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Meeting Yourself Without Rose Colored Glasses: An Urban Charter

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MEETING YOURSELF WITHOUT ROSE COLORED GLASSES:
AN URBAN CHARTER

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Abstract

The impact of a culturally relevant professional development series on classroom teacher's cultural lens was determined. Fifty teachers from two different school districts participated in 16 hours of professional development in an attempt to impact their understanding of how culture and instruction are connected.

During the professional development, participants took part in activities, dialogues and reflections designed to impact their cultural competency. The content of the four professional development sessions included (a) videos on culturally relevant teaching; (b) discussion of cultural identity of participants and how it surfaces in the classroom; (c) discussion of the culture, values, and beliefs of the students in the classroom; (d) completion of written reflections after each session; and (e) participation of selected teachers in a semi-structured interview.

After administering the four professional development sessions, the results indicated that the cultural lenses of teachers were impacted. Professional educators indicated an increased level of self-awareness and a better understanding of cultural diversity and the impact that culture has on instruction.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Walking into a kindergarten class, there are 19 students sitting neatly, legs folded crisscross applesauce, on the perfect square colored tiles before the smart board. Twelve of the students are African-American, three students are of Hispanic descent, one student is Cambodian, one student is from Kenya, Africa, another student is from Saudi Arabia, and one student is of Korean descent. The classroom teacher is a 22 year veteran European American, female teacher. The students are engaged in the morning routine. The morning routine varies per classroom but typically includes activities such as attendance, lunch count, weather, review of the date, counting of the number of days school has been in session, and a review of the alphabet. As the students moved quickly from activity to activity, time came to review the alphabet chart. All of the students in unison cheerfully screamed, "A is for apple, B is for bobcat, C is for candle, D is for Dog, E is for elephant, F is for flag," and the list continued until the letter Z for zebra. Every single student participated and seemed to enjoy the alphabet recital.

As an elementary principal, Researcher A stopped by classrooms often to get a 10-15 minute glimpses of instruction. This particular day piqued my interest. The researcher wondered if the students in the classroom were able to make a connection between the word bobcat and the letter B? In addition, it has been probably five years at least since the researcher used a candle so it was interesting to see what connection the students made with the letter and the formation of words. After speaking with four of the kindergarten students, they each explained how B is for bobcat but could not articulate what a bobcat was and often referred to it as a cat. In the afternoon, Researcher A

stopped back by the same kindergarten class with a simple question for four different

students, "Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter B?" One student responded

bat and another responded ball, both African-American. The Hispanic student did not

respond and the Kenyan student thought intently but was unable to conjure up a

word. The researcher suspected the students could not connect the letter and sound of

"B" because bobcat was not something they could conceptualize. The students had likely

never seen a bobcat, it had not been a conversation in the home, and in their social

construct of reality it had no meaning. They could sing a rhyme through rote skills but

they could not make sense of the learning. If all students were asked the same question,

less than half of the students would be able to give additional authentic words that started

with the letter B. Lazar (2011) asserted students bring funds of knowledge to the

classroom with them and when teachers utilize this knowledge, motivation and student

engagement can be further increased. If literacy and learning are grounded in Vygotsky's

(1978) social constructivist view, which emphasizes the relationship between the social

context and the individual. Teachers must accept that students can build from their lived

experiences to create meaning in academic learning.

One 5th grade classroom had eighteen African-American students and one

Hispanic student. The class was engaged in a lesson on dividing decimals. The unit

objective stated, "Students will demonstrate reasoning skills and their conceptual

knowledge around whole numbers of multiplication and division to apply new learning of

division with decimals." After dialoguing with the teacher, Researcher A realized the

teacher was only interested in the content aspect of the math lesson and not the funds of

knowledge the students brought to the classroom. The teacher had extensive knowledge

around the algorithm and how the decimal was more about reflecting upon what was

reasonable than dividing. When asked how she planned to convey this understanding to

the students, she was adamant that once students understood the purpose of the algorithm

the students would develop an appreciation for use of the algorithm. After one week of

instruction and practice, 25% of the students were able to show proficiency on dividing

decimals when assessed. Graham Nuthall (2005) noted that teachers are often pleased

with their lesson when students are cooperative and engaged with the activities without

focusing on what the students actually learned from the activity. This experience was

typical of the school-wide standardized data which also mirrors the national achievement

trend data.

As two minority elementary principals, we serve majority African-American

students. School A has 378 students with 88% African-American, 6.4% Hispanic, and

5.6% other. School B has 374 students with 51.6% African-American, 29.5% White,

9.8% multiracial, 8.0% Hispanic, and 1.1% other. The free and reduced lunch count is

over 80% at both schools. The teacher to student ratio is 16:1 at School A and 18:1 at

School B. According to the state assessment data, School A shows 30% proficiency in

ELA, 28% proficiency in math, and 22% proficiency in science. School B shows 41%

proficiency in ELA, 19% proficiency in math, and 21.9% proficiency in science. As

instructional leaders we witnessed the ingrained teaching rituals on a daily basis. Graham

Nuthall (2005) states regardless of the standard or taught curriculum, students learn about

teachers and classrooms from their own experiences of being a student. When the

student must drop his/her culture at the schoolhouse door, how does he/she enter the

learning cycle?

For the first time in history, non-White students make up 50.3% of students enrolled in public schools (Maxwell, 2014). The growth in Asian and Latino population produced the change as did the decline in the white population and flat growth of Black population. While the classroom population is shifting, the teaching force is not. As of 2016, non-Hispanic white teachers made up 82% of public school teachers in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). So how do we teach a growing group of students that we traditionally have not been able to fully educate at the same rate of their White counterparts? In the past there was no incentive to address this problem because the majority was being well-educated. Now we must address the cultural competence of teachers in order to meet the needs of a diverse population. There is a correlation between students' achievement difficulties and lack of competency teaching culturally diverse learners (Gay, 2000). The dramatic change in student demographics forces us to examine how teachers with diverse students/learners need to scaffold and support them with culturally relevant teaching strategies.

Many teacher educators have struggled to prepare teachers to meet the needs of culturally diverse learners. Educators lack the cultural competencies needed to teach children who live in poverty, or those who are ethnically, culturally, and/or linguistically diverse in the classroom (NEA, 2008). Pre-service teachers are prepared by their university programs to teach to mainstream White America, not diverse learners (Sleeter, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Gay, 2010).   With the demographic changes, teacher educators need to prepare linguistically and culturally responsive teachers for students whose backgrounds and values are different from the mainstream learners and a majority of teachers (Dantas, 2007). The goal of this study was to develop a four part professional

development series for teachers in the two schools described to see if the series impacts

their cultural lens.

More than 20 years ago, Ladson-Billings (1994) stated that no challenge has been

more daunting than that of improving the academic achievement of African American

students. Research shows that White teachers consider White and Asian students to be

more teachable than African American or Latino students. White teachers refer children

of color to special education more often than White children who come from the same

background as themselves (Delpit, 1988). Disproportionality is not only a factor with the

number of special education referrals for minority students, but also with the widespread

inequities related to school punishment of minority students compared to their White

counterparts (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Classroom educators yield greater success educating African-American students

when the students are allowed to bring their authentic selves into the classroom. This

four part professional development series provide teachers the opportunity to look at the

role their own culture played in their lives and gain an increased perspective of their

students' culture. Through examining the impact of race, culture and class on individuals

and groups, teachers could then see how the larger society plays out in the

classroom. Teachers need to determine if their current pedagogical approach is

appropriate in garnering success for all students. Participating in the ritualized act of

teaching is only working for one group of students. This study is an attempt to see what

impact a professional development series had on teachers' cultural lenses.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

On Dec. 9, 2015, while presiding over the Fisher vs University of Texas case, United States Supreme Justice Antonin Scalia openly and honestly stated, "There are those who contend that it does not benefit African-Americans to get them into the University of Texas where they do not do well, as opposed to having them go to the less-advanced school, a less–a slower-track school where they do well." Judge Scalia continued on to sum up his thoughts by saying, "I'm just not impressed by the fact that University of Texas may have fewer. Maybe it ought to have fewer" (Time, 2015). Judge Scalia represented the thoughts, beliefs and sentiments of many. He too is a product of his culture. He, along with many others, represent how the power of culture impacts educational institutions across the United States.

Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell (2009) defined culture as a combination of a person's values, beliefs, language, traditions, learning styles, and relational patterns...culture are those filters that help us as humans make sense out of ordinary things (p. 115). Culture helps to define how we think and create knowledge. Our understanding and view of the world is socially constructed (Gay, 2002). All things are impacted by our cultural understanding, including teaching and learning.

Judge Scalia (2015) interpreted his views of the world through his life experiences as Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (SCT) suggests. By examining the social world in which his lived experiences occur, his interpretation may have validity in his eyes. Sociocultural theory sheds light on the how people think differently between cultures because different cultures stress different norms and values (Valenzuela, Connery, & Musanti, 2000). SCT is a lens to explore how teachers and students create

knowledge through their sociocultural experiences. Vygotsky (1978) focuses on the

connection of humans and the sociocultural context in which they operate. From this

idea, cultural norms such as language, writing, values, and beliefs are derived from the

social environment. Just as Judge Scalia is unaware of the bias in his belief system,

classroom teachers may experience the same unconscious reality. The Sociocultural

Theory is the basis for how students learn, why social interactions are important in the

classroom, and the role that lived experiences plays in learning. However, it is difficult to

truly engage in social interactions if some students lived experiences are not acceptable

or viewed as valuable in the classroom.

     According to Gay (2013), "It is futile for educators to claim they can attend to the

needs of students without engaging their cultural socialization and to expect students to

divorce themselves from their cultural heritages easily and at will" (p. 48).   Vygotsky

theorized that learning takes place through social interactions but the theory is based

upon an inherent expert-novice relationship (Gay, 2013). In this expert-novice scenario,

the teacher is always the expert and the student is always the novice. With this setup,

there is no room for the teacher to learn from or about the student only for the student to

learn from and about the teacher. Sociocultural theory lacks the proposal that learning is

and should be a two way process in order to address the cultural competence needed for

optimal communication and learning (Barker, Quennerstedt, & Annerstedt, 2015).

Sociocultural Theory does not address the need to build relationships and communicate in

a manner that is culturally responsive. SCT focuses on the individual learning

characteristics and does not address the group socialization process. SCT suggests that

all members of the classroom come from the same group or cultural background and

knowledge is communicated and attained in the same manner. That is not true of

classrooms today in which there is much diversity and at times the teacher is of a

different cultural background than all of the students. For example, in the two schools in

which the research was conducted, 75% or more of the teachers were Caucasian, but the

student population was much more diverse. Therefore, SCT alone does not provide a

sufficient framework for extending learning from an individualistic and/or common

group perspective into the multicultural facet of current classrooms. All members of the

classroom were not of the same social-cultural background in the buildings where the

study was conducted. Therefore, the sociocultural theory alone does not provide a full

framework.

Properly educating the minority is and has been a social justice issue that is rooted

in racism (Berotocchi & Arcangelo, 2012). While race and culture are two separate

concepts, race relations in the U.S. are a major contributor to the deficient education of

African-American students. Therefore, an additional lens to explore the idea of ethnicity

and minority education experiences is through the Critical Race Theory (CRT). A quality

education is required for students to succeed in the 21st century. President Obama signed

the Every Child Succeeds Act on Dec. 11, 2015. President Obama (2015) reiterated, "the

bill reaffirms the fundamental American ideal that every child regardless of race, income,

background, or zip code where they live has the chance to make out of their lives what

they will." (USA Today, 12/11/15). According to the current disproportionalities of

minority students being underserved in the American education system, the goal remains

unachieved.

The Critical Race Theory centers on five key assertions:

1). Racism has played a key role in school structure and practices. Through methods such as tracking, low expectations of African-American students, meritocracy and the use of intelligence testing, teachers of African-American students have bought into stereotypical beliefs.

2). The dominant group determines and places value on the cultural, language, and societal norms that are acceptable. Therefore, students not adhering to the dominant social and cultural norms are not highly regarded.

3). CRT is a social justice issue with the vision of one day eliminating racism and empowering underserved students.

4). The experience of African-American students is real and should be respected. Students should be able to draw from their experiences to make sense of their learning. Therefore, teachers must attempt to understand and utilize the strengths African-American students bring to class.

5). CRT is derived from interdisciplinary research which expands the boundaries into many disciplines. The Critical Race Theory asserts how racism is common in American DNA (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

A particular focus on tenets #1, #2, and #4 bridges the gap that the SCT dismisses. The multicultural classroom has a cultural hierarchy that requires some students to abandon their cultural values and when there is resistance it damages the learning process. In addition, students need to bring their experiences to the classroom in order to make sense of the learning. When those experiences are welcomed and accepted, trust can then be built and the learning process can deepen. Therefore, an examination of culturally responsive teaching is incomplete without a discussion around

the CRT.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of the proposed intervention is to develop a four session professional development series, which will deepen staff and teacher understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy in order to increase the academic outcomes of African-American students living in poverty. In order to produce a series that embeds cultural relevance into pedagogy, cultural relevancy must also be embedded into the culture of the school. The first session of the series asked teachers to define their multiple identities. In essence, Who am I? Then the staff will examine and define who the students are, as well as the community. Teachers continue to look at themselves as well as others. The third day of the series discusses the classroom environment and includes culturally relevant pedagogy. The program will encompass tools and habits of mind. The last day of the series was set aside for teachers to discuss and share their transformation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.   What is the impact on teachers of a four day professional development series on understanding issues through the cultural lens of Critical Race Theory (CTR)?

2.   How has a culturally relevant professional development series impacted the instruction of teachers?

DELIMITATIONS

1.   Only two urban, impoverished schools were included in this study.

2.   Those surveyed included only classroom teachers in both buildings, not other staff members who interact daily with students and also participated in the PD series.

3.   Students were not interviewed to learn the student perception or impact in the

classroom.

ASSUMPTIONS

Reasons for the failure of minority children in the elementary setting might be the result of culturally relevant pedagogy among other factors which may influence the successful school experience of minority students.

KEY TERMINOLOGY

Anchor Chart   A visual display of knowledge on chart

paper which outlines or describes processes,

procedures and/or

information

Awareness   The willingness to recognize and accept

differences across cultures.

Competence   Ability to interact effectively with persons

from another culture.

Cultural Responsive Teaching   "The use of cultural knowledge, prior

experiences, frames of reference and

performance styles of ethnically diverse

students to make learning encounters more

relevant and effective" (Gay, 2013).

Minority   Not being considered part of the larger

group due to

differences in race, religion, nationality,

sexual, or political affiliation (Miller&

Glick, 1993).

Perceptions	The process by which the five senses impacts knowledge and insights into how people behave.
Responsiveness	The ability to respond in a culturally sensitive way
Teacher Attitude/Beliefs	One's viewpoint, disposition and/or attitude. "An attitude can have three components: affective (feelings toward the object), cognitive (belief or knowledge about the object), and behavioral predisposition to act toward the attitude object" (Finn, 1996).
Veteran Teacher	An individual with five or more years of teaching experience

ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter 1 provided an introduction as well as an overview of the current study which is the creation and implementation of a culturally relevant professional development series. This introductory chapter included the Problem Statement**,** Theoretical Framework, Purpose Statement, Research Questions, Delimitations, Assumptions and Key Terminology. Chapter 2 further investigates the literature used for the current study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Classroom teachers must be ready and able to adapt to the diverse learners in the classroom. This section lays the foundation for the model of professional development created and implemented using the Gradual Release of Responsibility. An overview of the importance that identity plays in closing the achievement gap will be addressed. A review of the impact of race and class on student learning is presented. An exploration of culturally relevant pedagogy concludes the literature review.

Identity

On May 17, 1954, separate public schools for Blacks and Whites were deemed unconstitutional from the ruling of Brown vs. Board of Education in Topeka, KS (Gay, 2004). The ruling was a bold step forward promoting racial equality. However, the law simply gave African-Americans and other minorities the right to be in the same building as Whites but it did not solve the racial inequalities (Banks, 1993). As Banks (1993) and Gay (2004) stated the lack of institutional changes that were made after the ruling including curriculum, materials, attitudes, and behaviors of teachers and administrators suggested the minority students were expected to arrive at their new schools and act like the White students. No attention was given to the idea that the Black students would arrive with a rich history and cultural identities that helped them understand the world as they learned to see it.

The majority of public school teachers are suburban, middle-class, white females (U.S. Department of Education, 2007-2008). The majority of public school-aged students are of a different class and racial/cultural background. Culturally competent

teachers are able to reflect on their identity development and make a connection as to how their identity influences their teaching style and interactions with students (Han, Olatunji, & Thomas, 2011; Howard, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).   Teachers teach how they were taught as well as their primary beliefs, what they know, and what they value (Banks, 1994; Howard, 2006; Nieto, 2000).

At the beginning of each school year, teachers typically introduce themselves to the students. The introduction usually entails to some degree: name, marital status, number of children, pets, hobbies, recent vacations, degrees, and other professional and personal identity characteristics. Through the progression of the year, students learn more about the classroom teacher through stories and other pieces of information shared, consciously or unconsciously (Han et al., 2011). Students typically will learn if their teacher is Polish-American, Irish American, Jewish-American, Italian, etc. Teachers share this information to make a connection with students and to help students understand what the teacher values. Teachers who understand their own cultural heritage can then learn about their students' culture and lived experiences to effectively communicate with the students (Nieto, 1999). In order for teachers to be culturally competent, an assessment of personal viewpoints, cultural beliefs, and biases are necessary (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Engagement with the social world occurs at the earliest stages of life. Humans not only seek out but prefer learning through interactions with others (Bonn, 2015). The adaptation of behaviors in different environments demonstrates our ability to be flexible to maintain social interactions. Laland, Odling-Smee, & Feldman (2000) described culture as "a human created environmental niche held together by symbols and practices

that are passed along across generations" (p. 1). Bonn (2014) further explained how culture is an integral part of understanding one's existence, establishing ideas about self, and making sense of one's existence in the world. Culture plays a critical role in identity development.

Part of the maturation process is figuring out "who am I?" The answer comes from a variety of sources: family, historical factors, political contexts, peers, individual characteristics, social contexts, teachers, and media. (Tatum, 2000). Identity is a complex concept that is formed over time. However, the foundation is laid during childhood experiences. These experiences influence who will be chosen as mates, future occupations, living arrangements, belief systems, parenting styles, and many other life choices. As teacher educators, understanding how culture continually influences one's life journey is essential to examining the identity-achievement connection (Noguera, 2002).

When a teacher can understand his/her own identity there is an openness and understanding of the importance of learning about their students' culture (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). When analyzing identities, it is typical to identify the things that other people point out first or stands out like: shy, gifted, friendly, Black, Puerto Rican, and homosexual. However, those in dominant groups rarely point out what is perceived as normal: White, heterosexual, male. Some portions of our identity are taken for granted because it is part of the dominant culture. There are seven categories that are often used to define identity: race or ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical or mental ability.

As each category is used to define an individual, there is a form of oppression

associated with each category as well (Tatum, 2000). Most people are in dominant

groups and oppressed groups at the same time. However, attention is generally held with

the oppressed identity and an acceptance of the dominant identity. A White, middle-class

female teacher may not understand the importance of how an African-American student

perceives him/herself differently from the majority group.   Good teaching encompasses

cultural awareness of the cultural values, communication style, learning styles, and

traditions of the students.

 "Some of the most crucial discontinuities in the classrooms occur in the areas of

cultural values, patterns of communication and cognitive processing, task performance or

work habits, self-presentation styles, and approaches to problem solving" (Gay, 1993, p.

95). In order to teach the students, the teacher must know the content knowledge as well

as the students. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and zones of proximal development

informed teachers about developmental stages of learning and provided insight on

developing the social context of learning (Petrova, 2013). However, African-American

students can be in a situation of trying to navigate three different experiences: home

culture, mainstream culture, and a culture of oppression as a powerless group (Neisser,

1986).

Impact of Race and Class on Student Learning

Race and culture are often erroneously used interchangeably (Jay, 2002).

However, many people confuse race with norms and culture (Jay, 2002). Culture is

described as what society deems as the most popular characteristic demonstrated by

people in the same race according to Jay (2002). People of the same race are not

necessarily of the same culture. People of common origins might have similar physical

traits but that has minimal correlation to personality traits, intelligence or behavior

(Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). The learning and professional development for the

intervention series focused on culture, not race. However, to ignore the role that race and

racism has played in the education of the underserved would leave the study lacking. The

social construct of race was created for the purpose of deeming one group superior over

another (Banks, 1995). According to Orfield and Lee (2005), there is a correlation

between the culture of minority students and teacher expectations, treatment, and

opportunities made available. Graham-Johnson (2014) completed a study on how

professional development can be the vehicle to help teachers build cultural competency

in order to create a more inclusive classroom. Racism has shaped and defined the

education of minorities, especially African-Americans, differently than for White

Americans.

Racism plays an intricate and devastating role in all parts of society: politics, legal

system, education, social life, etc. Racism can be subtle and easily socially acceptable

(Hughes & Giles, 2010). There have been many studies to show how culture and race

negatively impacts the academic achievement of minority students (Fordham & Ogbu

1986; Hilliard, 1978, 1992; Ogbu, 2003, 1978; Wright, 2003). According to Orfield and

Lee (2005), there is an obvious correlation between culture of minority students and

teacher expectation, treatment, and opportunities made available to students.

Consequently, the relationship between racism and high quality teaching and learning

must be explored if we are to impact structures, processes, and value systems in our

schools. CRT is a framework that can be used to reframe stereotypical thinking and

create a learning space so that our staff can learn counter-narratives and begin to consider

a culturally relevant pedagogical approach to teaching.

The idea and understanding of race is a socially constructed concept created to separate groups by superiority and inferiority (Banks, 1995). Manning Marable (1992) perfectly describes how racism and culture became entangled when he defined racism as, "a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific Americans, American Indians, and other people on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerisms, and color." (p. 72).   Racism by its very nature has shaped the education of African-American students differently than that of Caucasian students and from that, racism and culture have become blended.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

The changes in student cultural diversity were noticed nearly two decades ago as the teaching population remained the same (Snyder & Hoffman, 2002). In 2003, 83.5% of the teaching staff was non-Hispanic White while 42% of the student population was non-White (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Present day, 82% of the teaching force is non-Hispanic White while 50.3% of the student population is non-White (Maxwell, 2014). This demographic trend will continue as the Asian and Latino population continues to grow, immigration from other countries persists, the White population continues to decline and the Black population remains at a steady but flat growth rate (Maxwell, 2014). Grant and Wieczorek (2000) share the notion that a monoculture staff of teachers is responsible for successfully educating culturally diverse learners. This creates an academic effect and has social implications for culturally diverse learners according to Ladson-Billings (2001). Studies have shown there is a correlation between teacher's cultural competency and culturally diverse learners' achievement level

(Gay, 2000; Gollnick & Chinn, 2002; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006). In addition, a larger scale study of 62 school was completed by Jennifer Coleman (2014) in an effort to increase the cultural competence of teachers through professional development activities. In the past, there was no immediate need to address the growing concern of minority students who are not achieving at the same levels as their Caucasian counterparts.   The majority of the population was being well-educated. The change in demographics now presents a need to examine and address the underachievement of minority students.

The diversity experienced in classrooms today justifies the need for culturally relevant pedagogy. "Culturally relevant pedagogy maintains that teachers need to be non-judgmental and inclusive of the cultural backgrounds of their students in order to be effective facilitators of learning in the classroom" (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011, p. 66).   Academic success is determined by each student's performance based on the standard the state sets as a system of accountability. So all tested students are compared to the normed performance of White students since they have traditionally been the majority and who the education system was geared towards (Berin, 2006). Hilliard (2003) argued that the state standardized testing does not accurately measure achievement as it does not take into account the linguistic, cultural, and experiential differences that should be taken into account. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2015) mathematics and reading scores for Whites have traditionally been higher than Blacks and Hispanics across all grade levels since the inception of the data collection in 1990. There is an approximate 20 point difference when math scores of minority students as compared to those of White students and an

increased difference of 30 points from 24 points in reading scores according to the

National Center for Educational Statistics (2015).   Fryer and Levitt (2004) make the

point that there is typically one standard deviation in scores of Blacks versus White

counterparts in reading and math. While other factors should be considered regarding

academic achievement, the relationship between culturally relevant teaching, ethnicity,

and academic achievement of minorities must be acknowledged.

Geneva Gay (2002) believes the underachievement of African-American students

can be reduced through culturally relevant teaching. Gay (2002) outlines five essential

components for a pedagogical approach to culturally relevant teaching:

1. Teachers must possess explicit knowledge around cultural diversity.

2. Teachers should deliver curriculum that is culturally diverse.

3. Teachers should create a climate centered on learning and caring.

4. Teachers must know how to effectively communicate with students from diverse

    backgrounds.

5. Teachers must match instructional techniques to the learning styles of the

    students.

Culturally relevant teaching cannot be achieved by simply following a list of

tasks. Each of Gays' components must be attended to in order to reach diverse learners.

Gloria Ladson-Billings also was evaluating the needs of diverse learners and pedagogy.

Ladson-Billings (1995) describes the three components of culturally relevant pedagogy as

"1,) students must experience academic success; 2,) development and maintenance of

cultural competence; 3,) development of a critical consciousness which challenges the

status quo of the social order" (p. 160). Educators may look to Gay and Ladson-Billings

pedagogies and understand the ideas that are conveyed by each author, but are still

lacking the practical application in the classroom. In the book, *Educating Culturally*

Responsive Teachers, Villegas and Lucas (2002) discuss three initial strands that

comprise the fundamental orientations for teaching a changing student population.

Villegas and Lucas (2002) often mention preservice or prospective teachers, but the ideas

and concepts shared within their text are applicable to current educators. Education in

many communities of color, as well as many poor White communities, is in a state of

crisis (Sleeter, 2001). Although the emphasis is placed on preservice teachers, we need

to move forward with some of the training that practicing teachers should have received

in their early college careers. Villegas and Lucas (2002) present six curriculum strands

for educating a changing population of learners. The strands are: Gaining Sociocultural

Consciousness, Developing an Affirming Attitude Toward Students from Culturally

Diverse Backgrounds, Developing the Commitment and Skills to Act as Agents of

Change, Embracing Constructivist Views of Knowledge, Learning and Teaching,

Learning About Students and Their Communities, and Cultivating Culturally Responsive

Teaching Practices (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 26). They conclude their discussion of

the strands by stating that the extensive knowledge and sophisticated skills of culturally

responsive teachers develop only with experience. In fact, becoming a culturally

responsive teacher is a lifelong process.

Gradual Release of Responsibility as a Framework for PD Series

In the book, *Better Learning Through Structured Teaching*, Fisher and Frey

(2012) suggest "learning occurs through interactions with others; when these interactions

are intentional, specific learning outcomes" (p. 1). Fisher and Frey (2012) introduce the

framework for the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) as an instructional method to allow students to assume 100% of the responsibility of learning. The instructional model is grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and his work on zones of proximal development and tenets 1, 2 and 4 of the Critical Race theory (CRT) can be seamlessly woven into the instructional model to produce a culturally competent model of instruction. This belief is held because the GRR is in direct opposition with the ritual of teaching which includes the teacher sharing his/her expertise on a concept through direct instruction, students listen while a few may ask questions, and then an assignment is completed to demonstrate proficiency with the concept. This traditional method of teaching does not allow students to bring their culture into the classroom, only the teacher's cultural values exist.

In the traditional classroom there are two phases, I do it and you do it alone. This model occurs often in the classrooms in our buildings. A teacher will demonstrate how to divide with decimals using the algorithm and then students are to try a problem on their own. Another example is when teachers read aloud a text, ask a couple of questions then require students to complete comprehension questions. An even more startling method that has been witnessed is when there is no instruction rendered and students are in the Independent Learning phase completing a packet, worksheet and/or questions from the text. In order for the GRR to effectively occur in the classroom, the teacher must not only know their content but must also know their students and their students' understanding of the content.

There are four essential stages of the GRR: First, "I Do It" phase also known as Focused Instruction; The teacher establishes a clear learning purpose which describes the

relevance of the lesson to everyday life and how the skill or concept will solve potential problems. "We Do It" phase two, also known as Guided Instruction, allow the students to work together in purposeful, small groups to share their understanding of the concept. During this time the teacher meets with the small groups to provide differentiation to content, process, and product according to the students' understanding. Cues, prompts, and questions help the teacher to guide the students to more complex thinking. Phase three, "You Do It Together" or Collaborative Learning is when students work in pairs to discuss and engage in inquiry with a partner around the concept and apply what they have learned. This stage again allows for meaningful interactions with peers and the content which can be rooted in how the concept connects to the student's experience with the learning. This is an opportunity to build upon other student's ideas and express individual ideas. The final stage is "I Do It Alone" or Independent Learning. Students are to apply the information learned to produce a new product. While this instructional method can be effective, it does not clarify how or when to allow opportunities for cultural connections to be expressed by the student or teacher.

The first stage of GRR is focused instruction: establishing the purpose of the lesson, modeling strategies and skills, modeling the thinking required, and noticing how students are responding to the teaching (Fisher & Frey, 2013). In this phase of the learning, it is imperative that students understand the purpose of the concept or skill being taught. Knowledge about the learner is extremely important. If the students are not vested in the purpose for learning, they might miss the expert demonstration. The purpose for learning measurement might be to design a garden bed but some Black and Hispanic students may have heard suffrage stories about sharecropping. The students'

cultural heritage might create reluctance to learn about the concept due to lack of value. Focused instruction is the opportunity to observe the teacher model the thinking required and share his/her experiences around the task in accordance to SCT.   The addition of tenet 4 from CRT asks the teacher to recognize and respect the experiences of students while recognizing potential biases and personal stereotypical beliefs.

Guided Instruction is the second stage of GRR. This is the prime opportunity for teachers to differentiate based upon content, process, or product (Fisher & Frey, 2014). Through small group instruction with intentional grouping and planning, teachers can address gaps in learning. For example, in a 2nd grade classroom the teacher has delivered a focus instruction lesson on finding supporting details in a text. The thinking and how to use a graphic organizer as the repeatable strategy has been modeled. Students are asked to work with table partners for the next example before groups change. As table partners work on the new example, the teacher is moving around the room with a clipboard noting student responses. A few cues are given to ignite some students thinking but overall the partners are working to identify the supporting details in the reading. The teacher is noting those who have the correct answer and can explain why, those who may have the correct answer but cannot explain their thinking which indicates they are using procedural steps instead of conceptually understanding the concept and a third category of those who cannot explain their thinking, are not appropriately using the graphic organizer and do not have the correct answer. Fisher and Frey (2014) suggests this is an opportunity to group those who clearly understand with students who just need a bit more support and the teacher can work with the group struggling with the concept. The teacher might have a different, more simplistic graphic organizer available or a series of

questions or prompts to ask. The goal of guided instruction is to provide the needed

support so that students can reach the expectations (Fisher & Frey, 2014). However, with

the addition of tenet 2 of CRT, the teacher understands this is an opportunity to provide

cultural context for some struggling students. The teacher might reference the student's

role on the basketball team and how he/she provides support to the other players. The

teacher may ask how the student supports grandmother when she is preparing dinner?

Then the teacher can briefly re-explain the similarities between supporting details and

supporting grandma in the kitchen or the team on the basketball court. The Cultural

Competency Model of Instruction allows a personal avenue into the cognitive process

that is based upon SCT and CRT.

The third stage of GRR is collaborative learning, which is often overlooked. This

is an opportunity for students to discuss ideas and information with peers and bring their

lived experiences into the learning, naturally supporting SCT. Students need to,

"encounter tasks that will reveal their partial understandings and misconceptions as well

as confirm what they already know" (Fisher & Frey, 2014, p. 7). Students can only move

towards a richer understanding when they understand information and think deeply about

what a partner says and what they will say (Fisher & Frey, 2014). The addition of tenet 4

of CRT encourages students to bring their own experiences and cultural histories into the

learning to make sense of the concept while participating in accountable talk and using

academic language.

Independent learning is the final stage of GRR. "The ultimate goal of instruction

is students are able to independently apply information, ideas, content, skills, and

strategies in unique situations" (Fisher & Frey, 2014, p. 10). With the appropriate

support, students can meet the expectation and achieve this standard. Many times, students are asked to complete independent tasks without receiving appropriate instruction and practice. Through the use of the GRR instructional method, students practice at least two times and have expert modeling of the skill or concept before students are asked to engage in the learning alone. The addition of tenets from CRT and the natural flow of SCT, students are not required to leave their authentic selves at the door and are better equipped to demonstrate competency of the learning.

Effective instruction requires that teachers know their content and students (Fisher & Frey, 2014). The deep work of teaching requires designing instruction that involves deep content and serious consideration of the students (Reeves, 2011). A learner centered classroom focuses on the thinking learners will do, the intellectual skills learners will develop, the take away from the classroom events and experiences, and the long-term outcomes (Reeves, 2011). The addition of CRT creates a Culturally Competent Model of Instruction that allows, in addition to the framework of GRR, the opportunity and priority to connect the students' cultural lives to the learning thus connecting lived experiences to instruction. This methodology is applicable to student and adult learners.

The professional development series was presented using the Culturally Competent Model of Instruction. A shift away from an activity centered approach to a learning focused approach was required with students and adults. The lesson plan should not serve as a checklist, agenda or schedule of events but as a guide to what participants will learn and to what degree, how they will acquire the learning, and how the learning will be demonstrated. "We are born knowing how to learn, but our natural ways of learning are not always included in schooling" (Reeves, 2011, p. 157). As Vygotsky

(1978) theorizes, humans are social beings stimulated by interacting with other people. CRT asserts that when students are asked to abandon their cultural values, there is damage to the learning process.

According to Gay (2002), professional development should focus on three things: learning factual information about specific characteristics of different ethnic and cultural groups, understanding the pedagogical implications of the cultural characteristics, and developing a philosophy for cultural context teaching.

Impact of Professional Development on Teachers

When thinking about how much time educators have wasted in PD for things they already know, the feeling of frustration is understandable. It is not beneficial to participate in a PD on classroom management when that is not an issue in the classroom. However, when the PD allows the teacher to focus on a particular student who displays challenging behavior, the teacher might be more vested. Generalized trainings and one size fits all trainings do not work for most teachers. As both educators and researchers, the PD experiences that stand out allow us to have a voice, allow us to bring authentic scenarios to the learning, and also made us aware of a gap or opportunity for improvement.

Attempting to provide transformative PD requires time. The development of the PD must be well planned and tailored. And there must be time for the participants to experiment with the learning, reflect and revise (Avalos, 2011). The four series PD for the research project will require 16 hours of intensive learning and the teachers will extend their learning to the classroom. In session 1, it is important for teachers to make the connection of how valuable their culture has been in forming their identity and

helping them navigate the world. The teachers will provide evidence around their culture and then reflect over the next few weeks. The teachers will develop action steps for themselves to complete before the next session. Session 2 will develop knowledge about their student's cultural backgrounds. The teachers will again collect evidence, reflect and create action steps for the next session. Session 3 will explore the cultural hierarchy in our school, pedagogy and in particular, culturally relevant pedagogy. The final session will begin with Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices and end with roundtable discussion around our findings, thoughts and learning with the hopes of pedagogical shifts being evidenced. We believe this praxis approach to be in accordance with Gay (2000) who states, professional development should focus on three things: learning factual information about specific characteristics of different ethnic and cultural groups, understanding the pedagogical implications of the cultural characteristics, and developing a philosophy of cultural context teaching. There is no expectation for teachers to leave the PD as culturally responsive teachers, which is a lifelong process (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Purpose and Research Questions

Each year the Fine Arts department hosts a Spring Musical which parents attend the evening performance to see their child in the spotlight. The students practice January through March and work to perfect every line. This is the one event which academics is not a barrier. The music teacher reviewed the proposed plan for the musical. The teacher had all of the material and songs ready for my review. As we sat in my office, the music

teacher explained there will be spoken commentary, singing and acting. He explained that

several teachers had signed on to help and was quite excited about the potential of the

program. He went on to explain the play would be about John Henry and there would be

several instances of students narrating the acting and five songs throughout the program.

He stated he wanted to run a couple of songs by me because one of the teachers in the

building thought it might be controversial. I obliged and listened as he sang the song the

students would learn. The lyrics were as follows:

> Ole Massa told the slaves,
>
> Pick a bale of cotton,
>
> Ole Massa told the slaves,
>
> Pick a bale a day. A-pick a bale, a-pick a bale, a-pick a bale of cotton
>
> A-pick a bale, a-pick a bale, a-pick a bale a day.

I stood in amazement! I was speechless but I gained my composure as this could be a

teachable moment. I asked him to think about his audience and what might be the

controversy his colleague suggested might be a problem. He stated he did not think there

would be a controversy because he would teach the song in context to the story of John

Henry. So I asked what happens when a student is singing the song at home while

practicing for the musical, what might a parent say? He said he would take any calls that

might come but it is not likely there will be problem. He went on to say his colleague just

has him paranoid for no reason because he does not see anything wrong with the music

selections or spoken parts that include southern dialect.

The music teacher needed to strengthen his cultural lens as do many of the

teachers at my school. Teachers must be culturally responsive in all subjects and grade

levels. The purpose of this study is to see if the professional development series impacted the teachers' cultural lens. The data collected was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the impact on teachers of a four day professional development series on understanding issues through the cultural lens of CRT?

2. How has the culturally relevant professional development series impacted the instruction of teachers?

Rationale and Assumption for Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is, "an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in natural settings" (Creswell, 1998, p. 1-2). Upon examining Creswell's (1998, 2013) work on qualitative research, this study meets the criteria for qualitative research because it:

1). It emphasized process and outcomes were not the focus. The process by which teachers' cultural lens changed was the central focus for this study while the outcome could vary.   There was no true intended outcome that would be measured.

2). It emphasized making meaning of life experiences. The interview focused on each individual's life experiences in the formation of their cultural lens. The teacher reflections provided insight through written thoughts. The life experiences were important to the "why" and "how".

3). The researcher typically collected and analyzed the data. The data collection was conducted by both researchers through interviews, teacher reflections, and

artifacts. Both researchers also analyzed the data.

4). Fieldwork was required. Both researchers designed and implemented the four

series professional development program in order to collect the data.

5). The format of the research was descriptive. The full study was descriptive as

no surveys or other instruments were used. Responses were from interviews,

teacher reflections, and artifacts. The majority of the study was descriptive in

nature.

6). The researchers took an inductive approach. Through the examination of the

data, emerging themes arose to help the researchers form an understanding of the

phenomenon. It was through examination of the data from the interviews and

teacher reflections that the themes emerged and were different than expected at

the onset of the research.

Type of Design

The case study approach was used in an effort to focus on an issue within a

system. The qualitative case study design allows for a deep study of a phenomenon. The

four key questions Yin (2003) shared for choosing a case study approach include: (a) the

goal is to learn about the "how" and "why"; (b) behaviors cannot be manipulated; (c)

there is possible contextual background that may be relevant to the study; (d) there is not

clarity between the context and the case. Using this distinction, the phenomenon of

cultural competence professional development in two minority schools in order to

examine the impact on teachers' pedagogical approach was examined. This design is the

most feasible of qualitative designs for this study.

According to Miles and Hubermann (1994) a case is, "a phenomenon of some sort

occurring in a bounded context" (p. 25). Creswell, Hanson, Plano-Clark and Morales (2007) described case study research as "a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system or multiple bounded systems over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reports a case description and case based themes" (p. 245). Investigating the impact of a cultural competence professional development on cultural lens of the elementary teachers from two different schools met the criteria for a bounded system while the four part series adhered to the overtime criteria.

The benefit of the multi-case study was the ability to make comparisons and replicate the study. According to Baxter and Jack (2008), "A multiple case study enables researchers to explore within and between cases" (p. 548). This type of study allowed both principals to look at the similarities and differences across settings. In addition, the use of two similar schools generated more data thus helping with the reliability of the study. Qualitative case studies allow an examination of experiences and perspective, in this case, how the cultural lens of the teachers was formed and the impact of professional development on their cultural lens.

The Role of the Researchers

As dual researchers, both principals were responsible for researching, designing, and implementing the professional development created for the teaching staff. Due to the emic role in this qualitative research, the building principals as researchers have some potential bias and judgment that will be made explicit.

Both principals have been embedded within their schools for several years. Principal A has been working with her faculty and students for five years and Principal B

for seven years. Their unique interconnectedness allowed them an access and familiarity with all stakeholders. Both school leaders feel a special connection to the students they serve and want to be able foster the skills necessary to be successful, contributing individuals. This cannot be accomplished without the support and efforts of the teaching staff. Many members of the faculty have been with the leaders for years and were hired by the building principals.

Despite the closeness and appreciation of all that the staff does, both principals recognize the disconnect when educating the children. The researchers are seeking to alter the lens that teachers often use to view and teach children of color. Teaching is difficult in the best circumstances and teaching minority, urban children is complex. The work to become truly effective educators in urban schools requires a new approach to teaching that embraces the complexity of place, space, and their collective impact on the psyche of urban youth (Emdin, 2016).

Professional Development is a requirement at both schools; however, written consent for participation in the study was voluntary. This was explained in detail prior to the implementation of the series and the opportunity to ask questions was offered. Teachers were able to grasp the intent of the study and determine whether or not they would like to participate in data collection.

Site and Participant Selection

The four professional development sessions, teacher reflections and interviews were administered at two elementary schools in the St. Louis area. School A was a public K-5 elementary school located just outside the boundaries of St. Louis City. The population of the school was approximately 378 students with 19 classrooms. All of the

students received free breakfast and lunch daily. The ethnic makeup of the school was 88% African-American students, 6.4% Hispanic, and 5.6% other students. Approximately 9% of the student population received special education services, 10% of the students were English Language Learners, 10% of the students were registered as homeless, and there was a 20% transient rate. There were 31 classroom teachers with an average 12.3 years of experience; 24 were White females; seven were African American; there were four male teachers; and student ratio was 18:1.

School B was a public charter school, with 21 classrooms serving approximately 374 children. All of the children at School B received both breakfast and lunch free of charge. The students were predominantly African American making up 53% of the student population. Multi-Racial children comprised 15% of the population, and the Hispanic population was very small with only 3%. Caucasian children made up 29% of the total population of School B. Approximately 20% of the population received special education services and only about 4% were English Language Learners. There were 21 general education classrooms and one Autism room. The average years of teaching experience was six and the average age of the teaching staff was 30. There were three male teachers, one African-American and 17 Caucasian females.

Sampling Procedures

Approximately 50 teachers, 25 teachers from each school participated in the professional development series. The 50 participating teachers completed teacher reflections after each day of professional development. Time and money are the two barriers that exist in many schools. To address the limited resources available and garner information rich samples, purposeful sampling was used (Patton, 2002). Both researchers

wanted to hear the histories of teachers' cultural formation but there was not enough time

to interview 50 teachers or decipher the data. Through the use of purposeful sampling,

depth through smaller numbers was address instead of breadth by interviewing 100

teachers. Four interviews per school were scheduled within the specified time period.

While the sample size is too small to generalize, the individual awakenings that were

shared shed light on the issue at hand.

   Purposeful sampling method was used to identify the eight teachers to participate

in the interviews. Purposeful sampling was selected due to the potential of teachers not

being available or willing to participate in the interview. Professional development is a

requirement for all teachers in both buildings and building principals make decisions

regarding the what professional learning is needed. However, teacher absences and

levels of participation cannot be predicted in advance. Creswell and Clark (2011) state

the researcher makes a judgment call when identifying and selecting participants for the

study. The goal is to select participants who are knowledgeable, have experience with the

phenomenon, and are articulate and self-reflective. Creswell (2007) states the process of

information collection when using in-depth interviews is suitable with four to twenty-five

participants. This study involved 25 teachers at each site and random sampling would

not be feasible due to availability and willingness of teachers to participate in an

interview. The teachers interviewed were selected based on the following criteria: (a)

must be a full-time, certified elementary classroom teacher; (b) participant in the cultural

relevance professional development; (c) signed the consent form and volunteered to

participate in this study. Eight teachers met the criteria and were selected for participation

in the interview process. Since the purpose was not to generalize the findings the small

number of interview participants will not be an issue. The purposeful sampling method

was the most cost and time effective sampling method for this research design.

Table 1

Building A Interview Participant Background Information

Participant A, Beverly	3rd grade teacher	19 years teaching experience	Only worked in one district	Master's Degree
Participant B, Dionne	2nd grade teacher	25 years teaching experience	Has worked in one district	Bachelor's Degree
Participant C, Anita	5th grade teacher	30 years teaching experience	Has worked in one district	Master's Degree
Participant D, Lauren	1st grade teacher	4 years teaching experience	Has worked in one district	Master's Degree

Table 2

Building B Interview Participant Background Information

Participant A, Josh	6, 7 & 8th grade Social Studies teacher	13 years teaching experience	Has worked in five districts	Bachelor's Degree
Participant B, Rachel	1st grade teacher	10 years teaching experience	Has worked in two districts	Master's Degree
Participant C, Eve	2nd grade teacher	7.5 years teaching experience	Has worked in two districts	Bachelor's Degree
Participant D, Heather	3rd grade teacher	1st year teacher	Has worked in one district	Bachelor's Degree

Data Sources

There were three phases of data for this study. The first phase included a teacher reflection at the end of each professional development session. This was completed anonymously, and reflections were collected. The second phase, collection of artifacts, occurred during the professional development sessions. The final phase of data collection included individual teacher interviews which occurred after all professional development sessions were completed and teacher reflections submitted.

In this study, we chose a semi-structured interview method as the main data source. Vygotsky (1987) stated "every word that people use in telling their stories is a microcosm of their consciousness" (p. 236-237). Interviews are one of the most common methods of data collection in qualitative research (Siedman, 2013). There are three types of interviews: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. For this study we selected the semi-structured one-to-one interview format. The semi-structured interview contained open-ended questions generated in advance to ensure focus on the topic. The semi-structured format left room to probe and gain more detail if needed. The purpose of the interview was to encouraged participants to express their perception and experiences on culture and the impact of the professional development.

In an effort to supplement the interviews, teacher reflections were utilized as another data source. Participants were provided open-ended guiding questions to respond to after each professional development session. Moon (2000) argued that journaling could be a way to connect previously unconnected areas of meaning. According to Swenson (2004) journaling could be used to enrich data from interviews. Journals blended personal reflections with recollection of events in a descriptive nature (Chabon & Wilkerson,

2006). The hope of the researchers was the teacher reflections would clarify some of the responses from the interview. There were no length requirements involved. Once the teacher reflections were coded, the original forms were destroyed. There were no anticipated risks to the subjects. No personally identifiable information was collected through the use of teacher reflections. The potential benefit was a better understanding of the impact of culture on pedagogy.

Physical artifacts created by the teachers during the professional development series were collected as another data source. The artifacts potentially provided evidence of teachers' cultural lenses changing during the professional development. However, not all artifacts were useful for the research. In this study, the selected artifacts were used to support the findings of interview and reflections. Yin (2009) stated "physical artifacts can be collected as part of a case study and have been used extensively in anthropological research" (p.113). Some of the physical artifacts included teacher created posters, notecards, summaries, and t-charts. The physical artifacts served a minor role alone but collectively helped with perspective.

Data Collection

A requirement before conducting research was the completion of the Rights of Human Subjects training. This training was required by all researchers at the university to protect the rights of research participants. Special permission was sought from the superintendent of schools for approval to conduct the study in the school district with teachers in each respective elementary school. The next step was receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

With knowledge of the enormous amount of time this study would take, both

researchers had to plan six to nine months in advance with summer break and the onset of

a new school year. Informed consents were signed in September 2016. Written consent

for participation in the study was voluntary. This was explained in detail in May 2016

and again in September 2016. Prior to the implementation of the professional

development series the opportunity to ask questions was offered. Participants were

informed that names would not be used or any other identifiable information pertaining to

the participants or the site. Teachers were able to grasp the intent of the study and

determine whether or not they would like to participate in data collection. Teachers were

able to withdraw at any time from the study.

The professional development series occurred during the instructional day. The
table showed the professional development schedule:

Table 3

Professional Development Schedule

Data Source	Date	Time	Topic
PD #1	September 2016	9 am to 3 pm	Who Am I?
PD #2	October 2016	9 am to 12 pm	Who Are Our Students?
PD #3	November 2016	9 am to 12 pm	Impact of Culture on Pedagogy
PD #4	December 2016	9 am to 1 pm	Culturally Relevant Teaching Strategies

Teacher reflections were collected after each professional development as a way

to support the interview process. The physical artifacts from the session were also used.

The reflection sheets provided additional insight into the responses to the PD and

thoughts by the interviewed participants. The teacher reflections, interview, and artifacts

provided the triangulation.

Semi-structured interview questions were used to gain information around the

research questions. Through the use of open-ended questions, participants were able to

speak as long as they desired. Sub-questions were prepared to ensure clarity around the

research question. The interviews were voluntary and were scheduled for each individual

for their convenience. Each interview lasted between 30 - 75 minutes. The interviews

occurred after all PD sessions were completed and teacher reflections were submitted.

Table 4

Overview of Data Sources

Data Source	Artifact	Field Notes Observations	Teacher Reflection Questions	Participants
PD 1: Who Am I?	Defining Culture Poster	**Roundtable Discussion:** With your table group create a list of considerations, questions, wonderings, discussion topics you would like to bring to the bigger discussion.	**Teacher Reflection Question**: What actions are you willing to take to become more culturally aware in the classroom? (Submitted either at the end of PD or before the next PD)	25
PD 2: Who Are Your Students?	**Reflection Activity**: Think about an incident or situation that has occurred in your classroom that may have had some cultural considerations.	**Roundtable Discussion:** Which student would you like to know more about more and why?	**Teacher Reflection Question:** What information do you need to be more culturally aware in the classroom? (Submitted either at the end of PD or before the next PD)	25
PD 3:	**Reflection**	**Roundtable**	**Teacher Reflection**	25

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy	**Activity:** Create an anchor chart for your room. Please include definitions as well as examples of CRT characteristics you display in your room.	**Discussion:** Is there a characteristic or two that is well addressed in the building? Which characteristics need more support?	**Question:** What have you learned? What are you intrigued by? What do you need more time to process? (Submitted either at the end of PD or before the next PD)	
PD 4: Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices	**Reflection Activity:** Considering what we learned so far about ourselves, our students and culturally relevant pedagogy, take a few minutes to jot down your thoughts related to the excerpt on a notecard.	Self-Audit of Your Culturally Competent Classroom	**Teacher Reflection Question:** We are all familiar by now with the students we serve, the scores we have generated and the excuses that may have been suggested. So what? Now what? (Submitted at the end of PD session)	25

Data Management

The organization of data was extremely important. Data accessibility was also important because data sources from 25 participants were large. The data was categorized

by type: physical artifacts from the professional development series, teacher reflections

from each professional development, and interviews. All data sources were paper copies

initially except for the interviews, which were recorded electronically. Photographs of the

artifacts were taken and stored electronically for easy access and a back-up method.

Photographs of the reflections of the interview participants were taken to create a

separate file for the four interview participants. Both researchers needed to have access to

the data sources, so a Google Doc folder was created with a shared link with no public

access. All electronic copies were stored on a personal computer with password

protection. A dedicated flash drive was used to back up the information. Transcribing the

data was the next task. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) described the approach used

of "using codes for tagging segments of texts then sorting text segments with similar

content into separate categories for a final distillation into major themes" (p. 318). Both

researchers worked through the data to identify major themes.

Data Analysis

The context was to see how the cultural lens through which teachers viewed their

students would be altered after participation in a culturally relevant professional

development series. In particular, teachers engaged in readings, discussions and both

small and large group activities to activate and impact their lenses. The professional

development series focused entirely on teachers.

According to Yin (2003), the researcher could select one of the three ways to

analyze a case study: 1.) by using the theoretical hypothesis; 2.) suggesting rival

explanations; 3.) by writing a thorough case description. For this study, a written case

description was generated. In the data analysis, three data sources were examined in order

to triangulate the data. Participants completed teacher reflections with a guiding question

after each professional development session.   Artifacts were meticulously reviewed, and

four teacher interviews were conducted at each building. Data was organized according

to the codes and themes that emerged from each of the individual buildings.

Semi-structured interviews were carefully planned and executed. Participants

were not interviewed by the administrator/researcher, but rather another individual

familiar with the school setting who had been informally trained on the interview process.

Interviews were recorded with an mp3 player and the audio files were downloaded and

saved to personal folders on the desktop.   Both interviewers used the same interview

questions and protocol (Appendix B). Two general questions were asked:

1.) How has your understanding of culturally responsiveness altered your

perception of diverse learners?

2.) How has this culturally relevant series impacted your instruction?

 The audio files were password protected and only accessible by the two respective

researchers. Each participant was informed of the recording and all signed the informed

consent forms prior to the interview process. Once recorded, the interviews were

transcribed word by word by the researchers. The teacher reflections were already in

written format. Then the methodological coding process began.

Esterberg (2002) recommended, "getting intimate with data" (p. 157), and

outlined the main goal of immersing yourself with the data collected. The research

followed Creswell's (2009) procedures in order to analyze and code efficiently. He

mandated the traditional approach in the social sciences that allows the codes to emerge

during the data analysis (Creswell, 2009, p. 197). After interviews were thoroughly read

several times, the open coding process began. In order to continue the data analysis

process, six steps developed by Creswell (2009) were followed. The two researchers:

Step 1: Collected and organized the three data sources for analysis (Creswell,

2009).   First for the interview data, audio files were reviewed at least two times per

participant and then transferred into word documents. The teacher reflections were

already in written format. The artifacts were labeled with A, B, C, or D for the purpose

of matching artifacts from the PD series to interview participants. The three data sources

were then organized together in chronological order for grouping purposes. For example,

all data sources for participant A were organized in chronological order for the four

interview participants.

Step 2: Both researchers read through all of the data for the four interview

participants and began the open coding process. All teacher reflections were reviewed

the same, identifying blocks of text that captured the overall perceptions and meaning for

each participant.

Step 3: Began the detailed analysis with the coding process (Creswell, 2009).

After step 2, it was clear that key segments and phrases could be placed into categories

based on the participants' word choices. Key words were often repeated many time (i.e.,

environment, climate, different lifestyle, etc.).

Step 4: Both researchers used open coding process to generate a description of

the setting or people as well as categories for these analyses (Creswell, 2009). Codes

were generated based on the categories. These codes took the form of the participants'

word choices so as to maintain the essence of their experiences. A t-chart was created

with a list of repeated phrases and words and the context in which they were written.

Categories began to emerge such as: learn from others, environment is critical, school

and home language, goals and behavior, etc. Code families were created to create the

themes (Appendix A).   The two researchers met and analyzed each other's coding book

to determine whether the themes that emerged would support the research questions.

Step 5: Axial coding was used to establish a relationship with the open codes.

For example, blocks of text in the categories pertaining to school community, family or

the broader community went in the category of relationships. For this step the themes

were supported by the participants' narratives from the interviews, reflections and

artifacts. Then the two researchers met and analyzed the two coding books each

researcher brought in and explored if the themes that emerged supported or did not

support the research questions. The coding book looked like:

Code:	Description:	Example:
"multicultural awareness"	Identifies students with different cultural backgrounds from Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and different learning styles.	Beverly's description of making the environment welcoming for all and learning from those who may be different.

Step 6: The researchers interpreted the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2009).

This last step undoubtedly included the role of the researchers as the school

administrator; the interviewees' perceptions became clear and informative. Themes that

developed were prevalent because the researchers were able to recognize their own

connectedness with each interviewee and each participant.

Themes were identified, not for generalizing but to aid in understanding the

phenomena. The themes were then grouped with the research questions as the framework.

Building A identified three themes: Multicultural Awareness, Language and Culture, and

Student Engagement. Building B identified three themes: Self Awareness, Culture

Awareness and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.   After analyzing each of the interviews, a

detailed description was written. In the end, a broad interpretation by the researcher

regarding the meaning derived from this case study.

Vignettes of participant's experiences aided in sharing interview data according to

Seidman (2006). Direct quotes and stories were utilized for a better understanding of the

interviewee. Storytelling is a way to make sense out of data (Seidman, 2006, p. 210).

The goal was for the reader to gain a greater perspective.

Ethics

Total anonymity was achieved on collected artifacts to maintain participant

confidentiality. No names were placed on artifacts or teacher reflection sheets. Interview

participants were labeled A, B, C, and D in order of the interviews. Each researcher

gained written consent from each participant voluntary, and the use of audio recording

was thoroughly reviewed with participants. The school site or district was not identifiable

from the description as there are over 500 districts in Missouri.

Reciprocity was provided through the understanding that this study would directly

impact future professional developments in the district and contribute to knowledge about

the growing demographics in the schools. This study also provided teachers an

opportunity to reflect on their practice. Teachers were also able hear the experiences of

other educators as they are adjusting their own professional practice to be more inclusive.

Trustworthiness

There are several key characteristics that provide the basic foundation for

trustworthiness: (a) a clear and concise research question; (b) a research question and

case study design match; (c) purposeful sampling strategies employed; (d) a defined data

management system; and (e) accurate data analyzation (Shenton, 2004, p. 63-67). This

study met the foundational characteristics of trustworthiness. Creswell (1998) describes

eight verification strategies for qualitative research: triangulation, member-checking,

rich, thick descriptions, clarify researcher bias, include negative and discrepant

information, spend prolonged time in the field, use peer debriefing, and use an external

auditor. A trustworthy study should employ at least two verification strategies (Creswell,

1998). Credibility for this study was established through the triangulation of participant

interviews, teacher reflections, and artifacts. Interviews served as the primary data

source. The teacher reflections were used for the purpose of triangulation. In-depth detail

was provided regarding data sources, collection, and analyzation for dependability.

Conformability was achieved through the use of three data sources and links of evidence.

Transferability is achieved by using detailed, descriptions of the open coding located in

Chapter 4. Direct excerpts and sample artifacts aided in the reader's ability to transfer the

process to another setting.

Limitations

Principals as researchers and the instrument can be viewed as a limitation. The

potential for researcher bias and altered behavior by participants is a disadvantage. The

extensive detail of the data collection and analysis makes it possible for the reader to

draw their own conclusion about the study. This chapter outlines the rationale behind the

research design and methodology for this study. The multi-case design was chosen due to

the interactive nature of the data. In addition, it is difficult to explain or understand a

phenomenon outside of the social situation. Extensive details are provided regarding site

and participant participation in this chapter as well. The data collection process is explained for each of the data sources.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The analysis of the data collected is presented in this chapter. The purpose was to describe how and to what extent, if any, a culturally relevant professional development series impacted the cultural lens of teachers in two similar school districts. The research goal was to allow themes to emerge from the data.   The research questions explored were:

 1.) What is the impact on teachers of a four day professional development series on understanding issues through the cultural lens of CRT?

2.) How has a culturally relevant professional development series impacted the instruction of teachers?

The professional development series presented to the teachers was based on four topics with accompanying activities, teacher reflections, and roundtable discussions. PD #1 focused on defining one's own culture, understanding the many layers of culture, and the impact of culture. PD #2 explored the culture students bring with them and the impact of culture on teaching and learning. PD #3 provided the philosophical framework around Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. The final PD involved several reflective activities and shared strategies for culturally relevant teaching.

This chapter was organized in accordance to the three emerging themes for School A and School B. Direct quotes, interview stories, information from teachers'

reflection logs, and artifacts collected during the professional development series

provided the evidence to support the three themes. The following charts describe how

each artifact was collected. The four teachers interviewed, were given pseudonyms for

anonymity, participated in 16 hours of professional development on cultural relevance

and were classroom teachers at the time of the professional development.

Table 5

Data Collection Sources Building A

Date	Data Source	Artifact	Field Notes Observations	Teacher Reflection Questions	Participants
09/1/16	**PD 1**: Who Am I?	Defining Culture Poster	**Roundtable Discussion:** With your table group create a list of considerations, questions, wonderings, topics you would like to bring to the bigger discussion.	**Teacher Reflection Question**: What actions are you willing to take to become more culturally aware in the classroom? (Submitted either at the end of PD or before the next PD)	25
10/3/16	**PD 2**: Who Are Your Students?	**Reflection Activity**: Think about an incident or situation that has occurred in your	**Roundtable Discussion:** Which student would you like to know more about more and why?	**Teacher Reflection Question:** What information do you need to be more culturally aware in the classroom? (Submitted either at the end of PD or before the next PD)	25

		classroom that may have had some cultural considerations.			
11/7/16	**PD 3**: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy	**Reflection Activity:** Create an anchor chart for your room. Please include definitions as well as examples of CRT characteristics you display in your room.	**Roundtable Discussion:** Is there a characteristic or two that is well addressed in the building? Which characteristics need more support?	**Teacher Reflection Question:** What have you learned? What are you intrigued by? What do you need more time to process? (Submitted either at the end of PD or before the next PD)	25
12/7/16	**PD 4**: Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices	**Reflection Activity:** Considering what we learned so far about ourselves, our students	Self-Audit of Your Culturally Competent Classroom	**Teacher Reflection Question:** We are all familiar by now with the students we serve, the scores we have generated and the excuses that may have been suggested. So what? Now what? (Submitted at the end of PD session)	25

		and culturally relevant pedagogy take a few minutes to jot down your thoughts related to the excerpt on a notecard.			
5/1/17	Interview 1: Beverly	Interview Protocol (See Appendix D)	Researcher 1 transcribed 5/5/17		1
5/2/17	Interview 2: Dionne	Interview Protocol (See Appendix D)	Researcher 1 transcribed 5/5/17		1
5/3/17	Interview 3: Anita	Interview Protocol (See Appendix D)	Researcher 1 transcribed 5/8/17		1
5/4/17	Interview 4: Lauren	Interview Protocol (See Appendix D)	Researcher 1 transcribed 5/8/17		1

Building A

  Multicultural Awareness. A major theme that was referenced in each interview

and teacher reflection revolved around the teachers' heightened awareness of students

from different cultures. For the study, multicultural awareness involved having a greater

appreciation for the values, experiences, and lifestyles of different groups. For

clarification, the groups included ethnicity, religion, gender, socioeconomic status, race,

and mental or physical abilities. The teachers found themselves more conscious of the

differences of diverse students in the classroom as well as more conscious of their own

culture. According to Gay and Kirkland (2003), "teachers knowing who they are as

people, understanding the contexts in which they teach, and questioning their knowledge

and assumptions" are as essential as having sound instructional strategies (p.181).

Beverly shared her thoughts during the interview as follows:

   Before I really had a one size fits all teaching style. Especially if I was teaching a

   Class of same race students. I didn't really think about culture because the

   students were all Black or all White. Even when they were mixed race I thought

   of them as Black or White not really from a cultural perspective. But after we did

   the culture activity, it made me realize there is a lot to all of our culture, not just

   color. (Interview, 05-01-2017)

The interviews and teacher reflections showed multicultural awareness as a vibrant

theme. Participants thought of the class in groups or individual students more often in

terms of lesson planning and determining the instructional strategy. The dramatic shift in

ethnic demographics has important implications for schools and, more specifically,

classroom teachers, as the changing ethnic and racial makeup of schools undoubtedly will

influence the dynamics of teachers and students in classrooms across the entire nation

(Howard, 2010). This awareness was viewed as a positive by the teachers and each

expressed a need to continue learning about other cultures as the demographics continue

to change.

The four interview participants described a process of *self-reflection* needed to

evaluate their own personal beliefs and instructional behaviors and the impact on

teaching and learning behaviors. The teacher reflection dated 11/7/16 described the

previous behavior of attempting to ignore culture and treat everyone the same. The fear

was around entering into a race or poverty conversation and damaging one's own

character.

One professional development activity asked teachers to think about one student

in their classroom whom they would like to know more about. Beverly selected a 3rd

grader named Anthony. She was intrigued by him because his academic performance

was inconsistent; on an in-class assignment he might score less than half of the points and

on the performance assessment he would score in the advanced category. Beverly shared

her thoughts during the interview as follows:

Beverly shared that she did not realize the number of cultural groups she was a

member of and the teacher reflection about Anthony helped her to connect with Anthony

to see how she could better serve him. She learned that his father was an auto mechanic,

his grandfather was an auto body technician, and his mother loved crafting so there was a

lot of building and hands-on activities in his families. This information helped Beverly to

understand how and why he performs better on performance assessments. She could also

relate to this information as her mother was a nurse and her household was filled with

biology and science. Beverly stated she finds her strength when teaching math and

science each day and it is rooted in her upbringing from growing up in a house with

nurse.

Beverly was fully engaged during each professional development session and

provided honest feedback. During the completion of the culture activity, Beverly stayed

back to ask clarifying questions regarding culture. Her question from PD #1 was "How

often do teachers really learn about their students' deep culture?" The culture activity

completed by Beverly's group shows the critical thinking about culture (see Artifact 1).

The artifact showed thought about the many facets of culture and the connection to

personal identity. The antonym selected was empty and isolated which shows an

understanding of culture.
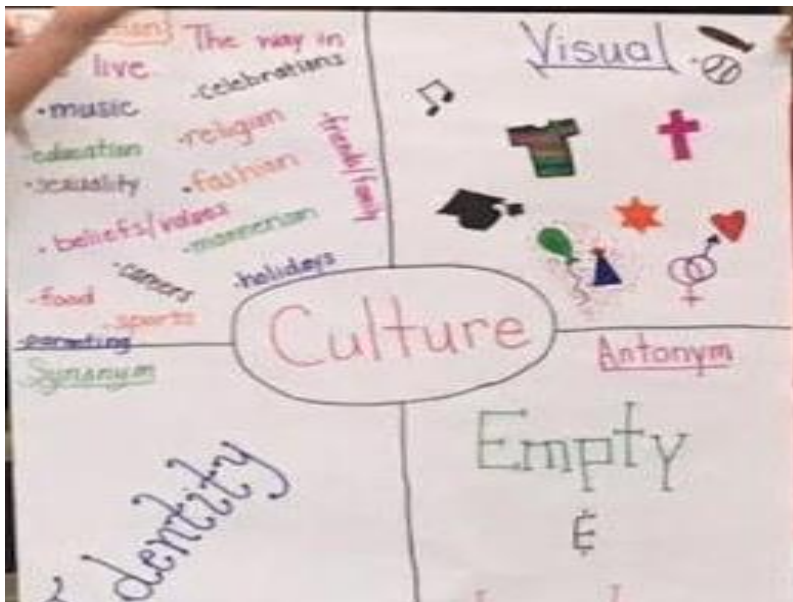
Artifact 1. A visual representation of culture

Dionne, a 2nd grade teacher participant, elaborated on how seeing the students in the classroom as cultural beings caused her to self-reflect on how what she valued as a classroom teacher created barriers to student learning. She also stressed the adjustments she had made to be more culturally accepting and aware by stating:

I'm very in tune with, with really the characteristics of different cultures and then how I can make my personal learning instruction connect to those characteristics. For example, I really think about my body language. I think about how I respond when students have a question. I think about, you know, before I used to always ask for eye contact, eye contact and in certain cultures eye contact isn't a norm. And so I had to think about when I'm teaching and I don't have everybody's eye contact, it's not being disrespectful, it's their culture. And so I've changed my instructional strategies and I've taken that barrier down on my side and opened up a lens that can value everybody in the classroom. (Interview, 05-02-2017)

Dionne described a desire to help the students in her class who struggle the most She shared strategies that she has tried in the past with minimal effectiveness. Her teacher reflection entry stated that her motivation for giving a full effort during this professional learning was to mark another strategy off the list of things she had tried. At the end of the second professional development, Dionne decided to read *Better Than Carrots and Sticks* by Smith, Fisher, and Frey (2015) as referenced during the professional development. *Better Than Carrots and Sticks* emphasizes prioritizing relationships, developing a non-confrontational rapport with students and families, and creating a welcoming environment built on a collective respect for each other. Dionne

expressed that it was through deep self-reflection that she realized the things she had been

changing included everything except her. Her reflection provided evidence of this shift

when she wrote:

> I have always been really good at teaching average to above average students
>
> reading strategies. I watch them flourish every year. Sometimes I see two to
>
> three levels of reading growth in a three month time period. By the end of year,
>
> most of my students are reading at the middle to end of 3rd grade. My struggling
>
> readers are not so easy. I work extra hard to get one to two levels of reading
>
> growth during the year. It usually is not a problem because I only have three to
>
> four low readers each year. This year I had eight low level readers out of
>
> twenty! They are all boys and the off-task behaviors during reading time were
>
> pushing me to my limit. I had no idea I was the problem! Problem A:
>
> Giving them books they didn't like. Problem B: Not really getting to know them
>
> and thinking of them in terms of their behavior. Problem C: My class
>
> environment was geared toward girls, me and my rules. The PD, the reading and
>
> the time to self-reflect helped me to stop and really look at what I do in the
>
> classroom. Some of the examples today made me feel like a lousy teacher. I am
>
> definitely guilty of teaching to the whole class and not acknowledging any of the
>
> background my students bring with them. I try my very best not to make it
>
> uncomfortable for any of the students who are different. I now know that's not the
>
> right thing to do. (Teacher Reflection, 12-07-2016)

Dionne's culture artifact (Artifact 2) showed she had some understanding of

culture at the onset and the examples from the interview and teacher reflections

demonstrated her growth in cultural competence.

Artifact 2. A visual representation of culture, second representation

Another participant, Anita, shared how after teaching for nearly 30 years and doing things the same for everyone, through reflection and learning, she realized that she must change if she wanted to see educational improvements for her students. She shared that cultural awareness was necessary by stating:

I've learned that students come with different cultures. They come with different values, beliefs, language. They come with different traditions, learning styles, different relationships how they interact with each other. So I had to learn like before not to teach everybody the same way and knowing that I'm going to get the same response. I had to learn how to teach in different styles where each culture would understand the same information—the information that has been presented to them. (Interview, 05-03-2017)

Anita's 1st reflection, dated 09-01-16, shared an interesting glimpse into her

journey. Anita has been at the same school for nearly 30 years and the population has

been nearly 100% African-American consistently. In recent years, the population has

changed and there are other nationalities in Anita's class. Anita stated, "there was no

diversity in my class until recently when students from other countries started attending,

before now things were fine." During the interview Anita shared how she recognized

that some students of different cultures tried to hide in the background of the classroom

because they did not feel like they were part of the class. She could relate this experience

to her own experiences when attending off-site professional development sessions. She

stated:

> Everyone needs to know that their culture is valued within our classroom. No one
>
> needs to feel as if they are beneath any group that is within the classroom. I
>
> notice it now and I try to include voices, activities, and material that represents
>
> everyone. It is very time consuming but I can see the difference it has made with
>
> my students this year. (Interview, 05-03-2017)

During professional development #1, Anita and her group struggled to create a

common definition for culture (see Artifact 3). The activity was to define culture, create

a visual representation, and provide a synonym and an antonym as a group. The teacher

reflection and interview provided evidence of a new awareness for Anita.

Culture is the beliefs,
customs and practices of a group
of people.

S - Story (personal)

A -
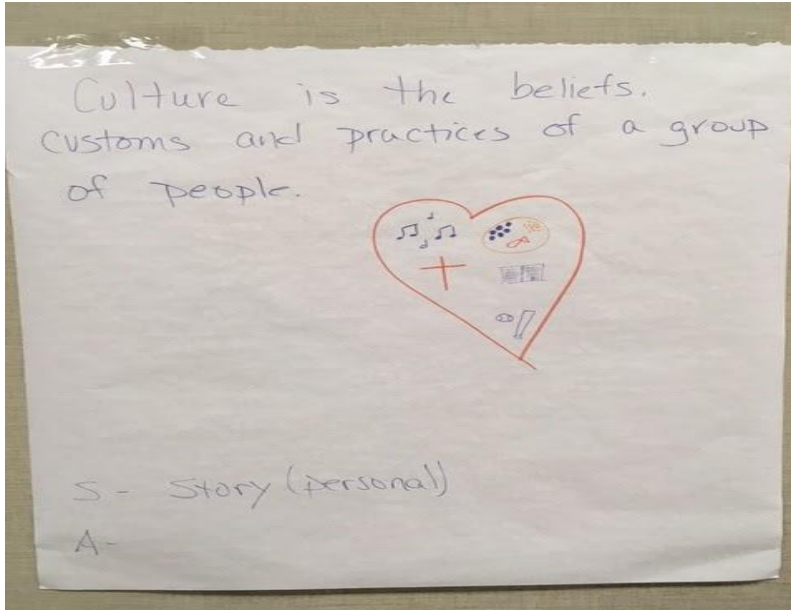
Artifact 3. A visual representation of culture, third representation

Summary of Multicultural Awareness

The three participants referenced multicultural awareness as a major shift gained

during the professional development series. The teachers reported a shift from race being

the dominant factor of culture to distinguishing characteristics that students have of

multiple cultures.   The teachers reported viewing the experiences of the students as a

gateway to connect instruction instead of as a barrier. Grant and Wong (2003) suggested,

"Developing awareness and sensitivity is merely a first, small step toward ensuring that

teachers will have the knowledge and skills necessary to provide an equitable literacy

education for language-minority learners that is based on their specific needs" (p. 388).

However, there were comments around why this form of learning was not a district

initiative and a need to learn multiple things in one year. The value of being culturally

relevant was relayed but teachers questioned the absence of content knowledge during the

professional learning.

Language and Racial Identity. While multicultural awareness was evident through the interviews and teacher reflections, entwined was the theme of language and racial identity which were mainly presented together. Statements regarding language typically linked back to race. For example, if a student used non-standard English the teacher connected the student being Black to the language spoken. Skin color was a predictor for the language spoken according to the teachers interviewed. Interview participants shared learnings around the importance of language and the connection they made between language and race. The key to becoming an effective educator is acknowledging the differences between students and teacher and adjusting one's teaching accordingly, which often requires nontraditional approaches to teaching and learning (Emdin, 2016). Evidence showed a newfound sense of responsibility for the teachers as they work to break the barriers of language and understand the difference between race and culture. Beverly shared how she attempted to break the language barrier to learn more about students from different cultures. The participant shared the following:

> Yeah, so we have a family from Saudi Arabia and we didn't…, we don't know…, we weren't aware of the language that they spoke at home and so we asked the student from Saudi Arabia to connect the language that he uses at home with the English language that we use in the classroom and so we ended up creating a bulletin board where we would just have common words that he used at home and then we would end up using those, his language, within our classroom language and connecting vocabulary back and forth.

In response to the teacher reflection that asked participants to: Think about an incident or situation that has occurred in your classroom that may have had some cultural

considerations, Beverly responded:

>   Each quarter we do IRLA (Independent Reading Level Assessment Inventory)
>
>   testing to learn students' independent reading level. I didn't realize that I
>
>   typically do not test my English Language Learners (ELL). Any student
>
>   receiving ELL support is automatically sent to the ELL teacher for testing. I do
>
>   not do this for Black students who have broken English or like my student from
>
>   Nigeria who speaks English. So it just makes me wonder if this is about me and
>
>   my perceptions or fears. (Teacher Reflection, 10-03-2016)

 Beverly shared that after professional development #3, viewing the video "Sometimes

You Are A Caterpillar" by Chescaleigh, and having deep table discussions with three

colleagues, she realized she was basing her instructional choice to send students to the

ELL teacher for testing due to her own assumptions about what the students would need

to be successful on the test.

Dionne shared about her decision to place students who seem to have similar

backgrounds in groups together so they can feel a level of comfort. In the past ethnicity

was not a focus, students were grouped according to ability level. Dionne also expressed

behavioral concern with students calling names, bullying behavior and ostracizing certain

members of the group due to language differences. Dionne was very open and honest

with her statements:

>   They are able to understand one another. They are able to communicate with
>
>   each other, to work with each other, to interact with each other, this is different
>
>   than before because before the children didn't have a great understanding of
>
>   different culture. If, for example, a child is coming from Nigeria and the students

think the child is black and the culture is different. They think the child is talking

funny but has the same color skin as the African American child. (Interview, 05-

02-2017)

Dionne shared a sense of relief after learning about communication styles and

enculturation. She previously felt that she had to be the peacekeeper in the classroom and

keep a watchful eye for name calling and bullying behavior. She had an aha moment as

she wrote for one of her reflections:

For our black families if we are talking about how we communicate, one of my—

what I tend to see a lot is what they call joning. What we see a lot is joning. In

other families it's not acceptable but in the black families, joning is part of their

interactions. When asked to describe what "joning" is, she shared:

Joning is a form of language used to express in a funny way of how you look,

how you play, how you walk, using different types of language as far as I would

say. An example would be "You look like a monkey. Your head is so big it's

going to blow up." That is the language used that my students feel doesn't offend

them but when the other cultures use it, it offends them. A Nigerian student has

no way of understanding "joning". I barely understand it. (Teacher Reflection,

10-03-2016)

The disconnect between culture and language are two are of the barriers teachers felt they

had the hardest time understanding. The teachers also expressed a new understanding

that culture and language do not depend upon one's race.

Lauren expressed how she noticed the different styles of learning that seem to be

geared towards certain cultures. She felt that she was not stereotyping but generalizing

by sharing what she sees as learning styles for the students in her classroom.

> Well, our students within our school system have in different cultures learned in different styles, such as our black or African American students, they learn more hands on. They learn through team building, surroundings such as a group of kids having different roles but working together. What I have observed is the Hispanic students who learn more visually through picture content, and our white students who are well rounded and learn through different ways such as hands on, visual, or even auditory. (Interview, 05-04-2017)

Lauren was happy to learn the difference between generalizing and stereotyping in PD #2 felt she did a better job of checking herself for stereotyping behaviors throughout the year.

Three of the four teachers interviewed found that learning to communicate and allowing the students to communicate with one another in their home language is in direct opposition of the educational program. The unconscious link between race and language was evident.

Summary of Language and Racial Identity

A person's identity is surely connected to the his/her culture and language. Students play no role in shaping their culture or language during the early stages of life. The teacher participants in the research have learned that the communities to which we belong shapes our culture and our language. The study shows a connection between language and race on the surface level which more learning has been requested by the teacher participants. The four teacher shared they never really thought about the role language plays in learning, especially when the majority of the students speak English.

In addition, they were unaware of their reliance upon race as a determining factor for language and culture values imposed upon students.

Instructional Engagement. The third theme addressed instructional engagement. A shift towards student contributions was evident in the data. Dionne noted her instructional practice has changed because there can be more than one viewpoint in the classroom and more than one acceptable answer. There was fear around starting a discussion that might be offensive to one or two in the class. Dionne noted these changes:

> More teamwork and really had to work on accepting others for who they are. And
> so when someone has a different point of view, we always try to take it back to
> the idea of different people have different points of view, and that's okay.
> (Interview, 05-02-2017)

Anita lamented about how rigor and relevance are terms that are heard often in education and the realization that relevance was about students and not content. Culturally responsive teaching asks students to question, deconstruct, and then reconstruct knowledge.   Culturally responsive teaching is also a mutual exchange of knowledge and information, wherein educators are learning from students, and vice versa (Gorski, 2013). She shared:

> So before now it was just about the curriculum, what needed to be taught, how
> much time I had to teach it, how do I get it done and now it's more about how can
> I make this relevant to the students' lives? (Interview, 05-03-2017)

Anita stated she was able to get her students more involved and more excited about the learning by adding pieces of information about how the learning would be relevant to the

students' lives instead of her own life. She shared that she always thought prior

knowledge meant academic knowledge, not personal or cultural knowledge. In addition,

she shared because many of the students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds,

their experiences were limited so she would just share her experience. During PD #3,

Anita completed her Culturally Relevant Teaching anchor chart to share some of the

ideas already incorporated in the classroom (see Artifact 4) listed hobbies and

characteristics and not just the socioeconomics and ethnicities. The shift from teacher-

centered to student-centered was a new area for Anita.
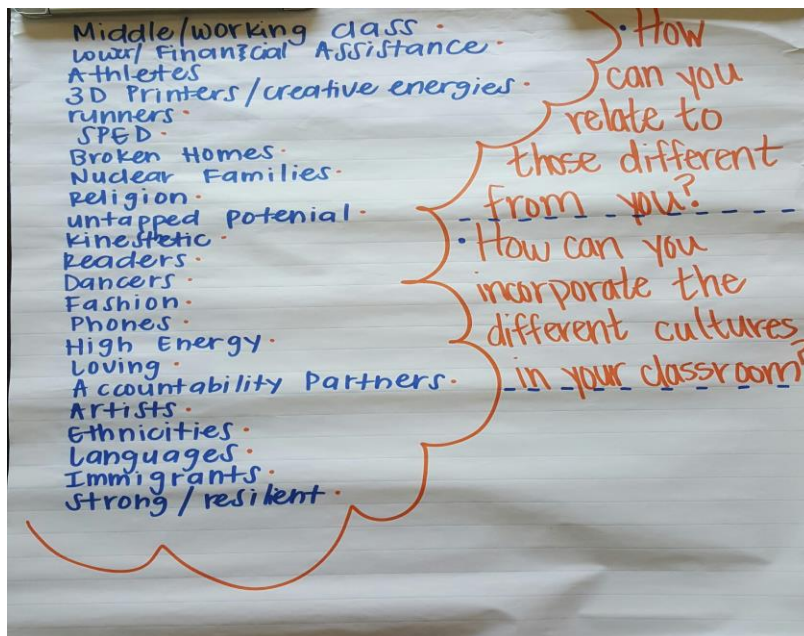
Artifact 4. Anita's anchor chart

Whole group instruction is prevalent in many classrooms. However, it should not

be the only form of instruction. As Nuthall (2005) stated, "ritualized routines are carried

generation after generation and based primarily on principles of classroom management"

(p. 895). Beverly recognized that many of her structures and instructional strategies were

based on maintaining order. Though she admitted she rarely had any discipline concerns

with her students she was concerned what would happen if she changed some of her

routines. Beverly stated:

> So the organizational atmosphere of my classroom has changed in the sense that
>
> it's not all whole learning. It's more small group learning and it's more of if you
>
> have a question it's okay that you have a question and you're not put down
>
> because you have a question… (Interview, 05-01-2017)

Beverly continued with how she has shifted her understanding of how student

engagement can be decreased when students are muffled or not able to freely express

themselves. She stated that she found herself trying to change student behavior when she

could actually use it as a contribution to the class and possibly assist other students in

learning. She stated:

> So I have a student in particular that comes to mind who loves to act out very,
>
> very much. And act out meaning in theater like, like likes to use his hands. Very
>
> theatrical. And I really played into that. So we did a lot of read alouds and I
>
> would often use the student to animate and describe what he was hearing for the
>
> class and it really pulled on other learning styles that I had never even pushed on
>
> before and then that student was able to shine within the classroom because it was
>
> his talent and I think by creating an environment where more learning styles were
>
> acceptable quote/unquote allowed for students to grow deeper and really be
>
> engaged with their learning. (Interview, 05-01-2017)

Lauren stated:

> We have this thing called classroom meetings and sometimes we call them
>
> classroom circles where we really like to get to know each other and so by getting

to know each other we highlight who is sitting around the circle and their

identities are shared. So not only who they are, where they came from and how

they're contributing to our classroom environment. What are their strengths?

What are their weaknesses? How can we grow together? So we do these, these

regular meetings or circles where dialogue is shared and we sometimes do small

group circles then where they get to know just a couple different people within

their groups or they're getting ready to start a group project and they want to

know what the strengths and weaknesses of their teammates are going into that

group project. (Interview, 05-03-2017)

According to Lauren, this is a very different approach that she began in January 2017.

After reflecting on first semester, she thought it would be a good idea to try. She heard

the idea during one of the professional developments and thought it might help her

classroom culture. She found much better work was produced from group projects and

she did not use as much instructional time with students tattling or bickering.

Included in the theme of instructional engagement was resources and materials.

Culturally responsive pedagogy is more than just a way of teaching or a simple set of

practices embedded in curriculum lessons and units (Howard, 2010).   Teachers began to

expand upon instructional resources and materials in an effort to shift their pedagogical

approaches with their diverse learners. Interviews and teacher reflections showed a

pattern of teachers working to identify resources to support the learning of students from

different cultures or bring in literature that shared a variety of cultural stories. Dionne

stated:

I also think that when I'm reading…, when I pick, when I pick novels to read with

my guided reading groups or as a whole group, I always want to make sure that I

don't just always pick the same type of characters. That I use a diverse lens and

think of both of students that are in my classroom as well people who are not in

my classroom to expose students to. (Interview, 05-03-2017)

Lauren shared during PD #3, and as noted in the teacher reflections:

I try my best to be more conscious of the different cultures. So, if there is

anything that the other cultures may have that will be relevant to our classroom,

relevant to our lesson, then I love to pull or have pulled from those parents, those

other outside resources that we have in our community to build on our lessons that

we have within our classrooms. (Teacher Reflection, 11-07-2016)

Summary of Student Engagement

There was a shift from a focus on what the teacher needed to do to what is the

student learning. The teachers agreed that when students are engaged in meaningful

work the level of production increased. As one teacher stated, "It really made me think

about who the instruction was for."

Table 6

Data Collection Sources Building B

Date	Data Source	Artifact	Field Notes Observations	Teacher Reflection Questions	Participants

09/2/16	**PD 1**: Who Am I?	Defining Culture Poster	**Roundtable Discussion:** With your table group create a list of considerations, questions, wonderings, topics you would like to bring to the bigger discussion.	**Reflection Question**: What actions are you willing to take to become more culturally aware in the classroom? (Submitted either at the end of PD or before the next PD)	25
10/7/16	**PD 2**: Who Are Your Students?	**Reflection Activity**: Think about an incident or situation that has occurred in your classroom that may have had some cultural considerations.	**Roundtable Discussion:** Which student would you like to know more about more and why?	**Teacher Reflection Question:** What information do you need to be more culturally aware in the classroom? (Submitted either at the end of PD or before the next PD)	25

11/7/16	**PD 3**: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy	**Reflection Activity:** Create an anchor chart for your room. Please include definitions as well as examples of CRT characteristics you display in your room.	**Roundtable Discussion:** Is there a characteristic or two that is well addressed in the building? Which characteristics need more support?	**Teacher Reflection Question:** What have you learned? What are you intrigued by? What do you need more time to process? (Submitted either at the end of PD or before the next PD)	
12/7/16	**PD 4**: Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices	**Reflection Activity:** Considering what we learned so far about ourselves, our students and culturally relevant pedagogy, take a few minutes to jot down your thoughts related to the excerpt on a notecard.	Self-Audit of Your Culturally Competent Classroom	**Teacher Reflection Question:** We are all familiar by now with the students we serve, the scores we have generated and the excuses that may have been suggested. So what? Now what? (Submitted at the end of PD session)	

12/16/16	Interview 1: Josh	Interview Protocol (See Appendix D)	Researcher 2 transcribed 01/27/17		1
12/16/16	Interview 2: Rachel	Interview Protocol (See Appendix D)	Researcher 2 transcribed 01/27/17		1
12/16/16	Interview 3: Eve	Interview Protocol (See Appendix D)	Researcher 2 transcribed 01/28/17		1
12/16/16	Interview 4: Heather	Interview Protocol (See Appendix D)	Researcher 2 transcribed 01/28/17		1

Building B

     Self-Awareness. One of the major themes explored throughout the professional development sessions and a significant factor throughout discussions, reflections and interviews was Self-Awareness. There were stages of comprehension in that participants expressed a better understanding of who they were as individuals and then how their awareness impacted their understanding of cultural relevancy as the series progressed. One interviewee participant, a first year teacher, spoke at length that she had not realized that some of what was discussed constituted a culture. All of the teachers were engaged in an activity that asked them to reflect upon and identify themselves.

Artifact 5. Who are we?

Cooper, He, and Levin (2011) address identity by stating, "We believe that knowing one's self as a complex, cultural being has to come before educators can begin to appreciate the diversity of today's students, their families, and communities" (p. 33). As teachers began to understand their own identities, they became more adept at recognizing identities of others. One participant named Rachel shared after writing down her own multiple identities:

> But, the PD kind of made me think about how truly diverse our classes are. It's not just racial. It's not just ethnic. It's not just religious. It goes much deeper than that with the way the kids identified themselves, and how we think about them based on this identity. (Interview, 12-16-2016)

She continued to discuss the disconnect between those teachers who are not self-aware and the diverse students populations:

> I think at least for white teachers around my age, and I'm in my 30's, so it's kind

of some people view it as, oh, it's something extra I got to do. Now, I've got to

teach all this diversity. (Interview, 12-16-2016)

One participant, Heather, was having a discussion with her students prior to our first

professional development session. She was talking about herself and her experiences and

how she was not from the city, but rather the county. Heather discussed in her interview

how her concept of county was related to a geographic location, several miles from the

school's location, and much more rural than the city. Until the professional development,

Heather had not taken the time to reflect about who she was and how her own

experiences and upbringing were different than her students. She had taken for granted

that her experiences should mirror those of her diverse students. Heather then discusses

how her students identified the county only as a mall, which is approximately five miles

from the school. At first, Heather found it odd that the students had a more limited view.

An objective of professional development session one was to explore various identities of

the teachers. In session two, the students' culture was discussed at length.

After a group discussion about the multiple identities, many of the teachers were

surprised to learn how many languages were spoken by the children and that American

Sign Language was one of them. No teacher had identified him/herself as bilingual.

Most of the teacher reflections indicated that the teachers wanted to learn more about

their students and they wanted to be able to share more of themselves with the students.

I'm going to find time to talk and listen to each of my students 1 on 1 to

Learn who they are in their own words. (Teacher Reflection, 09-02-2016)

I'd like to take more steps to help my students better related to each other and

have more discussions that will break down our barriers/stigmata. I will work on

being more understanding of others' differences and make sure expectations are

appropriate. (Teacher Reflection, 09-02-2016)

Summary of Self-Awareness

The identification of self was a crucial step in the progression through the entire

professional development series. The staff at Building B were relatively young, with a

mean age of 30 and had not yet explored their multiple identities. Once this self-

awareness is apparent, teachers are better able to recognize different cultural elements

and nuance in their students' behaviors and then use these insights to enhance their

teaching skills (Gay, 2002). One new teacher, Heather shared, "Because until like stuff

like this I didn't really think about, I didn't think about, well where did my, where did my

family come from." (Interview, 12-16-2016)

Cultural Awareness. The second theme that emerged was an awareness of

culture. The session began with a collaborative project that required a definition, visual,

synonym and antonym for the word culture (See Artifact 6). While the first professional

development session delved into whom we are as individuals, our identities beyond Black

or White, the second session centered on the students. Who are they? The disconnect

between home and school became a point of contention and was discussed at length as

the professional development sessions continued. Howard (2010) addressed the

differences in cultures by stating equally critical to the concept is that different forms of

culture are not viewed in a hierarchical manner, which assumes that certain types of

culture are superior to others, but rather that cultures exist on a continuum, giving

equitable credence to the different variations of culture. Most participants spoke of a

home school disconnection as a metaphorical clash of cultures. One study participant,

Eve, shared her thoughts on culture:

> I learned that like culture is more than just what we see, but it's the underlying
>
> culture that they have that we may not know about such as religion, home life,
>
> things like that, so it helped me get a better understanding of my students and
>
> what they may experience at home versus when they come to school, and what
>
> they may bring to school because of their culture. (Interview, 12-16-2016)
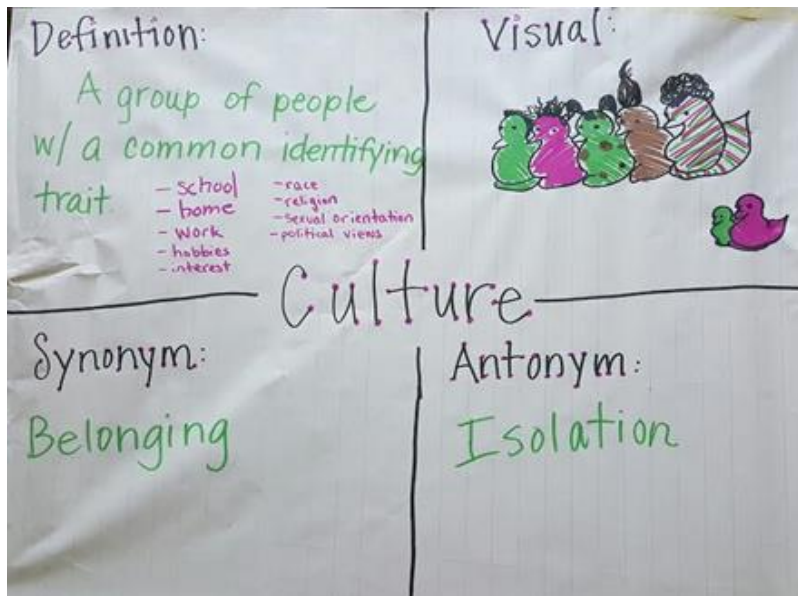
Artifact 6. A visual representation of culture, fourth representation

Another participant, Josh, continued to express some of the difficulties with the home-

school disconnect. As a seasoned teacher, he emphasized relationships and getting to

know his kids. He shared the following:

> I mean I find out so many things about our kiddos and their families and their
>
> lives, and there, and it's hard to really pin down specifically what I do as a result
>
> of those things all the time as much as it is almost like nuanced shifts in the way
>
> that I interact with them and the things that I say to them, and the things that I

focus on with them. (Interview, 12-16-2016)

Not all discussions around the disconnect were negative, sometime the disconnect involved clarifying assumptions. Haley, a first year teacher shared:

I had a student, an example was, it was a setting from a story, and he was reading

the story. And, the guy was in a closet. And, he's like I don't have a closet. I'm

like well, where do you put your clothes? I was trying to think, I was like where

do you put your clothes? My clothes are in a tub. So, just kind of like just

thinking about those things when I am picking out those stories and picking out

those books, and what we're picking. So, you know what I'm saying? I

definitely think that helps. They feel more comfortable to kind of express

themselves, and kind of, and then it opens up that path to learning. (Interview,

12-16-2016)

One of Rachel's disconnects involved understanding the use of formal language and home expectations, she shared the following:

Some of the kids don't realize that the words they're using are disrespectful to

others, or that that's just not how you talk in a professional or educational

atmosphere because at home that's how everybody talks. (Interview, 12-16-2016)

The culture activities embedded within the second professional development session sparked a tremendous amount of conversation around misconceptions and stereotypes related to certain ethnic groups. The staff was deeply engaged in conversation regarding their own students and whether some of the more common generalizations applied to their population. Many of the teacher reflections from this session left teachers wondering how to get to know the families better in order to

alleviate the home-school disconnect.

Summary of Cultural Awareness

Gay (2002) believes that it is critical for teachers to become mindful of their own cultural socialization, and how it affects their attitudes and behaviors toward other cultures. Once teachers had the opportunity to explore, share, and reflect upon their own culture; they were better prepared to engage in discourse related to the students' cultures. Rachel mentioned how she wanted to create a family atmosphere in her classroom and that the students work on a lot of projects that they can relate to their own homes and a place where they are safe to express who they are while at school.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. The professional development series was created so that knowledge continued to expand as the series continued. Once participants had a grasp on the identities of not only themselves, but the students, the work surrounding culturally relevant pedagogy began. Delpit (2012) described curriculum in her book, *Multiplication is for White People Raising Expectations for Other People's Children*, if the curriculum we use to teach our children does not connect in positive ways to the culture young people bring to school, it is doomed to failure. The last session addressed Culturally Relevant Pedagogy specifically and all of the participants addressed the method and practice of teaching during their interviews. Josh shared the following about pedagogy:

> And, I would really say that as I become more experienced, and as we've had
>
> these professional developments and learning about cultural responsiveness, and
>
> getting to know more about my kiddos, and all those things have helped me to
>
> kind of have a lot less of a scripted view about how it should be. And, it has

made me a lot more open to trying tons of new things, and being more willing to

fall on my face and say, well, that didn't work. I'm going to go ahead and try

something else now. And, it made me feel that really what I do is even that much

more powerful than I used to. Like there was a time when I was thinking about

leaving teaching actually. And, going through this process, which has been like

kind of like tearing down, building up, tearing down, building up, relearning,

kind of almost like a paradigmatic shift in the way that I think about education,

and I think about our kiddos has kind of led me to like rethink those approaches

and rethink the way that I do things. (Interview, 12-16-2016)

Rachel addressed how she now understands home and school therefore, she has altered

her approach. She stated:

Yeah, the kids in my classroom are very kinesthetic and very verbal. And,

That comes from home because in their homes, you talk. That's how you relate to

others. It's not so much written. So, we do a lot of whole group discussions.

And, they're very kinesthetic, they're very physical. So, we do a lot of hands on

 projects and building and cooperative learning. (Interview, 12-16-2016)

The professional development series also addressed characteristics of culturally

responsive teachers and the participants were asked to work collaboratively to create a

visual representation of each characteristic. This was productive discourse; participants

discovered that culturally responsive teachers are not educators who follow a checklist of

activities. This work is a shift in thinking. Artifact 7 is an example of a salient

characteristic as defined by Villegas and Lucas (2002). One participant's teacher

reflection wrote the following about the characteristic in Artifact 7:

I became more aware of what I do well and that I need to work more on affirming

my students, after learning about them. (Teacher Reflection, 11-07-2016)

Josh shared his thoughts about the series in general:

And so, what a lot of the series has done is it's caused me, well, number one to

self-reflect on my own actions and my own behaviors and the ways in which

those things impact the people around me. And, then also to kind of refocus my

thoughts on finding ways to get students more engaged. So, bringing in more

engagement strategies, more engagement things. And, I would really say that as I

become more experienced, and as we've had these professional developments and

kiddos, and all those things have helped me to kind of have a lot less of a scripted

view about how it should be. (Interview, 12-16-2016)

Artifact 7. Affirming attitude

Eve also discussed the classroom and pedagogy by stating:

It, well, it provided me with more resources to use within the classroom and

strategies that I used most in the classroom. I feel like I have a pretty good grasp

of it, but like it provided me with more things to look for within the classroom

and what to do. Like, I know I wasn't, I don't have a lot of stuff posted on the

walls that deal with, I don't know, with the students, like individual cultures in the

classroom. So, now I'm like incorporating more of like the student's culture.

(Interview, 12-16-2016)

Summary of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

The staff was very eager to learn more about pedagogy as a verb. They were

ready to dive into activities and discourse that would allow them to utilize appropriate

teaching methods for diverse learners. Educators who create culturally relevant learning

contexts are those who see students' culture as an asset, not a detriment to their success

(Milner, 2010). All of the interview participants mentioned the overall learning and it's

connectivity to culturally relevant instruction. Even seasoned teachers like Josh shared,

"Well, the number one thing that it refocused me on was making sure that I was looking

for new engagement strategies." He continued by adding, "Just changes in the way that I

interact and think about them just have profound effects on my relationship with them

which then has a profound effect on what they learn from me." (Interview 12-16-16).

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

There is a saying, "You can't change what is going on around you until you start

changing what is going on within you." At the onset of the school year, there were two

principals with continued challenges around a changing demographic of students, low

achievement, disproportionate discipline and many parent conferences attempting to

explain the motives of misguided teachers. The decision to plan and implement

professional development for each building in addition to all other tasks was a

monumental charge. At best, there was hope that teachers would see the parent

perspective, have a better understanding as to why some administrative decisions were

made, and teachers could get to know culturally diverse students whose needs are

different. However, there were unintended outcomes the researchers did not expect:

teachers actually enjoying the PD series, the emotional breakdowns of some experienced

teachers, and the decrease in referrals during second semester or the change in activities

being carried out in classrooms with students in grades 3-5. There was one teacher who

said something that would be difficult to forget, "I didn't know I was doing such a

disservice to so many children, why didn't you tell me?" It was a difficult conversation to

have as there were many ways to deal with such challenging discussions. My response

was one of my favorite quotes that all of my teachers have heard me say repeatedly:

"When you know better, you do better." We both left the discussion with a better

understanding of one another.

Summary of the Study

The study was a qualitative multi-case study of two similar schools investigating

the impact on the cultural lens of teachers throughout a four day professional

development series. The researchers used qualitative methods due to interest in learning

how teachers' cultural lens were changed, and the personal stories provided context to the

professional development experience. This study included eight classroom teachers who

participated in the four professional developments and one semi-structured interview for

each participating teacher. The interview protocol was based on the work of Seidman

(2013). The four teachers from each school were interviewed separately for one session

lasting no more than 75 minutes. The transcripts for each interview were analyzed by the respective researcher, then each researcher analyzed the transcripts of the second site. The analysis of the data revealed patterns and commonalities in the descriptions of impact on teaching and learning.

The professional development series was implemented using the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (Fisher & Frey, 2011) to serve as a model of instruction while utilizing tenets 1, 2 and 4 of Critical Race Theory (Solorazano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Delgado & Stefanic, 2012; Han, West-Olatunji, & Thomas, 2011; Lynne & Parker, 2006). Each PD was four hours in length and required deep reflection and personal stories to be shared. During PD #1, teachers created an artifact by defining culture, providing a synonym and antonym and drawing a picture to represent culture. The next activity teachers had to list the cultures which they belong. This was difficult for both groups as teachers did not yet have a true understanding of culture. The list included things like: White, teacher, Catholic, wife, mother, sister, and degree. Things such as how one handled emotions, social interactions, patterns for decision making and problem solving were not a part of the discussion. When teachers were asked to think about what culture their students belong, teachers realized they did not know enough about students to create a list. PD #1 showed how deep culture extends into every aspect of our life.

PD #2 asked teachers to create a list of things or qualities that make them great. This was extremely difficult for the teachers. The question was extended to, "How do your students shine? How do you help them shine? Does this impact their identity?" These questions created in-depth and emotional discussions about identifying more of the positives the students bring to class. One teacher stated, "If it was this difficult for me to

list why I am great imagine what our students would feel like if we gave them this assignment."

One of the interesting activities from PD #3 required teachers to take inventory of culturally responsive teaching strategies used in their classrooms. The teachers created a chart with strategies, definitions, and characteristics to share with the group. This activity helped some teachers to see they were not intentionally culturally conscious with strategies in the classroom while they had the opportunity to gain strategies from those who used culturally responsive teaching strategies more consistently.

PD #4 focused on "How can we better prepare ourselves to reach all of our students?" Several emotional awakenings occurred when teachers reflected on how well developed their relationships are with their students and families. It was during this PD that teachers expressed a sense of inadequacy, feeling overwhelmed with emotions, and a need for additional learning. At the end of the PD, teachers stayed to request more resources, ask questions, and debrief about the learning that occurred. One teacher asked, "How was I supposed to know all of this, they didn't teach this in school."

There were many stories shared and lessons learned during the PD. As the facilitator of the PD I had to be extremely careful not to discount what anyone had to say and listening was key. It was also important not to rush the discussion. While each teacher participated at the level they felt most comfortable, it helped that both principals had trusting relationships with the staff. Teachers were able to express their fears, concerns, and disagreements without penalty. This benefitted the PD series overall because each teacher and leader were allowed to bring their authentic self to each session. While the professional developments served as the anchor of the learning, the interviews

provided a great deal of information for the researchers.

Interviews were the documents that yielded the most information and served as the primary data source. The semi-structured interviews provided stories and examples, varied details, and background into philosophical beliefs of the four teachers who participated in the 16 hour professional development series. Teacher reflections and artifacts created during the professional development series were used to triangulate the interview data. Each researcher recorded field notes for recollection of non-verbals, aha moments, confusion and excitement during the professional development series. The analysis was based on broad interpretations, examination of current research on culturally responsive teaching and professional development.

The framework for the study revolved around two research questions:

1.) What is the impact on teachers of a four day professional development series on understanding issues through the cultural lens of CRT?

2.) How has a culturally relevant professional development series impacted the instruction of teachers?

Three themes emerged from the study for School A: a) multicultural awareness; b) language and racial identity, c) student engagement. School B also had three themes: a) self-awareness; b) cultural awareness c) culturally relevant pedagogy. An interpretation of the findings from Chapter four will be discussed in this chapter. This section will discuss the relationship between the literature and the findings of the study. Then there will be a discussion of the implications and recommendations for future studies.

Discussion and Analysis of Findings

The changing demographics in the American public school system and the

consistent face of American educators will require all educators to know more than basic

information about students, families, and the community. The charge of improving

academic outcomes for all students requires something more than just analyzing student

achievement data after the fact. With this in mind, we carried out this research to see if

we could provide assistance to teachers in our schools facing this dilemma.

Both researchers planned and implemented the same professional development in

their respective schools. Data analysis showed recurring themes in both schools. A

greater awareness of self and others was observed in both schools. School A labeled the

theme multicultural awareness since the teachers were able to reflect on their own

identity as well as transfer that perspective to the cultural identities of their students.

School B labeled the theme self-awareness as the learning was based around the teachers'

cultural identity and understanding the role culture plays in their lives. Both researchers

believed the age differences of the teachers at the two respective buildings played a major

role in the level of self-reflection. Building A has a median age of 45 years of age for

certified teachers. Building B has a median age of 30 years of age for all certified

teachers. The difference in age, life experiences, and years of teaching had an impact on

thought processes and learning. For example, Beverly's culture presentation (see artifact

#1) shows more substance and detail than what is represented in Eve's presentation (see

artifact #6) a basic level of understanding. Beverly has been teaching for 19 years and

Eve has been a teacher for 7.5 years. Eve also referenced in her interview that she

thought culture was more of what can be seen. Life experiences and age can have an

impact on understanding. Overall, both researchers agreed teachers had to deeply self-

reflect, which required large chunks of time and some awkward silence, in order to see

inside of themselves.

Building A labeled the second theme as Race and Language and Building B's second theme was Cultural Awareness. Although there are different themes, the common threads were the expressed disconnect between school and home and a similar connection of race and language. Dionne (Interview, 05-03-2016- School A) shared during her interview the disconnect between home and school and the use of "joning" as a form a communication among the Black students. Rachel (Interview, 12-16-2016 –School B) described how students used disrespectful words that are not acceptable at school but are acceptable at home. Teachers at both schools did not understand students' cultural background and connected race to language spoken. Some teachers were even unaware as to what language the students spoke at home. One teacher responded, "What language do they speak in Saudi Arabia?" Both schools found that teachers preferred formal language over the home language but realized now how such a demand dismissed the students' culture.

Both researchers found the ideas of control, classroom management, rituals and routines as the underlying factor for theme three: Student Engagement (Building A) and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Building B). Lauren (Interview, 05-03-2016-School A)) expressed how she has been engaging families more for ideas and resources to bring culture into the class and Josh (Interview, 12-12-2016-School B) lamented about how now he knows it is acceptable to try new things in the classroom and has had to revise his understanding of teaching. It was as if teachers needed permission to abandon outdated rituals and routines that have been practiced for years. One participant stated, "This is how I have always done it, I never thought about changing my routines." Providing a

nurturing environment reduces the power struggle between students and teachers. Once teachers empowered students to own their learning and incorporated different teaching styles, instructional engagement increased.

Teachers in both buildings noted language as a major barrier. Participants shared they felt intimidated addressing students and families who spoke English as a second language. Teachers also felt that because there was so much emphasis on academics and raising achievement, especially among African-American students, learning about culture became secondary or non-existent. Each of the interviewees made comments about the students lacking a sense of belonging in the classroom and the school. The teachers thought perhaps by making greater connections to students' culture, stronger relationships would ensue thus making students feel more connected. The final thread that teachers shared was the confusion or lack of learning around mental illness and culture. Mental illness among students and families are not topics readily broached in elementary school and the participants found it difficult to ask questions or express concerns around mental illness especially if the student was of a different culture.

Gay (2013) stated understanding and engaging students' cultural socialization is required in order for learning to take place (p. 48). A population shift is occurring therefore requiring a pedagogical shift for educators. Recognizing, appreciating, and utilizing the diversity and culture students bring with them each day is important in addressing the diverse needs of students.   This study was important because previous research on developing teachers' cultural lens through professional development did not utilize the school leaders as the lead change agent facilitating the professional development. While the activities were well organized and deeply reflective, the impact

of the school leaders leading the PD sessions was not clear. Teacher participants agreed in the interviews, reflections and as evidenced through artifacts, the professional development helped the teachers realize ignoring students' culture impacts classroom instruction.

In retrospect, there several limitations in this study. Each teacher received the same PD however, level of involvement, openness to learning and willingness to being vulnerable affected the outcome. The collection of more artifacts from the professional development sessions would provide more data and evidence. In addition, more readily available resources would benefit those more eager to learn. The interview questions were too structured. The more detailed interviews occurred when the teacher just started talking about the PD experience. Interviewing students and observing in classes would add validity to the research as well.

Recommendations for Professional Development

- School leaders should be required to participate in professional development regarding culturally relevant teaching practices and pedagogy on an annual basis.
- Teachers need training and modeling on culturally relevant teaching strategies and pedagogy.
- There must be a shared understanding of what the district, community, teachers, and students value regarding culture and diversity.
- Trainings should model how the curriculum can be connected through a cultural lens.

Recommendations for School Leaders

- Critical self-reflection and appropriate feedback is required for teachers in order

to honor the idea that each teacher is in a different place regarding cultural

relevance.

- Professional reading about minorities is necessary for to teachers to better

  understand their culture.

- Create instructional supports for teachers to aid in bridging the cultural gap.

- Opportunities for teachers and staff to engage in the school community will

  develop a greater understanding of students' culture.

- It is crucial for teachers to discuss race in a safe, structured place.

Recommendations for Future Research

- Replication studies in additional schools and districts to expand the research.

- Replication of the study using school leaders to deliver the professional

  development.

- An examination of participants to explore similarities and differences and the

  range of impact.

- A study on how to provide support in the classroom for culturally relevant

  teaching strategies and the impact on academic achievement.

Conclusion

A major component of the research was to explore the lived experiences of

teacher participants who participated in a 16 hour professional development series to

learn what the impact would be on teachers' cultural lens. Eight teachers agreed to

individual interviews and shared their perspectives on the learning from the professional

development. Three themes emerged in each building during the study; 1) cultural

awareness/self-awareness; 2.) language and racial identity/cultural awareness; 3.) student

engagement/culturally relevant pedagogy. The research provided evidence that

classroom educators' cultural lens can be altered through a professional development

series. According to a teacher participant, "I can now see how who I am interferes with

curriculum...I always thought it was just poor curriculum." Curriculum should and must

be geared toward the intended audience and teachers must be able to see, respect, and

incorporate diverse learners' needs in the classroom.

Overall, the professional development was impactful on teachers' cultural lens.

Teachers described an increased level of self-awareness, a better understanding of

cultural diversity in the classroom and in the building, and a greater understanding of the

impact of culture on teaching and learning. Minority student achievement, especially

African-Americans, can be improved by helping educators adjust to the demographic

shift and revise their pedagogical stance. Hoping that educators will make the adjustment

on their own is not likely to happen. School leaders must provide training and

development for educators' cultural competence in order to improve academic success

for all.

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Appendix A.

Culturally Competent Model of Instruction

Guided Instruction-50-75% teacher
- Teacher as Noticer – student as learner
- student think alouds; misconception analysis
- Teacher questions, cues, and prompts using students' strengths and cultural background (Tenet 2) while observing for intentional grouping (SCT)

Focused Instruction – 100% Teacher
- Teacher as expert – Student as novice
- Teacher models a think aloud of concept based on personal experiences (SCT)
- Teacher must be aware of personal stereotypical beliefs and biases (Tenet 1)

Collaborative Learning – 25% teacher
- Teacher as supporter – student as communicator
- Accountable talk and academic language
- Students are allowed to bring their experiences to the learning in collaborative discussion (SCT and Tent 4)

STUDENTS

Independent Learner – 100% student
- Teacher provides feedback – student consolidates
- Thinking alone
- Demonstration vs. regurgitation
- Students are able to make connections through lived experiences and engage in the task (SCT/Tenet 4)

Appendix B.

Building A Coding Categories/Keywords

Student background ● lifestyle ● environment ● different ● Black ● Hispanic ● White ● Asian ● language used at home ● barrier to learning ● culture ● different ● certain background ● identity	Instruction/Instructional Strategy ● whole group ● small group ● low achievers ● engagement ● involvement ● participation ● connected ● learning more	Pedagogy ● learning environment ● seeing self in others ● Respect ● restorative practices ● professional learning ● diverse lens ● different cultures ● different languages ● diverse thinking ● break down the barriers ● school community ● belief system ● change ● shift
Teacher/Student Relationship ● controlling ● sense of fear ● stronger relationship ● connecting/connection	Empowerment ● freeing climate ● space ● improved self-worth ● sense of belonging ● community ● partnership ● communication ● open and honest ● stronger relationship ● restorative practices ● resources ● books	Perception of Self ● learn from others ● white female ● strengths ● grow together ● age ● race ● economic level ● education ● expectations

Student Engagement

Code	Description	Example
Environment/Atmosphere/Climate	Changes in management of classroom, structures, and/or space	"...create an environment where others can learn from people that are different from them." (B) "So I want to always have an environment that is respectful of people from different cultures and really I have learned that to enhance the diverse learners we have, I have to be aware and very in tune with what kind of atmosphere and environment I'm allowing students to communicate and talk with each other.(B) "They are able to understand one another. They are able to communicate with each other, to work with each other, to interact with each other, which is different than before because before the children didn't have a great understanding of different culture. If, for example, a child is coming from Nigeria and the students think the child is black and the culture is different. They think the child is talking funny but has the same color skin as the African American child." (BK) "The Hispanic child, they look at a child back then that is different. Now they look at the child back then as being different but don't understand so they stand off away from that child because they don't understand that child. Which now, they try to understand the child, try to help the child to understand them, and they all try to communicate together on the same

		language." (BK) "More teamwork and really had to work on accepting others for who they are. And so when someone has a different point of view, we always try to take it back to the idea of different people have different points of view, and that's okay." (S) "I noticed this year that I had a lot stronger parent relationships happen this year than previous years and I think it's in part because of the cultural responsiveness and the climate that I've created within my classroom." (B) "I am now controlling an environment where people can be people and human beings." (B) I have realized that I created a more freeing climate where students can be who they are. Again, I'm not controlling them in the way that I think that they should be, but they are actually coming to our community environment and I'm providing them a space where they can own who they are and who they are is what makes our climate the way it is" (B) "I would say that my climate has changed because I wanted to make sure that everyone is comfortable. I don't want anyone to feel as if they are a sub-group within a classroom. I want everyone to feel as if they are on an even playing field even though we may recognize that they may not because of their home life." (Q)

Culture, Language and Racial Identity
*School as separate or different from the students culture, language or racial experience

Code	Description	Examples
Race/Socioeconomic Backgrounds	Differences based on race	"Well, our students within our school system have in different cultures learned in different styles, such as our black or African American students, they learn more hands on. They learn through team building, surroundings such as a group of kids having different roles but working together. What I have observed is the Hispanic students who learn more visually through picture content, and our white students who are well rounded and learn through different ways such as hands on, visual, or even auditory." (BK) "So before now students who came with new shoes or new hairdos, or things that we didn't understand it, but now I think I have a better understanding because those are the things that are valued at home, that are valued in the community and also me not trying to put my values off on the students." (S) "So when I think about the culture that I want to set within my own classroom, I think about those that come from a certain background." (B)

Language	Language differences based on race	"For our black families if we are talking about how we communicate, one of my— what I tend to see a lot is what they call joning. What we see a lot is joning. In other families it's not acceptable but in the black families, joning is part of their interactions." (BK)
Relationships	Culture based on race	"I learned a lot from the families that there is a sense of fear. When they send their students to school, there a fear that the teacher, myself, isn't going to understand their culture and so by being really open and honest with families that I am making an environment that is open and honest, there was more of a stronger relationship that was built. And this is new to me. I've never done this before. I never opened myself up to be vulnerable and I think because I was vulnerable, the family saw that I appreciated who the students are in my classroom." (B)
Behavior	self-reflection	"Whereas before I had professional development around this, I think I had a sense that everybody needed to act a certain way and it was my way and it's changed. My filter is different and I now recognize that everybody is an individual and I know that's really awful to say of as an educator, but I really think I was more of in a control sense before and now I'm not as much controlling." (B)

Multicultural Awareness

Code	Description	Examples
Self-reflection	Behavioral and mindset changes	"I've learned that student comes with different cultures. They come with different values, beliefs, language. They come with different traditions, learning style, different relationships how they interact with each other. So I had to learn like before not to teach everybody the same way and knowing that I'm going to get the same response. I had to learn how to teach in different styles where each culture would understand the same information—the information that has been presented to them." (BK) "Before I really had a one size fits all teaching style. Especially if I was teaching a class of same race students. I didn't really think about culture because the students were all Black or all white. Even when they were mixed race I thought of them as Black or white not really from a cultural perspective. But after we did the culture activity, it made me realize there is a lot to all of our culture, not just color."(S) "Well, now that I know about the different cultures in the class, we are more respectful of the cultures of the different types of learning." (S) "I'm very in tune with, with really the characteristics of different cultures and then how I can make my personal learning instruction connect to those

		characteristics. For example, I really think about my body language. I think about how I respond when students have a question. I think about, you know, before I used to always ask for eye contact, eye contact and in certain cultures eye contact isn't a norm. And so I had to think about when I'm teaching and I don't have everybody's eye contact, it's not being disrespectful, it's their culture. And so I've changed my instructional strategies and I've taken that barrier down on my side and opened up a lens that can value everybody in the classroom." (B) "Everyone needs to know that their culture is valued within our classroom. No one needs to feel as if they are beneath any group that is within that classroom." (Q)

Culturally Responsive Approaches and Considerations

Code	Description	Examples
Student Centered Instruction	Change in approach	"More teamwork and really had to work on accepting others for who they are. And so when someone has a different point of view, we always try to take it back to the idea of different people have different points of view, and that's okay." (S) "So before now it was just about the curriculum, what needed to be taught, how much time I had to teach it, how do I get it done and now it's more about

		how can I make this relevant to the students' lives?" (S) "Yeah, so we have a family from Saudi Arabia and we didn't…, we don't know…, we weren't aware of the language that they spoke at home and so we asked the student from Saudi Arabia to connect the language that he uses at home with the English language that we use in the classroom and so we ended up creating a bulletin board where we would just have common words that he used at home and then we would end up using those, his language, within our classroom language and connecting vocabulary back and forth." (B) So the organizational atmosphere of my classroom has changed in the sense that it's not all whole learning. It's more small group learning and it's more of if you have a question it's okay that you have a question and you're not put down because you have a question…" (B) "We have this thing called classroom meetings and sometimes we call them classroom circles where we really like to get to know each other and so by getting to know each other we highlight who is sitting around the circle and their identities are shared. So not only who they are, where they came from and how they're contributing to our classroom environment. What are their strengths? What are their weaknesses? How can we grow together? So we do

		these, these regular meetings or circles where dialogue is shared and we sometimes do small group circles then where they get to know just a couple different people within their groups or they're getting ready to start a group project and they want to know what the strengths and weaknesses of their teammates are going into that group project." (B)
Material	Use of tools and resources to enhance learning	"do computer programs that will allow us to go back and start from earlier stages like Lexia or AR as opposed to everybody having to be on the same level. " (S) "I also think that when I'm reading…, when I pick, when I pick novels to read with my guided reading groups or as a whole group, I always want to make sure that I don't just always pick the same type of characters. That I use a diverse lens and think of both of students that are in my classroom as well people who are not in my classroom to expose students to." (B) "I try my best to be more conscious of the different cultures. So, if there is anything that the other cultures may have that will be relevant to our classroom, relevant to our lesson, then I love to pull or have pulled from those parents, those other outsider resources that we have in our community to build on our lessons that we have within our classrooms." (Q)

self-reflection	Mindset change	"So I have a student in particular that comes to mind who loves to act out very, very much. And act out meaning in theater like, like likes to use his hands. Very theatrical. And I really played into that. So we did a lot of read alouds and I would often use the student to animate and describe what he was hearing for the class and it really pulled on other learning styles that I had never even pushed on before and then that student was able to shine within the classroom because it was his talent and I think by creating an environment where more learning styles were acceptable quote/unquote allowed for students to grow deeper and really be engaged with their learning." (B) "Yeah, so we have a family from Saudi Arabia and we didn't…, we don't know…, we weren't aware of the language that they spoke at home and so we asked the student from Saudi Arabia to connect the language that he uses at home with the English language that we use in the classroom and so we ended up creating a bulletin board where we would just have common words that he used at home and then we would end up using those, his language, within our classroom language and connecting vocabulary back and forth."

Appendix C.

Building B Code Book Sample

Code for Self-Awareness	Description	Examples
Identity	self-conception, self-perception, belonging	I think at least for white teachers around my age, and I'm in my 30's, so it's kind of some people view it as, oh, it's something extra I got to do. Now, I've got to teach all this diversity. I don't even personally know like exactly where I, like my family has come from. I don't think that some, I think sometimes they just don't, I don't know.
Code for Cultural Awareness	Description	Examples
culture	grasp, interpretation, appreciation	I learned that like culture is more than just what we see, but it's the underlying culture that they have that we may not know about such as religion, home life, things like that, so it helped me get a better understanding of my students and what they may experience at home versus when they come to school, and what they may bring to school because of their culture. I learned that like culture is more than just what we see, but it's the underlying culture that they have that we may not know about such as religion, home life, things like that, so it helped me get a better understanding of my

		students and what they may experience at home versus when they come to school, and what they may bring to school because of their culture.
Code for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy	Description	Examples
instruction	informed instruction, relate, approach	And so, I try to provide as much as possible, avenues for students to be able to pick the learning style that impacts them the best. It, well, it provided me with more resources to use within the classroom and strategies that I used most in the classroom And so, what a lot of the series has done is it's caused me, well, number one to self-reflect on my own actions and my own behaviors and the ways in which those things impact the people around me. And, then also to kind of refocus my thoughts on finding ways to get students more engaged. So, bringing in more engagement strategies, more engagement things.

Appendix D.

Interview Protocol

Script

Welcome and thank you for your participation today. My name is Apryll Mendez and I am a doctoral student at the University of Missouri- Saint Louis conducting Meeting Yourself without Rose Colored Glasses study as part of my dissertation. Thank you for completing the surveys and attending the professional development sessions. This interview will take about 75 minutes and will include two questions regarding your thoughts and experiences. I would like your permission to tape record this interview, so I may accurately document the information you share with me. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know. All of your responses are confidential and kept in a password protected file. The purpose of this study is to determine how much of an impact the professional development series had on the educators.

At this time, I would like to remind you of your written consent to participate in this study. I am the responsible investigator, specifying your participation in the research project. You and I have both signed and dated each copy, certifying that we agree to continue this interview.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop or take a break, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions of concern before we begin? With your permission we will begin the interview.

Questions

1. *How has your understanding of culturally responsiveness altered your perception of diverse learners?*

Provoking Questions:

a. *Family*

          i. *What did you discover about your families?*

b. *Learning style*

          i. *Give examples of your students' learning styles*

c. *Home language*

          i. *Give examples of home language use in your classroom*

2. *How has this culturally relevant series impacted your instruction?*

Provoking Questions:

a. *Engagement*

          i. *How are the students engaged?*

b. *Climate*

          i. *How has your climate changed?*

c. *Identity*

          i. *How do your students share their identities in your classrooms?*

d. *Diverse resources relevant to student cultures*

i.   What diverse resources to you have available?

e.   Student ownership

i.   How do your students develop ownership?

Appendix E.

Informed Consent

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities
Meeting Yourself Without Rose Colored Glasses

Participant_____   HSC Approval Number_____

Principal Investigator: Shenelle DuBose & Apryll Mendez   PI's Phone Number

  1.   You are invited to participate in a research study conducted with Apryll Mendez and Shenelle DuBose under the supervision of Dr. Kim Song. The purpose of this research is to develop a four part professional development series to see if the series impacts teacher's knowledge, skills and/or attitudes for serving our diverse students better.

2. a) Your participation will involve
1.   Attending a four-day monthly professional development series
2.   Possibility of being in the focus group for an interview with principal investigator regarding the professional development series

Approximately 50 teachers may be involved in this research. Approximately 25 teachers will participate at School A and 25 teachers from School B.

b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be approximately 4 hours for each professional development day. Interviews will take approximately 45 minutes to complete and will be scheduled with 4 teachers from each school towards the end of the professional development series.

3.   There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.

4.   There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about professional development and may help to you better educate urban youth.

5.   Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

 6. By agreeing to participate, you understand and agree that your data may be shared with other researchers and educators in the form of presentations and/or publications. In all cases, your identity will not be revealed. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for Human Research Protection). That agency would be required to maintain the confidentiality of your data. In addition, all data will be stored on a password-protected

computer and/or in a locked office.

7.   If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Shenelle DuBose or Apryll Mendez. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the Office of Research Administration, at 516-5897.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

_____
Participant's Signature
Date

_____
Participant's Printed Name

_____
Signature of Investigator or Designee
Date

_____
Investigator/Designee Printed Name