more in theory courses than in practicum courses (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2009). Academic affairs and student affairs have been compartmentalized, and this has hindered the collaboration needed to create an inclusive learning environment (Harper, 2008). The collaboration is laid out by Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2004): “It begins with the graduate preparation, with a focus on knowledge acquisition, but it must extend into one’s professional tenure in which the practitioner seeks out learning opportunities” (p. 174). This is critical for the development of HRL staff and support of our students. There has to be an institutional commitment, faculty commitment, and collaboration with student affairs staff.

**Implications for future research.** Future research could expand on various aspects of HRL staff in the Great Lakes Association of College and University Housing Officers (GLACUHO) region, such as an exploration of the range of ethnicities among HRL staff within this region. Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2009) share that research is severely limited and is several years behind research in psychology, which serves as a foundation for student affairs research. Even though the field has a fluid membership, the knowledge would allow for more dialogue among peers and cultivate that inclusive environment that cultural competency embraces.

Mean scores for cultural competence were higher for women than for men in this study, implying the need for an assessment of roles of women in HRL departments and within the general structure of teaching and administration at the university level.
Identities and labels are expanding as campuses become more diverse. Identifying a broader spectrum of identities for ethnicity and gender identities among students in university communities could allow researchers to expand demographic variable levels in future research. The variable of Socialize-Other Ethnicity highlighted those respondents who socialized with people who may not identify as one of the common categories of ethnicities (White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, etc.). Many of the answers written in responses for this survey question were a combination of ethnicities that could not be categorized within the common labels. Respondents as related to other groups with whom they socialized entered fourteen different ethnic combination. For HRL and student affairs to be inclusive and support individuals, the research must support and invite everyone to speak and be identified as they wish. Exploring the multiple identities of HRL staff will only open more doors for dialogue and increase awareness for the field.

Cultural experience is an important part of cultural competency. Although the data in this study revealed that HRL staff was not extensively engaged in study abroad opportunities as a way to develop cultural competency, future research should consider the diverse ways of getting cultural exposure and the significance each would have. As posed by Franklin-Craft (2010), a future study could seek information about how international experience plays a role in cultural competency development and to document the benefits of study abroad opportunities as a way to develop cultural competency.

Future studies could explore the differences in cultural competency skills scores of various levels of HRL staff and management. The data in this study showed a decline in scores as the age (and assumed experience) of staff increased. The research could also
consider any institutional or environmental barriers that might be in place to hinder older staff group from having the same opportunities of developing cultural competency.

Future studies could expand on the limited research in exploration of multicultural issues in curriculum. Pope (2005) and Harper (2008) identified this as an important area. The present research showed that most of the HRL staff chose academic programs to learn about cultural competence. Although the findings in this research showed that most people were more than likely culturally competent, we can continue to strengthen the curriculum in preparation programs for student affairs careers, where faculty, “regardless of their level of education, training, and experience with multicultural issues, are becoming increasingly responsible for the multicultural education and training of future generations of student affairs professionals” (Mueller & Pope, 2005, p. 687). The increased responsibility for future administrators would reflect a clear need to look at faculty training and how institutions can help faculty be better equipped to provide multicultural education and training.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this research was to examine the awareness, knowledge, skills, and the perceptions of cultural competency of HRL staff. This quantitative study was to understand HRL staff’s perceptions about cultural competency through their activities, interactions, and experiences. The research also looked at the relationships between demographics of HRL staff and their level of cultural competency. Through examining the relationship found, the researcher then outlined implications for HRL staff, student affairs, and institutions of higher education.

The literature revealed that there is minimal research on the cultural competency of HRL staff. The research focused on the HRL staff within the Great Lakes region of the
Association of College and University Housing Officers International (ACUHO-I). With the influx of a more diverse population entering college and university campuses, this research will share a deeper understanding of the challenges that will come and the areas that HRL staff and higher education will need to address to be able to service this changing student population.

This research was quantitative and utilized the MCSA-P2 survey instrument to collect the information from participants. There were six variables (the independent variables): gender, age, ethnicity, professional status (entry, middle management, and senior management), cultural experience (languages spoken, times studied abroad, and socializing with people different than yourself), and formal development (curriculum/fieldwork, workshops/training, and conferences attended) in this research. The research compared these variables to the level of cultural competence (the dependent variable) of HRL staff.

The research revealed that the variables of language, gender, formal development, and ethnic group different from themselves with whom the participant socializes all had a significant relationship with cultural competency. Furthermore, the variables age, professional status, study abroad, engaging in cultural activities, ethnicity, and institution were not significant within this research. Lastly, the variables ethnicity, professional status, and study abroad did not align with previous research that noted these variables having a significant relationship and are predictors of cultural competency.

The findings of this research offered a deeper understanding of the need to be culturally competent. Prior assumptions about the work of HRL staff indicated that it was just a concept of doing what is right. The study suggested that the work is now deemed necessary. Ashworth (1979) said, “Higher education has a long record of solid achievements,
social accomplishments, and forward strides that constitute an unsurpassable contribution to the public good” (p. 13). These words have resonated with the researcher for years and have lent deep meaning to the work and effort that should be put forth.

Students have an opportunity to operate in society more effectively because they understand different people and cultures. The charge for HRL staff then becomes creating and supporting opportunities for students who are interacting with people different than themselves. It should be a priority for any student affairs professional to make sure that all students acclimate to the university. For this to occur, HRL staff must understand all students and be proactive about reaching that understanding. Being the best would mean continually learning about yourself and others. HRL staff must strategically grow and work toward being culturally competent. This effort is imperative for the future of students and their ability to be global citizens. If HRL staff are not able to reach each student where they are, they could miss the opportunity to support that students’ developmental and educational needs. Not being able to communicate, empathize, and support each student will negatively affect the student or the residential community that they are involved with.
References


Chao, R. C. L., & Nath, S. R. (2011). The role of ethnic identity, gender roles, and
multicultural training in college counselors' multicultural counseling competence: A
mediation model. *Journal of College Counseling, 14*(1), 50-64.


practice in undergraduate education. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 47,*

Cooper, J. E., He, Y., & Levin, B. B. (2011). *Developing critical cultural competence: A
guide for 21st-century educators.* Corwin Press.

quantitative and qualitative research (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle, NJ: Pearson Education.


campus: Theory, models, and practices for understanding diversity and creating
inclusion.* Sterling, VA: Stylus.


Field, A.P. (2013). *Discovering statistics using SPSS: And sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll


Harris, D. L. (2010). Teachers' perceptions related to teacher preparedness, self-efficacy, and cultural competence to instruct culturally diverse students. ProQuest LLC.


Riggio, R. E., Murphy, S. E., & Pirozzolo, F. J. (2002). Multiple intelligences and leadership: Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.


Appendices
Appendix A: Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs (MCSA-P2) Permission

Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs (MCSA-P2) Scale
(aka Student Affairs Social Attitudes Survey or Instrument “A”)
Utilization Request and Permission to Reproduce Form

* On a separate page, please provide a brief description or abstract of your project *

I/we understand that the MCSA-P2 is copyrighted by Raechel L. Pope and John A. Mueller and cannot be duplicated or used without their written consent. Raechel L. Pope may be contacted at the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy, 468 Baldy Hall the University at Buffalo, State University of New York, Buffalo, NY 14260-1000 (716) 645-2471 (ext. 1095). John A. Mueller may be contacted at the Department of Student Affairs in Higher Education, 206 Stouffer Hall, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA, 15705, (724) 357-4541.

I/we understand that permission to reproduce the instrument will only be granted for the project that I/we have described herein and that if I/we wish to use or reproduce the instrument for other projects, I/we must obtain additional approval.

I will NOT publish the instrument in a journal, book, dissertation, or other publication types, nor will I publish the instrument on-line.

I understand that the MCSA-P2 is not to be used for any purpose other than research and further validation. Specifically, the MCSA-P2 should not yet be used to evaluate job suitability or performance, assess readiness for graduate study or graduation, nor to determine staff training or continuing education needs.

I am a trained professional in counseling, psychology, student affairs, or higher education, or a related field, having competed coursework (or training) in multicultural issues, psychometrics, and research ethics, or I am working under the supervision of such an individual.

In using the MCSA-P2, all ethical standards of the American Psychological Association, the American College Personnel Association, and/or related professional organizations will be adhered to. Furthermore, I will follow the “Research with Human Subjects” guidelines put forth by my university, institution, or professional setting. Specifically I will receive approval from the human subjects review board on my campus (institution or professional setting) prior to the initiation of any research utilizing this instrument. Ethical considerations include but are not limited to subject informed consent, confidentiality of records, adequate pre- and de-briefing of subjects, and subject opportunity to review a concise written summary of the study’s purpose, method, results, and implications.

Consistent with accepted practice, I will save and protect my raw data for a minimum of five years; and if requested I will make the raw data available to Dr. Pope (who is ethically responsible to monitor developments on the scale in terms of utility, reliability, and validity), and other students/scholars researching the multicultural competency construct.
Within 18 months of receipt of the permission to use the MCSA-P2, I will send a copy of my research results (for any study incorporating the MCSA-P2) in manuscript form to both Dr. Pope and Dr. Mueller, regardless of whether the study is published, presented, or fully completed.

Signature of the Requester

Date: 6-8-15

Name (please type): William G. Washington III

Address: 1820 Sutherland Dr. SE

Kentwood, MI 49508

Phone Number: 616-827-2912 Email Address: william1914@gmail.com

* * * * * * * * * * *

If a student, supervisor/advisor’s name, affiliation, and signature:

Name: Raul Leon, Ph.D.

Affiliation: Eastern Michigan University, Assistant Professor, Educational Leadership

Address: John W. Porter Bldg., Suite 304

Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Signature of the Supervisor/Advisor

Date: 10/5

For more information, refer to:

Appendix B: UHSRC Approval

IRBNet Board Document Published

April Nelson <no-reply@irbnet.org> Wed, Jun 8, 2016 at 11:14 AM
Reply-To: April Nelson <human.subjects@emich.edu>
To: Raul Leon <rleon1@emich.edu>, William Washington <wwashin2@emich.edu>

Please note that Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Review Committee (UHSRC) has published the following Board Document on IRBNet:

Project Title: [904104-1] Perceptions of Cultural Competency Skills among Professional Housing and Residential Life Staff at Post-secondary Institutions
Principal Investigator: William Washington

Submission Type: New Project
Date Submitted: June 7, 2016

Document Type: Exempt Approval Letter
Document Description: Exempt Approval Letter
Publish Date: June 8, 2016

Should you have any questions you may contact April Nelson at human.subjects@emich.edu.

Thank you,
The IRBNet Support Team

www.irbnet.org

IRB exempt status

Human Subjects Review <gs_human_subjects@emich.edu> Wed, Jun 8, 2016 at 11:51 AM
To: William Washington <william1914@gmail.com>
Cc: Raul Leon <rleon1@emich.edu>

You are all set to move forward with your research=

Sincerely,

April
Appendix C: Request to ACUHO to Distribute Study

June 1, 2016

Dear,

My name is William Washington and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program at Eastern Michigan University (EMU). The proposed title of my dissertation is the Perceptions of Cultural Competency Skills among Professional Housing and Residential Life Staff in Postsecondary Institutions. After gaining approval from EMU’s Human Subjects Research Board (HSRB) my goal is to begin collecting data in June 2016. The purpose of this study is twofold: (1) to examine the perceptions of cultural competency amongst HRL staff; (2) to examine the individual characteristics of HRL staff members and their relationship to the perceived level of cultural competence in HRL staff. I plan on administering a web-based survey to GLACUHO institution staff members via email.

I am requesting your assistance with my research. I am asking for ACUHO-I to forward a drafted electronic request and survey link for participation in my research to GLACUHO members or providing me the email addresses of your current list of Housing staff at institutions that are designated within the GLACUHO region? Your willingness to support my research efforts is greatly appreciated and I would like to thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

William G. Washington III
Doctoral Student, Educational Leadership
Eastern Michigan University
Appendix D: Student Affairs Social Attitude Scale Preamble


Co-Investigator: Dr. Raul Leon

Thank you for your time and willingness to assist with this research. The purpose of this research study is to gain a better understanding of the Perceptions of Cultural Competency Skills for University & College Professional Residential Live in Staff. You were selected to participate in this survey because your input can assist in better understanding cultural competency within Housing and Residence Life staff.

You must be at least 18 years old to participate. You must be currently working within Housing and Residence Life at your institution in a non-clerical capacity. The survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes. Additionally, as a participant, you have an option to enter into a raffle for one of (8) $25 Visa gift cards at the end of the survey.

This survey is hosted via an upgraded version of Survey Monkey that provides security for all Web-based survey responses via the use of SSL (Secure Sockets layer) encryption. Despite this additional protection, the security of survey responses cannot be absolutely guaranteed. There are no foreseeable risks to you by completing this survey, as all results will be kept completely confidential. You are free to withdraw and discontinue at any time without penalty.

There will be no direct personal benefit to you, but your participation will contribute to your understanding and reflection of your experiences. I hope that the perspectives as professional Live in Housing personnel will serve to support the development of future professionals that focus on college culture and inclusivity of all students to support retention and graduation. Additionally, your perspectives could be used to develop additional academic success strategies within the professional field.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you do decide to participate, you can change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study without negative consequences. Results will be presented in aggregate form only. No names or individually identifying information will be revealed. Results may be presented at research meetings and conferences, in scientific publications, and as part of a doctoral dissertation.
being conducted by the principal investigator. If you have any questions concerning your participation in this study now or in the future, you can contact the principal investigator, William G. Washington III, at 616-827-2912 or via e-mail at wwashin2@emich.edu

This research protocol and informed consent document have been reviewed and approved by the Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Review Committee for use. If you have questions about the approval process, please contact the Director of the Graduate School (734.487.0042, human.subjects@emich.edu).

Consent to Participate: I have read or had read to me all of the above information about this research study, including the research procedures, possible risks, side effects, and the likelihood of any benefit to me. The content and meaning of this information has been explained and I understand. All my questions, at this time, have been answered. I hereby consent and do voluntarily offer to follow the study requirements and take part in the study.

Appendix E: First Invitation to Participate in the Study

Dear Housing and Residence Life Professional,

Thank you for your time and willingness to assist with this research. The purpose of this research study is to gain a better understanding of the Perceptions of Cultural Competency Skills for University & College Professional Housing and Residential Life Staff. You were selected to participate in this survey because your input can assist in better understanding cultural competency within Housing and Residence Life. I hope that the perspectives as professional Housing and Residence Life staff, will serve to support the development of future professionals that focus on college culture and inclusivity of all students to support retention and graduation. Additionally, your perspectives could be used to develop additional academic success strategies within the professional field.

There are no foreseeable risks to you by completing this survey, as all results will be kept completely confidential. You are free to withdraw and discontinue at any time without penalty. There will be no direct personal benefit to you, but your participation will contribute to your understanding and reflection of your experiences.

If you have any questions concerning your participation in this study now or in the future, you can contact the principal investigator, William G. Washington III, at 616-827-2912 or via e-mail at wwashin2@emich.edu

This research protocol and informed consent document have been reviewed and approved by the Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Review Committee for use. If you have questions about the approval process, please contact the Director of the Graduate School (734.487.0042, human.subjects@emich.edu).

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you are under no obligation to accept this invitation to participate. If you wish to participate, please click the link below to review the informed consent information and to begin the survey:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SASAScale

Sincerely,
William G. Washington III
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Leadership and Counseling
Eastern Michigan University
Appendix F: Second Invitation to Participate in the Study

Dear Housing and Residence Life Professional,

Previously, I sent you a survey questionnaire about my dissertation study which aims to gain more knowledge about cultural competency within Housing and Residence Life. Your response is critical to the findings. I appreciate you taking the time and your willingness to assist with this research.

The purpose of this research study is to gain a better understanding of the Perceptions of Cultural Competency Skills for University & College Professional Housing and Residential Life Staff. You were selected to participate in this survey because your input can assist in better understanding cultural competency within Housing and Residence Life. I hope that the perspectives as professional Housing and Residence Life staff, will serve to support the development of future professionals that focus on college culture and inclusivity of all students to support retention and graduation. Additionally, your perspectives could be used to develop additional academic success strategies within the professional field.

There are no foreseeable risks to you by completing this survey, as all results will be kept completely confidential. You are free to withdraw and discontinue at any time without penalty. There will be no direct personal benefit to you, but your participation will contribute to your understanding and reflection of your experiences.

If you have any questions concerning your participation in this study now or in the future, you can contact the principal investigator, William G. Washington III, via e-mail at wwashin2@emich.edu

This research protocol and informed consent document have been reviewed and approved by the Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Review Committee for use. If you have questions about the approval process, please contact the Director of the Graduate School (734.487.0042, human.subjects@emich.edu).

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you are under no obligation to accept this invitation to participate. If you wish to participate, please click the link below to review the informed consent information and to begin the survey:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SASAScale

Sincerely,
William G. Washington III
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Leadership and Counseling
Eastern Michigan University
Appendix G: Dissertation Approval Form