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Participation Mandatory, Learning Not Required: A Phenomenological Study of Diversity Training in Education and Law Enforcement

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Abstract:

This study provides a timely, qualitative exploration of the perceived efficacy of cultural competency training for both law enforcement officers and educators. It comprises 18 semi-structured interviews, 10 of which were conducted with education professionals and 8 with law enforcement officers. Drawing four main themes from the interview sample, findings show participants held a complex perception of training efficacy. Interviews featured multiple anecdotes from participants concerning the application of culturally competency skills, as well as important takeaways concerning their desired topics/format of professional development sessions and their favored characteristics of facilitator approach. Our analysis further reveals implications of participants' identity and socialization and uncovers which aspects of training participants transferred to professional practice. Given the host of legislation surrounding cultural competency trainings as divisive, the study provides a foundation for vital, wider inquiry.

Key Words: cultural competency | professional development | law enforcement | educators | officers | diversity training | cultural humility

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Our hope is that our body of work might be the beginning of an exploratory spark which encourages a prospective student to begin a similar journey as our own. A special thanks to our mentors and advisor, Dr. Good, Dr. Mayes, Dr. Alfred, and Dr Hassler. Your support and guidance were paramount to our success, and we are forever indebted to you all. May this time have been spent cultivating a curiosity in each of us that never dies.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

The American civil rights demonstrations of the 1950s and 1960s challenged the structures of racism and yielded legislation and rulings concerning equal pay, voting rights, and integration. These were declared victories, but seventy years on, landmark rulings, policies, and legislation meant to curtail legal discrimination in America's public systems, have all failed to deliver. Significant disparities and segregation remain (Anderson, 2016; Darby & Rury, 2018). Racial segregation was a characteristic of the 19th and 20th century, and the *Brown v. Board* ruling was a major victory for civil rights in education, despite it never being fully realized (Yell, 2022). A decade after the ruling, only 1.63% of Blacks were attending desegregated schools, and places like Prince Edward County would defy this order by closing its schools for 5 years (1959-1964) rather than comply with the court's decision (Anderson, 2016). Subsequent cases would see the promises of *Brown* stripped away and watered down until there was little left to enforce (Kelly, 2012). Students and their educators remain victims of a flawed education system rooted in white supremacy, a system that propagates injustice at every turn. But if disparities and segregation begin in our primary years of education, they extend far beyond. Racial disparities in our criminal justice system, particularly law enforcement, have been glaring in recent years (Altman, 2020, Wu et al., 2023).

It is clear that cultural competency sits in parallel with *Brown v. Board* in that both stand as illusions of a promised ideal that rarely manifests but becomes passed down through resolutions and public policies. Cultural competence refers to the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all

cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, spiritual traditions, immigration status, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each (National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care, 2009).

A complication with the idea of cultural competence is the belief that individuals can be trained or develop expertise to operationalize it in training programs as a best practice (Kleinman, 2006). Diversity training sessions are billed as though they make our institutions and individuals better, despite a lack of evidence that they produce solutions for either (El-Rayes & Rhee, 2021). Attempts to simplify cultural processes overlook differences in social and ethnic groups, such as personality, religion, age, etc. and by lumping those experiences, values and norms into a construct one can have competence around but omitting the vastness of individual experiences within cultures and contributing to the false premise of cultural competency (Delmouzou, 2002). Thus, addressing bias, minimizing discrimination, and providing equal opportunity are often intentionally positioned marketing campaigns that fail to provide equal safety and opportunity for Black and Brown citizens in classrooms and medical offices, in the streets, and in our courts (Baum, 2021; Dobbin & Kalev, 2016).

In the last decade, a series of events have triggered an increase in diversity training aimed at improving cultural competency (Baum, 2021). School districts, corporations, community organizations, health care and law enforcement professionals have all engaged in professional learning opportunities meant to address the systemic challenges faced by institutions throughout the country (Wu et al., 2023). In 2013, the

Black Lives Matter organization was founded in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman, the killer of Trayvon Martin (Drakulich et al., 2021). By 2014, the platform organizers mobilized to join local protesters following the murders of Eric Garner in New York and Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, both killed by law enforcement. As protests came in waves, the Black Lives Matter platform received international attention (Drakulich et al., 2021). The loss of Brown in Ferguson was keenly felt by the larger Saint Louis community, where a number of urban school districts had recently lost state accreditation and were assigned state-installed school board members and administrators (Delaney, 2019). The following year, Brown's death was followed by Freddie Gray of Baltimore and Sandra Bland of Austin (Wu et al., 2023).

In 2016, human rights organizations began to note an increase in white nationalist and other extremist activity, which many suggest may have coincided with the presidential campaign and ultimate election of President Donald Trump, and the next several years would prove just as tragic (Fortunato et al., 2022). The summer preceding the election, the nation witnessed the deaths of Alton Sterling of Louisiana and Philando Castille of Minnesota, again at the hands of police. These events brought a series of costly discrimination and harassment lawsuits, which were also a catalyst for an uptick in workplace training (Dobbin and Kalev, 2016). Educational institutions followed suit.

In 2018, a viral video of suburban Texas teens using racial slurs motivated the Carroll school district to create a plan to address cultural awareness in their student body and implement culturally responsive teaching. Later, as the culture wars swelled, resistance to the district's Cultural Competency Plan would become a model for grassroots organizers in other districts who were eager to dismantle diversity, equity, and

inclusion programs for teachers and students alike (Barbaro & Tavernise, 2021; Hixenbaugh & Hylton, 2021; Lowry, 2021).

In 2020, the murders of George Floyd, Ahmed Arbery, and Breanna Taylor coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic and sparked a season of protests and riots highlighting significant public concern for racially motivated violence and disparity in public safety and law enforcement (Altman, 2020). Disparities in health care and the bias of health practitioners likewise took center stage as the pandemic unfolded and death rates among Black Americans far outpaced those of other races, intensifying protest (Heckler & Mackey, 2022). According to Norwood (2021), "the nationwide protests ignited by the murder of George Floyd by a police officer not only fueled demands for systemic police reforms but also forced companies and government agencies across the country to reexamine the inequities within their organizations." Dong (2021) found that Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)-related job postings increased by 123% between May and September 2020.

But in the fall of 2020, in direct backlash to the Black Lives Matter movement and the increased desires to close racial disparities and create more equitable workplaces, political leaders set their sights on Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Wallace-Wells, 2021). In a nationally televised news interview, conservative fellow of the Manhattan Institute, Christopher Rufo, called on then-President Trump to root out the theory and end cultural and racial awareness programs at the federal level. Later, Rufo would tweet that the attack on CRT was a successful bid to brand freeze CRT, creating a public perception of the theory as toxic (Wallace-Wells, 2021). Despite stark racial disparities in academic outcomes, schools and other public institutions were soon faced with masses demanding

revision or omission of antiracist programs and policies (Barbaro & Tavernise, 2021; Baum, 2021; Hixenbaugh & Hylton, 2021). In addition, books in school libraries that centered characters of color or with LGBTQ+ identities were targeted for banning and were centered in explosive conflicts in school districts nationwide (Bray, 2023; Lopez, et al., 2021).

The current political climate presents unique challenges for public practitioners, not unlike those in the Civil Rights Era who faced resistance in their efforts to challenge the status quo and demand paradigm shifts. Today, as in years past, highly organized, intentional campaigns have been launched to drive wedges and sow the seeds of discontent (Keierleber, 2021). Though racial disparities in law enforcement and education have been broadly detailed by researchers, reactions to the Black Lives Matter movement, the Pandemic, and the CRT controversy have likely shaped practitioners' perceptions of workplace training before they even begin. The 24-hour news cycle and the overuse of social media for gathering and learning about current events pose further threats to critical thinking and discourse because of misinformation and disinformation (El-Rayes & Rhee, 2021). Facilitators of cultural competence training now navigate a social and political landscape fraught with both opposition and overenthusiasm, as participants both contribute to or resist what they perceive to be the woke culture phenomenon blanketing public discourse at all levels of the social hierarchy.

Problem Statement

Growing multiculturalism in the populace has made American leaders increasingly aware of the need for effective communication with individuals from diverse backgrounds. However, there remains a lack of cross-cultural leadership, as evidenced by

a troubling rise in societal conflict in recent years (Sereni-Massinger & Woods, 2016). The emergence of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has awakened the need for cultural awareness not only about Black issues but a multitude of cultural issues that plague our nation. The BLM movement has been a catalyst for dialogue as it relates to addressing cultural contention (Iorio, 2017). Such movements and discourse have created and urgent need for cultural competency in public service workers and have caused a renewed interest in training for cultural competency. Still, the effectiveness of trainers, curricula, and methods aimed at increasing such competency has yet to be seen (Gay, 2010; Lai & Lisnek, 2023). Strengthening the cultural competency of workplaces will aid in addressing the cultural disparities, such as race, that are evident and documented in all sectors of society. Examining the response to cultural competency training in law enforcement and education allows one to understand not only the range of cultural understanding in workplaces but the need to provide training that is effective to those who attend.

Given the increasing, widespread media attention on police brutality against People of Color, citizens are demanding change within law enforcement. Stinson et al. (2021) analyze the current climate regarding the policing of Black neighborhoods and neighborhoods for other People of Color (POC) by acknowledging the discrepancies among their interactions. Controversy surrounding the treatment of communities of Color and law enforcement has persisted for decades. Social Media coverage has ignited the resurgence of this public scrutiny (El-Rayes & Rhee, 2021). As a result, individuals have publicly condemned police and questioned law enforcement as an institution. In response to the public scrutiny, law enforcement has employed several solutions to address the

disparity. One prominent solution offered is training. Cultural competency training is imperative to law enforcement who serve diverse communities because it equips officers with the knowledge and tools needed to serve the community efficiently (Lai & Linsek, 2023). Most training in law enforcement focuses on anti-biases but is typically not research-based or empirically evaluated for its effectiveness on lasting change (James, 2017; Paluck et al., 2021; Lai & Linsek, 2023).

In education, professional development training is implemented to inform practitioners of the schools' diverse demographics and urge educators to become culturally competent in meeting the ever-changing needs of the student population; however, there is much work still needed to be done for institutional change (Spikes, 2018). While there is a great need for education to grow in cultural competency due to the changing demographics within our school systems, there is little known regarding the aspects of in-service training and its capacity to lead to the transformation of educators. (Spikes, 2018). Hence, educator preparation programs are urged to facilitate training that improves the cultural competency of administrators and teachers. However, there is a gap in the research regarding whether these programs improve cultural competency and if so, what elements leverage that improvement.

Given the current climate, this study focuses on examining individuals who have participated in cultural proficiency or diversity training in the public sectors of law enforcement and education. This phenomenological study examines the extent to which participants perceive their experiences in diversity training to be effectively influenced by training and whether participants report having shifted attitudes or behaviors toward their professional practices (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Larsen & Adu, 2022; Lekas et al.,

2020). The findings of this study can be a catalyst for future research and influence professional development creation and implementation.

Purpose Statement

Throughout our professional experience, our team members have facilitated and participated in a number of professional development trainings. Having witnessed both transformation and resistance within ourselves and among colleagues in response to professional development sessions, we felt compelled to investigate what led participants to engage or disengage from training and to accept or reject an application to their personal and professional lives. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of law enforcement officers and educators receiving workplace training in diversity, equity and inclusion workshops and to consider which approaches, practices, or components of those sessions had a positive influence or were not well received and why. Participants who attended these trainings can uniquely define and describe what elements moved them to adopt or reject training. In this study, we identified the extent to which specific training program elements fostered growth, self-reflection, and change for educators and law enforcement officials.

Significance of the Study

Law enforcement officials and educators are public servants who significantly impact our society. The research investigated employees' experiences and attitudes toward DEI training and their willingness to adopt or transfer the training into their own practices (Betancourt et al., 2003). Researching public servant participants in cultural competency training in their workplace can enhance the body of research and ameliorate the impact of systemic racism and discrimination. DEI training is essential for improving

the outcomes in law enforcement and education. In law enforcement, diversity training can help officers better understand the communities they serve and build trust and respect with those communities. It can help reduce discrimination and bias which can lead to better outcomes for officers and the public.

In education, diversity training can lead to better academic outcomes and a more positive school environment. School districts that fail to embrace a DEI lens can see resulting low expectations for students, less rigorous coursework and programs, and poor school climates. By researching the impact of diversity training through interviews, we gained a better understanding of the perceived effectiveness of workplace training and uncovered areas of need as well as ideas for innovation.

Research Question

Our study is one in phenomenology, in that we aimed to examine the phenomenon of cultural competency as it relates to professional development and how this proficiency impacts participants' cultural competency and professional practice. Phenomenology is a design particularly relative to qualitative research, wherein researchers seek a deep and meaningful examination of thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, and actions (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Using the cycle of socialization (Harrow, 1997), self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977a) and theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985) as our supporting frameworks, we engaged in research about how individuals experience cultural competence and workplace training. In this process, we interviewed participants selected through convenience sampling and voluntary response sampling. Our research focused on the following research question:

What is the perceived influence of cultural proficiency training on the professional practice of law enforcement officers and K-12 public educators?

Our team conducted a study that we believe will increase the body of knowledge regarding DEI training in the workplace and explore what factors increase an employee's ability to transfer professional development into the workplace. Our research has revealed multiple themes and offers practitioners a greater perspective on how professional development concerning DEI may impact workplace practices.

Defining our Terms

To provide clarity around our study, we offer definitions and explanations of key terms, many of which overlap among facilitators and organizations. Definitions and explanations are listed below; where terms are used interchangeably, they are listed together:

Professional Development/Workplace Training- These terms will be used to describe sessions aimed at improving job performance through increased knowledge and skills.

Diversity Training- This term includes a distinct set of programs aimed at educating and facilitating positive intergroup interactions, reducing prejudice and discrimination, and enhancing the skills, knowledge, and motivation of people to interact with diverse others.

Cultural Competency/Cultural Proficiency/Cultural Sensitivity- While this term is evolving, the term as used today refers to "the ability of individuals and systems to respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and faiths or religions in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, tribes, and communities, and

protects and preserves the dignity of each" (National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care, 2009).

Cultural Humility- This term extends the concept of cultural competency, emphasizing an iterative process that begins with an examination of one's own beliefs and cultural identities in a process of self-reflection and self-critique. Cultural humility is a lifelong endeavor whereby individual improvement also yields the improved ability to engage with others across cultures (Lekas et al., 2020).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter two aims to evaluate the literature that provides the context for our research study. This review begins with a discussion of identity and socialization. These themes offer context surrounding how participants may approach cultural competency. Given that our participants are adults, we also examined the literature surrounding andragogy, the method of teaching adult learners. Research shows that there is a science to adult learning, and examining this concept provides the groundwork for the influence of workplace training for adults.

The review will then address the theoretical frameworks that apply to our study: self-efficacy, self-determination, and theory of planned behavior. Examining these concepts will aid in framing our study as it relates to participant motivation and behaviors. These frameworks support how our participants present themselves along the different stages of proficiency and their willingness to acquire new knowledge.

Our study also explores the literature surrounding the term cultural competency and how it is experienced in the fields of education and law enforcement. Studies show that there are differences in the application of cultural competency practices among law enforcement and education. The literature will reveal assets as well as deficits in the implementation of cultural competency training. The literature review culminates with the gaps in the literature and how our study sought to fill them in.

Identity and Socialization

Every child enters into the world void of any understanding or expectation of what is in store for them. At every stage in their early development, they are socialized by

those responsible for their care and subsequently derive meaning from the experiences and exposure presented to them. This starts the first stages of socialization, an exchange of messages and meaning that one has no control over nor ability to accept nor deny (Adams et al., 2023).

Our early socialization is marked by an inability to ask questions or make assumptions; we were born into a world that either afforded us the benefits of our privilege or the challenges of our marginalization. We would neither deny nor accept our plights as we had no clue what that meant in the context of our development. In this stage, our culture and values, sense of right and wrong develop, and our self-esteem which is tied to self-awareness and self-concept progress. By age two, infants begin to understand how to behave based on people's reactions to their behavior (Reed, 2015).

Social identities play a crucial role in one's experience throughout life and have long been formed and reinforced in media, text and discourse (Deaux, 1996). Education, and by extension classrooms, play a crucial role in the first stage of socialization and provide opportunities for adolescents to begin the development of critical consciousness (Schwarzenthal, 2022). Researchers have applied the Brazilian educator and philosopher, Freire's (2014) ideas of critical consciousness to further engagement with adolescents. The expansion of his framework of using education as a tool goes beyond literacy to understanding the structural inequities that exist in society and uphold marginalization (Schwarzenthal, 2022). Applying this approach allows for a greater understanding of the role identity plays in social engagement.

These representations and misrepresentations of identity form the development of self that socialization is built upon at every stage of our lives (Adams et al., 2023). The

complexity of our identities follows us throughout our development as we seek to understand the world around us (Castor, 2021). While some of our identities usually stay throughout our lifespan (e.g., race, gender), the shift in our understanding of being an older adult is influenced by cultural norms which may include ubiquitous stereotypical views of what it means to be an older adult as well as other social structures and hierarchies (Grusec, 2016). The impact of past relationships and experiences may affect later life adaptation of how to behave and interact in certain situations and may be the result of the delayed effects of early socialization (Grusec, 2016).

This understanding is shaped by how others see us, how we see ourselves, our families, historical context and other significant cultural, political and social exchanges. Defining self and understanding who one is, is an integral part of identity, in the past, present and future. Our discernment of self, how we learn and what we accept continues to evolve (Tatum et al., 2000). Historically in academia, it was understood that identity was formed and completed once we reached adulthood, and theories of cognition were formed as individuals completed adolescence. Now, it is more broadly understood that socialization continues well into adulthood creating a paradox by which we are social and individual beings connected in a multitude of ways and in the end still alone in the world (Damon, 2020). In this space, individuals are still learning from the world around them, thus socialization continues well into adulthood.

Messaging about who we are and how we should behave is immediate and influences our sense of self. Institutions reinforce these messages through a bombardment of conscious and unconscious rules handed down through houses of worship, schools, museums and other cultural artifacts strewn throughout our social lives (Adams et al.,

2023). The failure of educators to take into account the identities of their students and their own identities begins to form the basis for how information will be delivered and understood. Freire (2014) disquisition highlights the need to pull information from students and not just make deposits that may conflict with their experiences. This contributes to their socialization by devaluing their experiences, if not a member of the dominant group, by unconsciously implying their stories do not matter equally in the discourse.

For those willing to weather the social storms by disrupting the status quo, there is an opportunity to minimize the harmful effects of the Cycle of Socialization (Harro, 1997). Participants must first have a waking up moment that creates a shift in their critical consciousness and provides space to reconsider their early messages and begin to counter those by identifying and reaching out to others and building community (Adams et al., 2023). This begins with finding like-minded individuals who are also engaged in critical consciousness: the ability to investigate and acknowledge the various systems of inequity and feel responsible to challenge these systems as they show up in society (Freire, 2014).

Any attempts to challenge or question these norms are met with implicit and explicit consequences keeping change at bay, confined to an elusive target whose goalpost is constantly in motion. This self-perpetuating cycle maintains oppression and oppressive systems by creating obstacles introduced early and at each stage of the cycle. And, at the core of this cycle of socialization is fear, confusion, insecurity and ignorance, all of which may limit any progress toward change (Adams et al., 2023).

A tenet of this framework is the concept of lifelong learning, which is the ability to facilitate growth by altering behavior and eliminating the need to maintain the status quo. Adults engaged in lifelong learning gain confidence and are empowered to learn new skills, knowledge and values (Laal, 2002).

Andragogy

Andragogy as a learning theory focuses on the learning preferences of adult learners (Knowles, 1984). Knowles (1984) coined the term andragogy to distinguish the theory and practice of adult learning from pedagogy. This theory is rooted in the belief that adults have distinct learning preferences and characteristics that differ from children. While children are dependent on teachers to provide a structured learning environment, adults tend to be self-directed and motivated learners who bring life experiences and knowledge to the learning process (Taylor & Kroth, 2009). Andragogy is a significant framework for understanding and designing effective learning experiences for adult learners. Contrary to a learning strategy, andragogy is a philosophy that can include a multitude of instructional strategies (Forrest & Peterson, 2006). Zmeyov (1998) encapsulates the term as “the theory of adult learning that sets out the scientific fundamentals of the activities of learners and teachers in planning, realizing, evaluating and correcting adult learning” (p.106). The role of adult learning in andragogy is a key element in the theory and practice of this educational approach. Andragogy illuminates adult learners' unique characteristics, needs and motivations that shape their learning experience (Taylor, 2007). Knowles (1984) identified several essential principles that distinguish andragogy from pedagogy. The principles include:

1. Self-directed learning: Adults are motivated to learn when they perceive a need for knowledge and have the autonomy to direct their own learning experiences.
2. Adult learners experience: Adults have a plethora of experiences that can be leveraged in the learning process. These experiences can serve as a foundation for new learning and shape the way adults approach and engage with new information.
3. Relevance and practicality: Adult learners are more likely to be engaged and motivated when they understand the importance, applicability and relevance of the knowledge and skills being taught. Learning experiences should be linked to real-world experiences and provide practical solutions to the challenges adult learners will experience.
4. Problem-centered approach: Andragogy encourages a problem-centered approach to learning, where adult learners actively engage in identifying and solving authentic problems. This approach fosters critical thinking, problem-solving and the application of knowledge in pragmatic contexts.
5. Collaborative and interactive learning: Adult learners benefit from collaborative learning experiences that allow them to engage in meaningful discussions, share perspectives and learn from each other. Interaction and dialogue among learners are seen as critical components of the learning process.

Principles of andragogy have been widely accepted and applied in various fields of adult education, including professional development, workplace training and lifelong learning. In the context of professional development in law enforcement and education, applying principles of andragogy can be beneficial in designing and implementing

effective cultural competency training (Brown, 2006; Birzer, 2003). Key elements of andragogy and cultural competency training are self-directed learning, relevance and practicality, experience-based learning, collaborative and interactive learning and flexibility and inclusivity. Adult learners tend to be motivated when they perceive a need for new knowledge or skills to navigate the work environment. Mezirow (1998) suggests that shifts in mindset require an adult to engage in critical reflection, questioning assumptions and engaging in dialogue with others as essential elements of the transformative learning process. Transformational learning goes beyond acquiring new information or skills; it involves a deep shift in one's worldview and sense of self (Brown, 2006).

Motivation: Self-Efficacy and Self-Determination

Andragogy's framework for adult learning includes many elements from Motivation Theory, with particular connections to self-determination and self-efficacy (Houde, 2004; Flowerday, 2016; Pew, 2007). This relationship is seen through several factors of self-determination and self-efficacy, such as personal beliefs and values, interest, self-relevance, autonomy or experience (Ryan & Deci, 2019; Flowerday, 2016).

Self-Determination

Self-determination Theory, an offshoot of Motivation Theory, centers on the will and willingness of an individual to engage in action steps toward a given goal (Ryan & Deci, 2019; Santiago-Rosario et al., 2023; Sweet et al., 2012). Willingness and attitudinal positions have become particularly salient to conversations around diversity in recent years; since 2020, the United States has seen a sweeping and successful campaign to mobilize voters and parents for or against Critical Race Theory and diversity

programming (Bezrukova et al., 2012; Gorski & Perry, 2022; Onyeador et al., 2021: Roberson et al., 2022). This willingness may impact the length or frequency of participation, as well as the effort applied to acquiring information or engagement in activities (Flowerday, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2019). As diversity training features unique cognitive and emotional demands from participants, recent researchers have called for new approaches to diversity training that may mitigate defensiveness and resistance (Bezrukova et al., 2012; Onyeador, 2021; Roberson et al., 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2019; Weinstein et al., 2022).

In part, these challenging reactions may be related to shifts and expansion in complex personal identities, including values and interests (Roberson et al., 2022). Discussions concerning bias, discrimination and diversity can uniquely challenge one's worldview and socialization and are likely to raise concerns that may seem subjective or emotional (Alhejji et al., 2016; Bezrukova et al., 2012). Self-determination experts explain that individual values can contribute to a variation in learner participation (Flowerday, 2016). For example, Homan et al. (2010) found that the value an individual assigns to diversity can shape their perceptions of groups/team makeup. In addition, these researchers demonstrated that an openness to differences could shape an employee's opinions of team characteristics. Unfortunately, in their systematic review of diversity trainings, Beruzkova et al. (2012) pointed to a significant lack of research surrounding the values and personality characteristics of training participants, despite acknowledging that attitudes toward diversity training are likely formed before sessions, in part because the issues have often been politicized. Similarly, Alhejji et al. (2016) pointed to a lack of understanding around antecedents to diversity training, including diversity beliefs.

Interest, the desire an individual has to know more about a certain topic or to practice a certain skill, also shapes learner engagement (Flowerday, 2016). Interest can be a catalyst for the internalization of knowledge or a transfer of learning into practice (Alhejji et al., 2016; Flowerday, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2019; Vansteenkiste et al., 2018). It is important to note that interest is dynamic, changing as needs or environments shift, and evolves along a continuum as a learner builds a larger base of knowledge (Ryan & Deci, 2019; Flowerday, 2016; Vansteenkiste et al., 2018). For example, interest in diversity trainings increased following the visibility of the Black Lives Matter movement in relation to the murder of Michael Brown in 2014 and again following the murder of George Floyd in 2020. Interest can also be fostered by instructors as they demonstrate the relevance of their content to the needs and existing interests of their students (Flowerday, 2016).

Relevance is another factor of self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2019). The extent to which participants find training applicable and foundational to success in daily tasks will thus increase or decrease learner motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2019; Pew, 2007). Relevance may shift over time, especially with the demands of employers (Alhejji et al., 2016). Given the evolving nature of interests and relevance, administrators and supervisors often presume that autonomy, or choice, which is also an integral concept within andragogy, may further foster motivation (Alhejji et al., 2016; Bezrukova et al., 2012; Parola & Marcionetti, 2023). While some researchers show little difference in the efficacy of diversity trainings that are voluntary versus those that are mandatory, others find some evidence to suggest that mandatory trainings are more likely to contribute to the transfer of learning to practice (Alhejji et al., 2016; Bezrukova et al., 2012). Similarly,

Alhejji et al. (2016) suggest that the value an employer places on diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in the workplace can impact the engagement of participants and their willingness to adopt new practices.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is another area impacting motivation. The father of Self-Efficacy Theory, Albert Bandura (1997b), centers the theory on an individual's perception of their own capacity (or incapacity) to change behavior as a driving factor in producing (or not producing) desired outcomes (Bandura, 1997b). It is important to note that neither self-efficacy nor self-determination is static (Flowerday, 2016; Love et al., 2021). Like interest or relevance, individuals will express more or less self-efficacy, depending on the topic or activity in which they are immersed, the amount of exposure they have had to information on a given topic or the amount of practice they have had with a particular skill (Combs, 2007; Sweet et al., 2012). Unsurprisingly, researchers have shown that knowledge acquisition holds a consistently positive correlation with self-efficacy (Flowerday, 2016; Love et al., 2021). Thus, the ongoing nature of diversity training is vital (Beruzkova, 2012).

For example, Somers and Terrill (2022) studied the correlation between the number of shifts, shift locations and work experience for law enforcement officers; they found that officer confidence was higher for those with more broad experience across a higher number of shifts. Similarly, another study, wherein law enforcement officers received training regarding interactions with the LGBTQIA+ population, found an increase in the officers' reported levels of self-efficacy regarding interactions with LGBTQ-identifying persons (Israel et al., 2014).

Engelman and Deardorff (2016), however, report some evidence that training may result in a decrease in self-efficacy. In this study, officers were offered training aimed at improving their interactions with the deaf and hard of hearing during domestic violence calls. While some law enforcement officers participating in the training were more motivated afterward to attempt the skills they had learned, others who initially reported higher levels of self-efficacy with these populations felt the task more daunting following the training. Researchers posited that one reason for this decline in self-efficacy may have been a lack of awareness concerning the deaf and hard-of-hearing population (Engelman & Deardorff, 2016). These findings are in line with other sources that indicate an increased amount of participation in continuing education often drives an increase in self-efficacy (Flowerday, 2016; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021).

Naturally, the relationship between knowledge and self-efficacy also follows the inverse pattern. That is, individuals with higher self-efficacy are shown to seek out more opportunities for training. For example, in their study, Parola and Marcionetti (2023) found that higher self-efficacy in educators was related to a higher likelihood that the educators would seek out professional development. Another study by Dupuis and Fenster (2020) reported that the higher teachers perceived their self-efficacy, the more likely they were to participate in professional development opportunities offered by their institution's cooperating universities. Furthermore, multiple studies have found that self-efficacy shapes participants' effort and engagement with the instructor, materials or activities during training sessions (Dupuis & Fenster, 2020; Durksen et al., 2017; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). Both studies from Durksen et al. (2017) and Richter et al. (2022) showed that educators with higher reported self-efficacy were more likely to hold a

positive perception of collaboration with other teachers, seek out collaborative, interactive professional development sessions and were correspondingly more likely to share their knowledge with others at their campuses following training, thus increasing collective efficacy.

Given the relationship between knowledge and self-efficacy, as well as the added factors of motivation within the construct of self-determination, some researchers have applied self-efficacy and self-determination theories together as they explore the influence of individual motivation on behavioral change across a variety of tasks and competencies, including cultural proficiency (Combs, 2002; Combs, 2007; Flowerday, 2016; Santiago-Rosario et al., 2023; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021; Sweet et al., 2012; Torres, 2020). Researchers in law enforcement and education have built on the research of Combs (2007), who showed that training intentionally addressing factors of self-efficacy improved participant intention and commitment to tackle more difficult tasks following training sessions (Love et al., 2021; Parola & Marcionetti, 2023; Santiago-Rosario et al., 2023).

Theory of Planned Behavior

Self-determination, self-efficacy (Ryan & Deci, 2019) and theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985), while different, share space in their attempts to explain the relationship between choices one makes to influence the outcome of a situation. The belief that working toward a goal will produce the desired outcome (self-efficacy) and one's attitude (self-determination); theory of planned behavior, either, positive or negative, toward the behavior, alongside subjective norms and perceived behavioral

control make both theories complementary to each other but not the same (Ajzen, 1991; Wiethoff, 2004).

The causes of human behavior cannot easily be reasoned to beliefs, bias or social norms, although all play a role in the outcomes of our decisions. The theory of planned behavior (TPB) is a psychological model used to predict how individuals make logical, reasoned decisions about their behavior at any time or given place (Ajzen, 1991). TPB was developed by social psychologists and has become a framework for explaining and predicting behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2000). It is one of the most widely applied expectancy-value models of attitude-behavior relationships which has met with some degree of success in predicting a variety of behaviors (Ajzen, 1988, 1991, 1996a; Conner & Sparks, 1996; Godin & Kok, 1996).

The theory of reasoned action is the precursor to the theory of planned behavior, which was developed by Ajzen (1991) and is one of the most well-studied theories used to measure the intention to behave ethically in many disciplines. The shift and renaming were due to the discovery that behavior is not completely voluntary and cannot always be controlled; therefore, perceived behavioral control was added to the theory and renamed TPB (Madden, 1992). One of the main differences between the theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behavior was that there was a better chance of understanding the actual attitude with TPB and how the behavior was carried out (Moretto, 2021).

In addition, there are six constructs of the theory of planned behavior that collectively make up a person's actual control over behavior (Ajzen, 2020).

- Attitudes - This refers to the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of the behavior of interest. It entails a consideration of the outcomes of performing the behavior.
- Behavioral intention - This refers to the motivational factors that influence a given behavior where the stronger the intention to perform the behavior, the more likely the behavior will be performed.
- Subjective norms - This refers to the belief about whether most people approve or disapprove of the behavior. It relates to a person's beliefs about whether peers and people of importance to the person think he or she should engage in the behavior.
- Social norms - This refers to the customary codes of behavior in a group of people or a larger cultural context. Social norms are considered normative, or standard, in a group of people.
- Perceived power - This refers to the perceived presence of factors that may facilitate or impede the performance of a behavior. Perceived power contributes to a person's perceived behavioral control over each of those factors.
- Perceived behavioral control - This refers to a person's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior of interest. Perceived behavioral control varies across situations and actions, which results in a person having varying perceptions of behavioral control depending on the situation. This construct of the theory was added later and created the shift from the theory of reasoned action to the theory of planned behavior.

Across disciplines, the theory of planned behavior has been successfully used to explain and predict a broad scope of intentions and behaviors (Steinmetz, 2016). If

employees in the workplace view the possibility of their participation (attitude) as positive and believe that others want them to participate (subjective norms) this will likely increase their willingness to perform the behavior (Moretto, 2021).

Behavioral beliefs guide one's attitude either toward a positive or negative outcome, such as "What will the outcome be if I make this decision?" Whereas the perceived social or peer pressure manifests in the normative beliefs in questions like "What do others expect me to do or how do they expect me to behave?" Whether one will be supported or ridiculed shows up in normative beliefs. In control beliefs, behavioral control is produced by impacting the performance of the behavior, in which the question of whether one is confident in their ability to behave this way or if they have the knowledge to make the decision. In addition, the TPB looks at attitudes, behavioral intentions, subjective norms, social norms, perceived power and perceived behavioral control (Wiethoff, 2004).

These constructs describe an overview of the behaviors related to the TPB and how to effectively use them in understanding how the research can better apply them in professional development. The ethical intentions in the framework influence the moral disengagement that individuals use as a cognitive process in determining the self-condemnation from contemplating doing something they know is wrong (Black et al., 2021).

While identity plays a role in how one experiences the world around them, researchers have not found consensus that identity be used to complement the TPB framework. Jew and Tran (2022) state, "Prior research into social justice activism-focused activism has suggested that marginalized identities play an important role in

identity-relevant activism, e.g. African American ethnic identity in relation to African American Activism" (p. 4886).

Understanding the divisions between diversity training and diversity education requires practitioners to identify best practices and apply that knowledge in the creation of any professional learning that has diversity awareness as its goal. From needs assessments to the acquisition of skills, knowledge and awareness, feedback, active learning and evaluation must be combined to deliver successful programming (King, 2010). Participation in either approach could extend learning and awareness, enhancing cultural competency and proficiency.

Using the theory of planned behavior in diversity training as a framework could explore participants' motivation to learn by considering their attitude toward the experience and whether it was their belief that it might benefit them. Their intentions might also be influenced by the social norms of whether their coworkers or managers viewed the experience as valuable, thus rewarding them. These relationships could influence their motivation to comply (Wiethoff, 2004).

Cultural Competency and Cultural Proficiency Defined

Our study sought to examine how individuals who attended diversity training in the workplace experience that training. Being that the term cultural competency is ambiguous, it is best to fully define the term culture in relation to cultural competency. Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines culture as "the beliefs, social practices and characteristics of a racial, religious, or social group." Gauging the importance of culture in workspaces, researchers developed their own all-encompassing definitions of the term. Cross et al. (1989) state that culture is the "integrated pattern of human behavior that includes

thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group" (p.13). Hammond (2015) argues that culture is the way that our brain perceives the world around us.

Cultural competence as a term has gained traction in the medical field to address the historical shortcomings of mainstream physicians to adequately meet the needs of minority groups (Lekas et al., 2020). Cross et al. (1989), one of the first researchers to use the term, define cultural competence as, "a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or amongst professionals and enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (p.7). Additionally, systems and institutions that demonstrate cultural competence would value diversity, have the ability for cultural self-assessment, be conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact, have institutionalized cultural knowledge and have development adaptations to diversity (Cross et al., 1989). Defining cultural proficiency thus puts the earnest work in the hands of the physician and medical leadership to create an environment that is inclusive for all patients that they serve. In relation to this definition, cultural competence is also defined as the professional's ability to provide support for those with diverse values, beliefs and behaviors which include tailoring delivery to meet social, cultural and linguistic needs (Betancourt et al., 2002). Despite beginning in the medical field, this term has emerged in research in education as well.

According to Lindsey et al. (2003), cultural proficiency is composed of five elements: valuing diversity, having the capacity for a cultural, self-assessment, managing the dynamics of difference, having institutionalized cultural knowledge, developing

adaptations to practice according to diverse needs. Cultural proficiency is only obtained if an individual practices these elements on every level. On the continuum of cultural proficiency, one can fluctuate from least proficient to most proficient. Cultural destructiveness is the lowest point on the continuum then moves to cultural capacity, blindness, pre-competence, competence, and proficiency. If we visualize cultural competency on a continuum of cultural proficiency, then we can better assess what the term means for practitioners in the workplace.

Professional Development and Cultural Competency in Education

Professional development takes place in our schools throughout the country as a means to educate and inform teachers about best practices for student achievement, often tied to school improvement efforts (Wei et al., 2010; Borko et al., 2010). With the growth of diverse populations of students and changing demographics, the increase in integration of technology, changes in policies and curriculum, ongoing research of effective practices, and demanding academic standards, teachers need of high-quality professional development to build upon their instructional knowledge (Prater & Devereaux, 2009; NEA, n.d.). Professional development can look like attending an hour-long workshop to multiple full day in-services (Wei et al., 2010). Depending on the modality, these sessions can be given in person or remotely over video conferencing (Hartshorne et al., 2020). Administration, state-wide goals and the climate of the building drive the topics and content of the professional development provided to staff (Wei et al., 2010).

School districts must provide the time, space, support and resources that are necessary to attend professional development for ongoing teacher learning (NEA, n.d.). Teachers are tasked with engaging in mandatory, high-quality professional development

that aligns with rigorous state standards and school improvement goals (Knapp, 2003; Kennedy, 2016). It can be difficult to find the time to attend professional development, and sessions are sometimes sandwiched between other priorities. Some districts provide time without students present on staff workdays; other districts attempt to provide small snippets of time throughout the day when students are engaged in other activities outside of the classroom. These smaller windows of time can prove difficult, as the training is typically disconnected from the work that is occurring that day. State and federal policies should prioritize intensive and sustained professional development, as proven most effective by research, rather than disconnected and episodic workshops (Knapp, 2003; Wei et al., 2010).

There are many reasons and motivations for attending professional development. Professional development can be mandatory or voluntary, provide an increase in pay, result in a stipend, provide further resources and materials to your classroom, increase credentialing, or improve skill sets and knowledge. When teachers are provided opportunities to choose topics for their professional learning, there is considerably more buy-in. Providing educators with opportunities to work collaboratively and reflect upon their practices with experimentation and reflection can also increase teachers as active participants (Borko et al., 2010; Kennedy, 2016).

In a review, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) found that seven elements widely used in professional development were proven effective. These elements included: being content-focused, incorporating active learning, supporting collaboration, using models of effective practice, providing coaching and expert support, offering feedback and reflection and being of sustained duration. Most or all of these elements were included in

effective professional development that resulted in changes to practices and knowledge and improvements in student outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). On a systems level, Tooley and Connally (2016) identified areas where improvement was needed to increase the effectiveness of professional development. These areas are identifying professional development needs, choosing approaches most likely to be effective, implementing approaches with quality and fidelity and assessing professional development outcomes.

Educators are familiar with the pedagogical approach to teaching children, which involves the teacher making decisions about what students should learn, how they should learn the content and the learning process (Ozuah, 2005). Pedagogy involves transmitting knowledge and skills through teaching strategies such as lectures, quizzes, readings and tests (Knowles, 1980). This approach is less effective with adults as adult learners need more than a "passive transfer of knowledge from one person" (Chan, 2010). Andragogy is a concept that contrasts with more traditional pedagogical approaches to teaching children and involves internal motivation and self-concept. While andragogy focuses on the adult learner, it is built on the premise that adults are more self-directed and motivated to pursue hands-on opportunities that are relevant to their lives. Andragogy puts a high value on the learner's autonomy. It allows teachers to evaluate their approaches and beliefs, enhancing self-awareness and improving communication and trust between the instructor and participant (Chan, 2010). This approach to addressing adult learners lends itself to investigating one's internal thought processes and biases as they interact and encounter diverse student populations (Brown, 2006).

In recent years, more time and attention has been devoted to cultural competency training during professional development in the academic workplace in order to address the needs of the ever-changing diverse climates in our schools (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Prater & Devereaux, 2009). Teachers who practice cultural competency can infuse cultural awareness, understand and value the role of diversity, and adapt their curriculum to the dynamic differences within the student body (Harrison-Bernard et al., 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2001). Titles associated with cultural competency training can range from cultural diversity; cultural sensitivity; cultural awareness; diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) or cultural humility, to name a few. These topics encompass addressing the needs of diverse populations and racial disparities due to systemic racism long-standing in our schools for centuries (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Prater & Devereaux, 2009). Not only do students benefit from cultural competency in their educators, but faculty and staff also report being more satisfied and creative and benefitting from similar outcomes in the academic workforce (Harrison-Benard et al., 2020).

In a study on knowledge gained from professional development, Harrison-Benard et al. (2020) found that participants benefited from components of lecture, reflection, engagement or active participation and feedback. Participants were also encouraged to explore differences, share personal experiences and interact with diverse groups of people which may have influenced their perceptions and increased their participant awareness of biases and strategies to minimize bias.

Studying the ineffectiveness of implicit bias training and interventions, Lai et al. (2016) indicate that change is short-lived, and interventions require intensive ongoing support. The research team noted that interventions have not been tested over time, that

interventions may be effective, but the wrong populations may be targeted, and children's implicit preferences can remain changed for years as opposed to adults who have shown to only last hours or days (Lai et al., 2016). This study may lend itself useful to the educational professional development world that frequently attempts to check the box of diversity and equity work. When teachers attend training that is not intensive and without follow-up support, one can suspect from this study that results will be short-lived. Khalid and Snyder (2021) note that such short term or episodic training is adequate for customer service, CPR and learning a new skill but is not adequate for issues of diversity and is often confused for education. Training itself is often packaged, answers questions, is generic, promotes conformity and might even be seen as performative. Education, on the other hand, is transformative, complex, challenges assumptions, poses questions and is structured around critical thinking (Khalid & Snyder, 2021; Hooks, 2010). Failure within the school system to acknowledge, understand, accept and celebrate students of diverse backgrounds can create miseducation practices, hostile school environments, stress, anxiety, and an overall lack of feeling supported (Gay, 1994).

Professional Development and Cultural Competence in Law Enforcement

Similar to the field of education, scholars have studied the efficacy of professional development and cultural competency training for law enforcement personnel. Multiculturalism in the United States has led to significant societal changes and has placed new demands on law enforcement officers (Sereni-Massinger et al., 2015). As communities become more diverse, it becomes crucial for officers to be able to understand and navigate different cultural backgrounds, perspectives and communication styles (Sereni-Massinger & Woods, 2016). This is important for building trust, reducing

the potential for misunderstandings and promoting community and officer safety. Diversity training may enhance an employee's ability to serve a diverse population in public sectors such as education and law enforcement (Israel et al., 2017). Although the effectiveness of cultural competency professional development for law enforcement officers has been inconsistent, diversity training seeks to facilitate positive intergroup interactions, reduce prejudice and discrimination, and enhance the skills, knowledge, and motivation of people to interact with a diverse group of people (Bezrukova et al., 2012). Literature on diversity training for law enforcement has focused mainly on intercultural communication training (Boulware-Brown, 2004; Rowe & Garland, 2003) and recommendations for training content and format (Coderoni, 2002). Law enforcement training often employs the andragogical approach that acknowledges that adult learners bring a wealth of life experiences, prior knowledge and skills to the learning environment (Taylor & Kroth, 2007). Law enforcement training programs that incorporate andragogical principles often involve interactive and experiential learning activities, problem-solving exercises, case studies, role-playing scenarios and discussions.

Contemporary research has extended diversity training to prepare law enforcement to effectively work with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) communities (Israel et al., 2016). Despite law enforcement officers undergoing such training, incidents of police brutality and unjustified use of force continue to occur. This suggests that additional measures need to be implemented to address this issue effectively. The persistent pattern of African Americans being killed by law enforcement has placed a spotlight on the role of race in fatal police encounters and the need to improve police training and decision-making to reduce bias (Kahn & Davies, 2017).

Minorities disproportionately experience higher rates of police brutality compared to white individuals. According to Swaine et al. (2015), young Black men were nine times more likely than other Americans to be killed by police officers. Affirming this reality, Correll et al. (2007a, 2007b) state that cultural stereotypes linking Blacks and criminality drive the shooter bias effect, and it is not related to affective or explicit prejudice.

It is crucial for law enforcement agencies to acknowledge and address implicit bias through comprehensive training programs and policies that promote fairness and equal treatment for all individuals (Vodde, 2009). Law enforcement officers benefit from practicing cultural competency, which enables them to better understand and respect the diverse communities they serve. This fosters trust and cooperation, leading to more effective policing. In addition, cultural competence helps officers avoid biases and stereotypes that can hinder fair and unbiased decision-making (Williams, 2012). Furthermore, it enables officers to effectively communicate and de-escalate situations, reducing the likelihood of conflict (Safi & Burrell, 2007). Overall, cultural competence is crucial for law enforcement officers to uphold justice and maintain positive relationships with the communities they serve. Cultural competence in the field of law enforcement refers to the ability of officers to effectively interact and engage with people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Connell et al., 2008). It involves understanding, respecting and valuing the beliefs, values, norms and practices of different cultures. Law enforcement agencies recognize the importance of cultural competence in promoting positive community relations, enhancing trust and improving policing outcomes.

Gaps in Literature/Critique of Previous Research

Currently, there is not a wealth of information using phenomenology to investigate the efficacy of diversity, equity and inclusion training. We have not been able to identify any research articles using phenomenology to examine the approaches, practices and components of workplace diversity training that create change within individuals' professional practice in the field of law enforcement and education. Few studies have asked professionals who have participated in cultural competency training to reflect on aspects of the training and if they are useful in their practice. Our study is a review of both.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of qualitative research is to delineate and develop a theoretical framework that contributes, challenges or explains characteristics of various aspects of society. By using first person accounts, qualitative researchers seek a deep and meaningful examination of thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, or behavior; a qualitative method is appropriate for this study (Creswell and Guetterman, 2021). As researchers, we used a conceptual framework that allowed us to draw on several theories and concepts to inform our understanding of the phenomena. Our study sought to identify and explore the factors that contribute to perceived acceptance, resistance or acknowledgment of concepts identified in cultural competency and professional learning sessions. These sessions are also discussed as diversity, equity and inclusion workshops/training programs. Our research focused on the question: "What is the perceived influence of cultural proficiency training on the professional practice of law enforcement officers and K-12 public educators?"

Qualitative methods rely heavily on postmodernism, or the idea that truth is relative and not singular or concrete (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013; Merriam &Tisdell, 2016). Thus, researchers working from a postmodern perspective are less inclined to seek or capture the objective, definitive essence of an experience but instead explore multiple perspectives. In this way, qualitative research is often interpretive and descriptive (Lapan et al., 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Our study aimed to gain better insight into the influence of workplace training on the cultural competency of participants. Understanding the role that socialization plays in

participants' exposure to values, social norms and discourse provided a road map for the influence of professional learning, growth and proficiency in the area of cultural competency. By taking a phenomenological approach to our study, we believe we were effective in bringing to the forefront the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives (Lester, 1999).

Research Design

The skills encompassed by cultural competency are abstract in nature and difficult to measure. To do so requires a qualitative, phenomenological frame of inquiry; this application allowed researchers to seek an understanding of a given phenomenon (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Larsen and Adu (2022), phenomenology captures and explores these experiences as researchers study human perceptions, or thoughts and feelings, as formed through their encounters or shaped by their environments. As stated previously, the phenomenon of diversity training has seen a significant rise in the workplace as cultural proficiency is in increasingly high demand (Drakulich et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2023). This study explored the phenomenon of diversity training as it relates to the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of public service professionals as they carry out their practice.

Our team used Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a form of phenomenology which is a method steeped in interpretive and descriptive analysis (Larsen & Adu, 2022). IPA allowed us to interpret participants' explanations or descriptions of their lived experiences/interactions during diversity training, as well as their thoughts, feelings, and resulting behaviors as reactions to that experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Setting/Site

We conducted research in the Midwestern Metropolitan area of Saint Louis with a population of 2.8 million people (FRED, 2022). The racial demographics of the area are 46.4% White, 45.7% Black, 3.4% Asian, 3.1% two or more races and 4.1% Hispanic or Latino (Census, 2022). It is important to note the demographics of the area because the workplaces that we selected for this study service a diverse population. The sites of our participants varied based on workplace and occupation. However, we concentrated on two professional environments: educational and law enforcement. We chose these spaces because they are public service sectors and support the diverse population in the St. Louis Metropolitan Area. In the public sector, it is imperative that professionals in these fields have a sense of cultural competence in order to satisfy the needs of the communities they serve.

Participants

For this study, we identified professionals in education and law enforcement who had participated in culturally proficiency or diversity trainings using convenience sampling methods. According to Waterfield (2018), convenience sampling is a non-probability form of sampling that allows research choice based upon their accessibility to participants. We chose convenience sampling because it provides for an ease of access to find individuals relevant to our study. During recruitment, our team employed voluntary response sampling, wherein researchers make contact with convenient parties, who in turn inform potential participants of the study (Vadakedath, 2023). Interested participants then connect with researchers to coordinate participation. Researchers in this study interviewed interested participants from the aforementioned workplaces who had

attended professional development centering diversity, equity, or includion. We gathered data from participants through interviews to help us understand what contributed to and influenced their training experience. Interviews continued until we attained saturation; that is, until existing themes recurred in subsequent interviews but new themes were emerging (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Chitac, 2022). Table 1 shows specific participant demographics.

Table 1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	Educators		Law Enforcement Officers		Full Sample	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*
Gender						
Female	10	100	3	38	13	72
Male	0	0	5	62	5	28
Race						
African American	2	20	4	50	6	33
Asian	0	0	1	12	1	6
Multiracial	1	10	0	0	1	6
White	7	70	3	38	10	55
Age						
20-29	1	10	0	0	1	6
30-39	3	30	1	12	4	22
40-49	1	10	2	25	3	17
50-59	5	50	3	38	10	55

Data Collection

In applying this interpretive, descriptive frame, our team asked our subjects to offer interpretations of their own perceptions through semi-structured interviewing, and then we explored the information gathered for common, interrelated themes (Lapan et al., 2016). According to Merriam & Tisdell (2016), semi-structured interviews allow researchers to work from pre-planned questions but also to use these questions in different orders and to seek answers to both closed and open-ended questions. This offers researchers the benefit of gathering both concrete data, such as the titles and topics of training, as well as more abstract information, such as participants' thoughts and feelings during training. Semi-structured interviewing also allows researchers the prerogative to probe for more information from a subject or to explore a particular thought or feeling in more depth where necessary.

The goal of our phenomenological research was to design qualitative research questions that would elicit detailed descriptions of participants' lived experiences in cultural competence training in law enforcement and K-12 education settings (Moustakas, 1994). We specifically inquired about any shifts in thinking or behavior that professionals may have had as a result of their experience with training. We anticipated the responses to these questions to inform the primary research question, "What is the perceived influence of cultural proficiency training on the professional practice of law enforcement officers and K-12 public educators?"

Researchers conducted the interviews virtually via Zoom. It is imperative that interviewers collect research that preserves, to the closest possible degree, the specific wording and context of participants responses. Here, our team recorded and transcribed virtual interviews via Zoom and utilized Zoom's transcription software. We cross

referenced and compared the transcription to the audio recording to identify any errors and to ensure the fidelity of the transcription.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involves reading the data, demarcating the data, eliminating irrelevancies, grouping and naming data into constituent, and arranging the data into themes that accurately describe the participants' lived experiences. Our research team followed the seven steps of IPA as address by Charlick et al. (2015) & Smith et al. (2009):

1. Reading and re-reading
2. Initial noting
3. Developing emergent themes
4. Searching for connections across emergent themes
5. Moving to the next case
6. Looking for patterns across cases
7. Taking interpretations to deeper levels

Our team began by selecting two sample interviews for individual coding then identifying together what themes overlapped amongst the five of us. When we arrived at a difference, we clarified as well as considered our own perspectives and how we interpreted the phenomenon as a part of the hermeneutical cycle (Larsen & Adu, 2022). Once we identified the core themes, we exchanged the interview transcripts to ensure that there was consistency among researchers' application of the themes. We then used Dedoose software to identify core themes. The analysis enabled us to gain a deep

understanding of participants' lived experiences in workplace professional development sessions centered in cultural competence.

By asking our participants to consider their own cultural competence, as well as their thoughts, feelings, and actions related to training and then to interpret the responses ourselves, a double hermeneutic circle emerged (Larsen & Adu, 2022). This occurs when researchers assign meaning to the meaning participants have already made (Smith et al., 2009). Heuristic elements are further present in studies where the researcher does not engage solely through concrete observation but also through interactions with subjects (Lapan et al., 2016; Larsen & Adu, 2022). In this way, a researcher has less detachment, or less suspension of their own judgments but draws conclusions by engaging in a more inter-subjective, interpretive process (Lapan et al., 2016; Larsen & Adu, 2022).

This subjectivity is in keeping with postmodernism, as IPA recognizes the limitations of objectivity (Larsen & Adu, 2022). Researchers who choose this method recognize that holding their own understanding and positions entirely apart from their work is less likely than the possibility that the researcher and subject construct meaning in tandem (Larsen & Adu, 2022). This is not to say that heuristic elements remove all objectivity or scientific approach; rather, this frame of inquiry involves researchers with deep knowledge concerning the phenomenon. Thus, the researcher, as the key instrument of the study, functions with a finely tuned capacity for measuring qualitative data (Larsen & Adu, 2022). In this instance, our team consisted of five researchers with diverse backgrounds, races, and genders. Thus, we brought not only a depth of knowledge concerning the phenomenon of cultural competence but also interrater reliability; this dynamic aided in reducing researcher bias. (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Researcher Reflexivity

Researchers using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) research design become the primary instrument in investigation and play a crucial role in conducting the analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data (Alase, 2017). IPA is a qualitative research methodology that focuses on exploring and understanding individuals' lived experiences and subjective perspectives (Love et al., 2021; Van Manen, 1990). In utilizing IPA, we understand our biases will influence how we interpret the experiences as shared in a double hermeneutic circle (Larsen & Adu, 2022). The hermeneutic circles exist first in our participants' perception and second in the researchers' interpretations of those perceptions (Larsen & Adu, 2022).

The life experiences of researchers may have a significant impact on the research design and the implementation of the study. As researchers, our personal experiences can influence personal bias, sensitivities and insight, empathy and rapport, reflexivity, participant selection and interpretation and analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). Researchers bring their life experiences, beliefs and values to the research process. Those factors can shape how we interpret and analyze data and potentially introduce bias. Being cognizant of our bias is crucial to ensure that we do not sway the findings (Denzin, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1986). As graduate students in a social justice cohort, we had insight into the phenomenon being examined, and we were equipped to ask relevant questions, connect with participants and interpret the findings. Researchers who share life experiences with participants may find it easier to build rapport and trust. Shared experiences may enhance empathy and understanding, making it more likely for participants to open up and share

their thoughts and feelings. This can lead to richer, more refined and distinct data (Creswell, 2019).

Reflexivity refers to the ongoing reflection of researchers on their own role and potential influence on the research process. Our life experiences contributed to their reflexivity, helping them critically examine their assumptions, biases, and preconceived notions. The more we are self-aware, it will lead to more rigorous research design and analysis. Our life experiences may have influenced our choices regarding participant selection. According to Saldana (2015), researchers seek out individuals who have experiences or perspectives that resonate with their own, or they may intentionally diversify the sample to ensure a broader range of viewpoints. Our life experiences may have affected how we interpret and analyze the collected data. Researchers may arrive at distinct interpretations based on their unique backgrounds, knowledge, and perspectives. Our subjectivity was mitigated through rigorous analysis and peer debriefing.

Reflexivity Statement: Crystal Isom

I was raised in a middle-class, African American home in Flint, Michigan. My parents grew up in the South and experienced many obstacles to accessing quality education and career opportunities. My family values military service, work ethic and our faith. I was raised in a traditional family. My father retired from the Air Force and General Motors. My mother was a homemaker deeply committed to raising her five children instilling faith and commitment to serve in our community. My father's military experience played a significant role in shaping how our family welcomed people from diverse cultures in our homes. My parents were married for over forty-three years, and they paid for all five children to go to college. They truly wanted us to have more

opportunities than they were afforded. I think my parents' expectations still impact me today. I think that I naturally connect with people from diverse cultures because it was something I routinely experienced. I occasionally struggle to understand people who are not curious about diverse cultures and unwelcoming to people who are different from them. My experiences growing up in a working-class neighborhood that valued education have also played a significant factor in my upbringing. All of my close high school friends went to college and our community placed premium value on professional success, financial stability, and community service. I graduated from a variety of colleges, and I love learning new things and meeting new people. I suspect that my experiences learning about diverse cultures has led me to believe that most people want access to the American dream. I think I have a bias that we all can achieve great things if we work hard. My parents wanted us all to access higher education, ensure financial stability and establish a legacy for their children. The social justice coursework has opened my eyes to systemic oppression that many people have experienced. As an educator, I have served as a Teacher, Assistant Principal and Principal in North Carolina and Missouri. I have served PK-12th grade schools that are economically and racially diverse. I have been fortunate to successfully serve families with a plethora of needs. I find it extremely stimulating to creatively serve a variety of stakeholders. I have discovered that all families want the same basic things for their children; they want their children to be self-sufficient and find their passion. I recently transitioned to a school that is committed to social justice and enabling nontraditional families to access Montessori education. While we are increasing our number of students that are accessing Montessori education, our school has contributed to the rise of gentrification in our

neighborhood. When I consider my scholarly worldviews, I value social justice and equitable opportunities for all people, but more specifically families in poverty and underrepresented groups. The study explored what compels training participants to change their attitudes and behavior. Educators and law enforcement officials were interviewed to determine to what extent specific elements of a professional development program encouraged their growth, self-reflection and change. I was cognizant of the bias that I have towards everyone being interested or investing in understanding diverse cultures. I considered that my experience is not commonplace, and I did not make judgments about people who had not experienced a diverse culture. We are a product of our unique learning experiences. It is my hope that our research gave insight into how professional development impacts change into perspective about diverse cultures.

Reflexivity Statement: Jennifer Niebrzydoski

I am a white, middle-class special educator at a large suburban school district in St. Louis, Missouri. I have worked within the school setting with the same district for over 22 years. During this time, I have held positions as a paraeducator, special education teacher, and behavior intervention specialist. I currently work with grades kindergarten through 12 as a behavior intervention specialist. In addition, I also held a position at a private applied behavior analysis clinic as a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst overseeing programming for children with autism spectrum disorder. While holding these positions I attended many professional development trainings and workshops as an educator and as a behavior analyst on a variety of topics that were required in my positions. Throughout the past 2 decades I have spent in education, I have witnessed the shifts and variations in content and language, the shifts in leadership and direction, as well as the idleness of our

school systems as it relates to cultural diversity development for educators and staff. I have attended many trainings, workshops, and seminars concerning social justice during my time as an educator. My daily encounters and history within the school system will shape the way in which I research and show up in this qualitative study. The ways in which I have observed institutional racism in our schools will undoubtedly provide limitations to my study as I cannot remove that subjectivity from my social justice lens. My hope is that the topic of the effectiveness of diversity training provided first-person experiences from the participants and thus removed my subjectivity from the study. Although my professional worldview cannot be removed, my position in this work remained focused on the participants' experiences and their successes and failures in participating in diversity work within their school districts. I acknowledged my limitations of this work and my biases that will ultimately affect assumptions regarding my research. In these instances, I was reflective and transparent with my findings.

Reflexivity Statement: Jamie Martin

My own position in this study is one of a cis-gendered, able-bodied, white, middle-aged female. I am married, middle class, and college educated. I have lived, learned, and worked in predominantly white, middle-class spaces for most of my life.

My formative years were spent in a rural town in Wyoming, where I had sparse exposure to People of Color, immigrants, or LGBTQ-identifying persons. In this small community very near Salt Lake City, Utah, my socialization as a Latter-Day Saint has been deeply impacted by my religious culture. Worship houses have been the social hub of my life from a very young age. Family traditions, rituals, and relationships have all been shaped by this faith practice, and my earliest, most persistent views of race, class,

and morality were established through the lens of Latter-Day Saint doctrine. These views caused an enormous amount of cognitive dissonance for me when I lost a young, unarmed Black friend in a police shooting in 2016. Since that time, I have spent much time and effort critically examining narratives of Christian nationalism, race, gender identity, sexuality, and disability that were present in my faith historically and that are still put forward today. This effort is one I expect will continue throughout my lifetime.

Intersections of my identity have offered me an entry point in identifying and confronting my own biases (Crenshaw, 2017). As a female and a member of a heavily patriarchal faith, I have experienced sexism and marginalization both inside and outside my faith spaces. I have also often been the subject of religious bias. The most impactful intersections I have experienced have resulted from poverty and a parents' suicide. These situations each brought exposure to the successes and failings of public mental health resources and the limitations of food and utility assistance.

Because my experiences as a member of a dominant racial group in the United States have allowed me to see myself reflected in society's standard characterizations of normalcy and have thus found a great deal of comfort and security in this placement, I recognize that I have minimal understanding of the allostatic load carried by my marginalized counterparts through every facet of their lives (Guidi et al., 2021). Nor do I fully appreciate the powers of perception, innovation, and strategy it requires for my colleagues to rise above the obstacles that society (including myself) has placed in their way. I am grateful for brief opportunities in spaces where I was one of few who looked like me, where I have witnessed this struggle and reckoned with my own contributions. These experiences are vital, as it requires a high degree of ongoing intentionality to

recognize and confront a Eurocentric view of the world, deficit thinking, and to avoid a White Savior mentality, all of which are present in my thoughts and behavior (DiAngelo, 2022).

I have also benefited from professional experience in diverse settings across three different states, giving me a somewhat wider window into the way these distinct systems participate in the same struggle to compartmentalize general education students/mainstream classrooms from spaces which occupy and serve English Language Learners, students of color, or disabled students. Observing leaders either striving to overcome harmful practices of white supremacy, ableism, and Christian nationalism, or those who remain willfully blind to these practices, has become an instructive asset in studying the cultural sensitivity of public service professionals.

I came to this study with the privilege which results from sharing racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds with those I serve, but also the challenges of being an outsider. These positions, as well as profound personal loss, have all informed my understanding of the harm which comes when the powerful or privileged misjudge and mischaracterize those they serve or study. Accordingly, research requires me to engage critically through self-reflection, study, and peer feedback. Consistent discussion with my fellow researchers in this collaborative dissertation format proved particularly beneficial.

Reflexivity Statement: Toni Fall

From childhood to adulthood, several personal aspects have defined my views of the work. Growing up in Cahokia, IL, as Black female, I was in predominantly white spaces during school due to the tracking that existed. As early as 4th grade, I was placed in classrooms of students with comparable intellectual strengths. These classrooms

featured a handful of children who looked like me with no instructors who did. It was in this space that I understood how exclusionary academic institutions are. This remained throughout high school where students of color were casually weeded in and out of the honors classes. However, the core remained the same. The absence of educators and peers that resembled me throughout my primary educational experience contributed to the examining of my own identity and, at moments, worth.

The absence of representation throughout my schooling motivated me to pursue a career in education. I began my educational career at Northern Illinois University, but because of the birth of my son and my family living far away from me, I moved closer to home. I enrolled at the University of Missouri–St. Louis, where I obtained both a bachelor's and Master's in Secondary Education. As an undergraduate majoring in the education field with an emphasis on history, I gained further insight on how society operates and the historical context of our nation. I also immersed myself in a diverse population which broadened my view of the world itself because of their social and cultural backgrounds.

As a practicing educator, I have witnessed systems that oppress students in the name of appeasing those in leadership. I have also observed educators, principals and community stakeholders prompt awareness of institutional biases. These practices have been stagnant throughout the educational associations I took part in and represented. After considering my impact on my students and community, it was necessary that I gain more tools to assist me in this endeavor. So, I registered for a doctoral program not only for myself but for the students I serve to combat the deficiencies in the academic field.

These encounters have assisted in the development of a qualitative approach that recognizes and values the diverse perspectives of individuals. Reflecting on my undergraduate work in history, I can gather correlations between responses of people and the societal shifts that have elicited it. Along with that, the years that I've devoted to perfecting my practice as an educator have allowed me to reflect on my own methods. I consistently evaluate my awareness of how I interact in spaces and the impact of the work I undertake.

In connection to this work, I realized the biases that I had investigating cultural competency as it pertains to the workplace and the examination of motivators for transformation. Grappling with this matter as it relates to educators is troublesome for me because teachers are cognizant of the political jargon in order to seem culturally aware. So, one could appear to have this awareness because they understand the terminology but do not actually employ it with fidelity. Which leads to me questioning those identified as culturally competent and their validity. Further limitations in my positionality present themselves due to growing up in predominantly white educational spaces as a Black female. Being a double minority can periodically hinder my ability to see the privilege of my upbringing. It is through this lens that I examine myself and our research.

Reflexivity Statement: Tabari Coleman

I come to this research influenced by my social identities, specifically my race, class, gender identity and socialization as an American born and raised outside of the continental U.S. My experiences living abroad paved the way for constant reflections, questioning and cultural enrichment. My formative years were spent stationed overseas at Clark AFB, Philippines. I lived there 8 years before moving to California and the next

7 years would be on the island of Guam. Those environments would inform my understanding and appreciation of cultural differences, values and ways of being in the world. My parents were children during the Civil Rights movement and understood that their lives were challenging in ways they didn't want for their children and education was emphasized as the game changer. I learned early that being a Black male in our society was a challenge, but one that could be overcome if I understood how those before me fought for justice and my right to all the liberties bestowed upon White folks. This message was constant, both in verbal and physical manifestations. A Black fist, carved from Philippine mahogany, stood in my parent's home as a symbol of power and courage and a reminder to me that the fight for justice never ends but our approach should continue to evolve. My father recently gifted this to me and the message, I hope, will be as impactful to my daughter as it was for me.

While in graduate school working on my master's degree, I taught high school for a couple years and connected with several social justice organizations that would become a part of my professional learning and career. I worked at the Anti-Defamation League for 14 years while also facilitating anti oppression workshops and training programs for the National Conference for Community and Justice for more than 20 years. In both roles I have been facilitating workshops focused on anti-bias, and anti-oppression for early childcare centers, K-12 schools, nonprofits, law enforcement agencies and corporations all over the country and in Israel, Japan and Berlin. My approach to education in these spaces centered on recognizing the role of socialization, representation and bias as we form community in the workplace.

My team and I looked at workplace training and the impact of those sessions on cultural competency. I've spent the last 20 years engaging and exploring these and other topics with audiences that both welcomed and resisted what they assumed we'd be discussing. As we began our research, I was mindful of how my biases entered into the process, knowing I wasn't able to suspend all judgments. I hoped to understand them better, to notice how they showed up and guarded against them influencing our research. I didn't expect the process to be easy, and as a team I believe we have become more adept at appreciating how they've shown up and in voicing those concerns to each other we were able to model and challenge just how easily we can be influenced by our biases.

I approached our research with empathy and thoughtfulness when engaging with each of the participants. This helped me connect and relate as participants expressed vulnerability when sharing thoughts and ideas that may have been different from my own point of view and perspective. In my personal and professional life, I intentionally look for ways to affirm even when I don't agree. As I continue to remind myself that I'm a work in progress, the work becomes easier than it once was, and I believe our research explored how to help practitioners like myself develop more effective professional learning environments.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers pursue trustworthy studies by utilizing 4 criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981; Lincoln, & Guba, 1986). In order to consider each of these criteria we looked at them individually with a critical eye. As educators, our hope was to connect with individuals on a personal

level in order to create trusting partnerships that allow the sharing of authentic experiences.

As researchers, our credibility is essential when reporting the experiences of another individual. In qualitative analysis, the researcher is the primary instrument (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stahl & King, 2020). We have included researcher reflexivity statements to give our worldviews, experiences and biases as we approach this work (Probst & Berenson, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). We verified information with the informants to check the accuracy of the reality being told, requesting their feedback and approval (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stahl & King, 2020).

The second factor of transferability is difficult to apply as we are not attempting a study for replication (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Stahl & King, 2020). We did, however, learn of a set of specific characteristics or factors that can impact the future of successful professional development. By being as descriptive as possible with our findings and portraying rich and thick descriptions that reflect the experiences of our participants, we hope to offer transference that may be applicable to organizations and institutions in the future (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stahl & King, 2020).

The third criterion is dependability, or trust (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). As researchers, we recognize that our own biases and assumptions are part of the research process. To ensure trustworthiness and dependability, we coded interviews with other researchers to examine and reflect upon our cognitive processes and internal biases (Cutcliffe, 2003; Tufford & Newman, 2010). While we made such notes, we were also aware that our diverse team provides the ability to consider multiple perspectives in the hermeneutic circle. We utilized reflexive auditing and provided a description of decisions

that were made throughout the research process (Stahl & King, 2020). In addition, we have each constructed researcher reflexivity statements to explain our relationship with the work being investigated as well as our histories within the areas in which we researched (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

We are each active participants in our community spaces, and we researched with integrity using a critical eye on our own processes. We worked with the participants in order to gain a complete understanding and accurate interpretation of the information that is shared. The research that was collected will give the reader an understanding of the successes and challenges of attending or participating in workplace training aimed at diversity and equity. We hope to engage the readers with the experiences of our participants by reporting their unique perceptions of these experiences. The collected research was not to be reported with the goal of validity but rather the goal of trustworthiness in what the researcher is reporting (Stahl & King, 2020).

Ethical Issues

Our research began after we obtained informed consent from our participants as well as providing an explanation of our inquiry and what methods we will be using. Ethical considerations to our research existed in the form of potential repercussions for our participants for their candid responses to how their own workplace training has affected their views on diversity and their cultural competency. We realize that being authentic to this process of researching practices regarding social justice can include risks. For these reasons, we used pseudonyms to address the participants to ensure the protection of their identities (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Our data was kept confidential in password-protected files labeled with numbers and non-identifiable

information. All data collected and videos taken was destroyed at the conclusion of this research study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Skewing the data or outcomes to our liking will not further the discussion on social justice practices and their efficacy. We remained true to the process set forth in the previous section.

Limitations and Delimitations

The limitations of this study primarily focused on generalizability. For example, our pool of educator participants included no male respondents. In addition, as mentioned above, our study was not one that can be replicated or that is transferable. We noted another limitation of our study being that cultural competence is difficult to define and measure when selecting our subjects. We relied on our participants to be truthful and honest during their interviews. It is noted that participants may not have been truthful in their interviews or may have displayed performative aspects that cannot be identified or teased out and removed from the data collected. We also recognized and acknowledged that our own biases can affect the outcome of our study and the way that the information is received from our participants. The delimitations of this study are that we only focused on a small sample size and our samples only came from St. Louis or the surrounding area. Our focus was on educators and law enforcement and there are many other professionals that engage in diversity and equity work that were not included in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

In this chapter, we examine the significant themes derived from our analysis of the interview data gathered from eight law enforcement personnel and ten education professionals. Our interpretation of the interviews revealed four key themes that emerged from our research study, addressing the research question:

> What is the perceived influence of cultural proficiency training on the professional practice of law enforcement officers and K-12 public educators?

Themes that emerged from our findings include:

- Theme One: Identity and Socialization
- Theme Two: Challenge and Accountability
- Theme Three: Relevance and Applicability
- Theme Four: Choice and Autonomy

This chapter is structured around the aforementioned themes. To differentiate between the perspectives of participants in the respective workforces, we have categorized each theme based on the viewpoints expressed by educators and law enforcement officers. In our study we will be using the terms diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), cultural competency, implicit bias and cultural proficiency interchangeably due to organizations, institutions and participants' use of these terms to describe their professional development experiences.

Theme One: Identity and Socialization

Theme one is informed by the complexity of both subordinate and dominant social identities (Tatum, 2000). When socialization is presented as an absolute instead of

a continuum, little room is available for people to be anything other than who they are (Harro, 1997). This has the potential to limit progress and opportunity for change within educators and law enforcement officers.

During interviews, educators and law enforcement shared a range of thoughts and reflections about their past. More than half of the educators discussed messaging from friends and family that influenced how they perceived people different than them. Participants' demographic identity and socialization from their families and communities had an influence on their ability to embrace cultural proficiency training. Law enforcement professionals also experience, and continue, their socialization as they encounter situations in the community that challenge, contribute or create new thoughts and experiences that support their earlier socialization. Understanding the impact and often subtle messaging received daily and historically may provide insight into the pathways needed for change to occur. Identity, both social and cultural, influences how messaging is received and processed, and the participants' reflection supports our premise of socialization and identity playing a significant role in their experiences in cultural proficiency professional development.

Educators

> ...And I want to reject the idea that I have taken on their beliefs [family], but if you're gonna be honest about socialization, you have to realize that some of those subliminal messages probably do exist and are something that I have to actively confront when they come up. (Educator 1)

Educators have a significant influence in the lives of children, spending more time during the week with them than their families and thus having more time to influence and contribute to their socialization. If we accept the premise that socialization occurs throughout our lives but is critical during our formative (0-8) and adolescent years (10-

19), then the messages the participants received requires a commitment to unlearning which can only occur when participants are aware of its impact. In the case of several of the educators interviewed, their ability to both recognize the harmful messages they received and the awareness that shifting their thinking will require intentionality, demonstrates part of what is needed for the cultural competency professional development sessions to be effective. Some of the participants referred to their discomfort in being vulnerable and their concern about being judged for things they had no control over. In the Cycle of Socialization, all individuals were born into a world with systems already in place, and their caregivers were their first teachers, providing [socializing] them with their interpretations of the world (Harro, 1997). Most of the participants understood that the messages they received growing up had an impact on how they viewed the world and people from demographic backgrounds different from their own. Participants recalled experiences from their past and some from their present that became clearer after having participated in one of their training programs.

> ...this [training] just opened my eyes to realize that there's other people that really think this way [bias], and they might not realize what they're doing is harmful. Like there's other people like me who didn't realize the way they think was bad. They're not a bad person, they've just been raised in an environment that puts a value on someone because of the way they look or their culture. And I know that that's wrong now, and it's definitely helped me think in a different way. (Educator 1)

Not every participant pointed to their socialization as an impediment to their learning or interest in the cultural competency workshops they participated in. For many of the educators, their families played a role in their initial understanding of people different from them, but the educators didn't reference other factors like community, houses of worship, media, etc. Their willingness to reflect on the messages they received

and how they intentionally challenged those as they became adults was noteworthy. Of the educators that did mention family during the interviews, it was clear that the messages they heard left an impression but one that through personal experiences and relationships produced a counter narrative, one that was reinforced in the cultural competency professional development sessions they attended.

> ...I think I've been more curious about people that are different than me than I have been judgmental. With that being said, I mean, when you talk about socialization, you also have to factor in your family which may not be that way. I heard racial slurs from my father and had a number of conversations about that growing up… (Educator 3)

Participants' exposure to people who were different from them, coupled with conversations of openness or disgust, had an influence on how they chose to experience relationships with others as they got older. The ability to be curious may have also contributed to their willingness to embrace experiences, challenging their early messaging. Educator1 shared an awareness that what they heard about people of other races was wrong, and they were willing to interrupt those moments and remain curious about people from different backgrounds.

> I can't help the way I was brought up. I can't help the environment I was brought up in…. That wasn't really my choice. But I feel like the way that the information was given, the way it made me feel, was like I'm a bad person, and why did I let that happen? I didn't feel like there was a lot of empathy or sympathy for me not knowing. More of like a why… why…why couldn't you know or why didn't you educate yourself? Like I can't really educate myself on something I don't know exists until I do. (Educator 1)

This participant felt like their socialization was out of their control, yet they were being judged by the things they shared, and it had negative consequences when they disclosed. Because their families held views that were passed on to them, in some way, they were held responsible for the information, despite not having exposure to counter

narratives. The views they were taught were not their own, yet they were expected to challenge or know better even though they didn't have the knowledge or tools to affirm nor deny them as truths. This connects with the theory of planned behavior, the evaluation of normative beliefs and a motivation to comply with what was expected (Ajzen, 1985).

Being responsible for things out of their control made them feel like they were a bad person and resulted in guilt or shame, components of the cycle of socialization that allowed the cycle to continue instead of being valued for their vulnerability and willingness to reflect and process how this might inform some of their thinking today (Harro, 1997). The role of professional development should be education and awareness not blaming or being held accountable for messages that a participant didn't ask for.

> So, needless to say, we've gone through, my siblings and I went through a lot of—I guess a lot of exposure that, had my sister not been biracial, we may not have gone through as a white family. I, so basically, sadly. I, as a parent of children who are biracial went through a lot of the same things 20 years later that my parents went through."
>
> "I think that really led to my wanting to be more involved on a more educational level, on a professional level, you know, seeing what my own children were experiencing and then seeing what kids in my schools where I was working were experiencing and families are experiencing. (Educator 6)

This participant was able to reflect on the ways their parents and family had an influence over their thinking, even though they were working to challenge those messages as an adult. The exposure in their early socialization reminded them of the challenges their biracial sibling endured. These memories generated stories that they would revisit in their adult life when their own biracial children and students in their school were navigating hardships because of their racial or ethnic background. This demonstrates the influence of those early messages and the ability to revisit and recall what it was like to be 'othered' as a child. The reminder that despite the passage of time, twenty years in this

case, the same racial dynamics of oppression were still happening and contributing to their socialization.

> ...No one wants to admit, kind of where they came from if it's not something they're proud of, especially in front of people that could take it the wrong way if I say it the wrong way. I tend to say things sometimes without thinking, and I didn't want to mess it up. Yeah, it was… it was a little nerve wracking to say certain things out loud, which it was probably a good thing to start being uncomfortable with having those sorts of conversations. Maybe it could have been, you know, eased in there just a little bit more, though, instead of like, oh groups let's talk about our lives and your messed up past right away. (Educator 2)

Acknowledging ways they heard or internalized messages of their upbringing in public/professional spaces was challenging and contributed to discomfort that left a lasting impact on the participants. It was suggested that maybe a slower approach to discussing personal stories could have been used and may have eased the discomfort, despite the participant understanding and expressing that the process of being uncomfortable was part of the learning. Cultural competency training was discussed as valuable, even when participants felt uncomfortable sharing their personal stories.

> Well for me, and I do wish this happened more often. And I know that a lot of DEI work right now starts with identity. So, you know a lot of the conferences I've gone to draw the bubbles, what's your core identity, the stuff people see, you know, and you go around and then you trade to somebody else, and you're like, yeah, you know, so it's like a lot of identity work that's already starting on a very vulnerable level for a lot of people. And so, as educators we're all varied, and you know, as a nation we're all varied. Clearly if you look at the politics of things, it's a pretty 50/50 split. (Educator 4)

Awareness of one's identity is a starting point for many cultural competency professional development sessions. Participants expressed these activities as a norm in many sessions and conferences they attended. This experience evokes different feelings, specifically discomfort and vulnerability and some educators expressed that this may not be welcomed by participants at the beginning of a workshop. Recognition that their

identities may evoke unwanted biases increases discomfort and an unwillingness to participate in the sessions. This is likely exacerbated by the political divisions in the U.S. and the effects of what some label as identity politics (Baum, 2021; Fortunato, et al., 2022).

Law Enforcement

> ...You know, I'm saying I've been Black for 38 years here, and I'm saying I mean, that's just not a problem that I've seen as a Black man. The problem that I've seen has nothing to do with race at all, just has to do with how policemen talk to people in general. You know, there is a lack of respect when it comes to the general public sometimes, but there is a reason for that….. The reason for that is because policemen are used to dealing with people that don't like them on a constant basis. They're used to dealing with people that want to fight them on a constant basis, you know, and your guard is always up, you know, and I like to use this analogy of, you know, you're a female or you're a man, and you got cheated on. In your next relationship, you're going to be saying you're going to be a little bit more on guard, right? (Officer 1)

Both educators and law enforcement officers struggle through past and current socialization, as they attempt to make sense of the world around them. Law enforcement officers consistently have limited time to process their experiences before being inundated with the next round of exposure from people usually, but not always, in some form of distress.

The officer interviewed suggested that race [identity] was less significant than other factors, and their socialization in their professional role was through their lens of experience and not related to social identities. The ability to recognize that experiences are our own and may or may not converge with others' experiences provides an opportunity to both empathize and hold space for greater connection and understanding. The bias held by those who viewed law enforcement as problematic was understood by the officers as potentially part of an experience they held, similar to his feeling of having

to have his guard up because of encounters where harm was a possibility, even if there was no justification for it. Our socialization at all stages of life is significant, creating pathways to justify our behaviors and feelings and providing insight into others' reasons for holding on to the things they do (Adams, 2023; Harro, 1997).

> He's doing it for a reason because of what he's been through. But there's the training that policemen need, it's to help with that, you know, I mean, and I'm not saying that we need to lose our paramilitary for some, I guess I don't know what kind of word I'm looking for. But I think we just need to learn how to relax, we need to learn how to be cautious, safe and personable at the same time, you know, yeah. So, the military doesn't have to deal with that, the military… they can be one way all the time, because they don't deal with the general public. With policemen, it's a little bit different because you go from acting like you're in the military, that military attitude, to kissing and hugging a baby two hours later. And for some policemen, it's hard to switch that on and off, and then go back and forth constantly, you know? (Officer 1)

Law enforcement officers are expected to maintain a level of cautiousness and compassion, be forceful and friendly despite being trained to view most situations as potential threats. This juxtaposition creates a dueling dynamic between who they are and who they are expected to be. Their identities and responses are expected to be fluid while still maintaining an awareness in each situation that would prove difficult for most. Officers expressed feeling like, if professional development workshops are going to shift officer interactions, the content of the sessions should take into consideration the myriad of experiences they encounter on a daily basis.

> It's hard to tell if it's just my life experience. Like without it, would I have interacted with people differently? I don't think so. I feel like I've had enough life experience dealing with diversity and cultural competency and however many different ways you want to kind of explain stuff, like the differences between us, I feel like I've already experienced it enough in life that I know how to deal with people. But at the same time, as I'm learning, life experiences and dealing with people, it's good to also get this additional information. I just don't know where one applies more than the other and almost certain that it doesn't hurt, but I don't think that I don't feel like without it. I would have personally had much of a difference in the way I interact with the people that I have to deal with, whether

> that's colleagues, superiors or clients. I just feel like, I mean, if that was the case, for me, personally, I mean, like I said, I think that lack of sensitivity or care or understanding, whatever the reasons are, that this training, even if it was provided to them still may not change them. (Officer 7)

While a majority of educators were able to identify the role that socialization played in their upbringing, nearly half of law enforcement officers struggled to make those same connections. Officer 7 attributed their lived experiences and encounters with different people as catalyst for their learning and not necessarily because of a diversity or cultural competency training. The officer acknowledged that receiving additional information about different groups of people is valuable and contributes to overall learning, and changing requires effort that not everyone is willing to make. For them, the changes have been beneficial and influenced their current position in life.

> To be honest, I don't think you can train a person. I don't think you can train your heart. It's either in you or it's not. And I'm not saying that people can't change their way of thinking or can't be enlightened, but if you are a racist, and I really hate when people say, oh, well cops, all cops are racist. No, you don't become a cop and you're racist. You are already racist, and you become a cop. So, I don't know that the training can change that because that's a changing of the heart. So, our answer to that question would be, I don't think there's a lot of change, even though we do the training, and I know that we do that training, you kind of go on autopilot, okay, we've got to get this training done, we've got to get this done. You got to get that done. So, you kind of go through the motion. But I think one of the ways that the department, since we have to do this training, let's make it really relevant. And although we may not necessarily change someone's heart, we can certainly make you think about why am I doing what I'm doing and is what I'm doing right. And fair. And just. (Officer 8)

Some officers believe that socialization resulting in views of hate or bias were not the result of the profession but of their upbringing. For these officers, the effectiveness of professional development is unlikely because they believe that those feelings cannot be trained out of people. The efficacy of these workshops would be limited because socialization may have already contributed to biases about groups of people or topics

raised in the professional development sessions. Identity and socialization played a role in both law enforcement officers and educators' experiences in cultural competency training programs. Educators could more easily pinpoint moments in their childhood that may have contributed to their views of different groups, while officers were less likely to reference messages they received growing up in their respective households.

Theme Two: Challenge and Accountability

The second theme that emerged from the analysis was challenge and accountability. This theme is informed by the theory of planned behavior, which explains the influence of accountability measures on an individual's motivation to shift their actions or behavior (Ajzen, 2020).

Educators and law enforcement officers in the study reported that by engaging in DEI training and applying these principles in their practice, there is potential for creating a more inclusive and supportive environment that benefits stakeholders. Both educators and law enforcement officers stressed the necessity of continuous training that promotes accountability, fosters critical thinking among participants and utilizes a range of effective teaching methods. The design of the training program and the facilitator's role in delivering professional development are crucial factors in establishing an environment conducive to skill acquisition. Participants spoke to the need for a scaffolded, or tiered approach, in professional development which might take into account the previous training participants may have received and deliver an appropriate level of challenge for each participant.

Educators

Educators are public servants that interface with a diverse population. Educators are charged with creating inclusive learning environments and experiences that facilitate students' emotional and intellectual growth. The emphasis on training that meets the unique needs of both the audience and the communities they serve was highlighted by participants. The structure of the training program and the facilitator's role in delivering professional development are key in enabling skill acquisition. One educator stressed the importance of ongoing training that holds participants accountable, encourages critical thinking and incorporates diverse teaching methods.

> The things that I valued the most in DEI sessions are when I can have good conversations with people that make me think about stuff that I may not have thought about or, or pushes me to, to wanna learn more about something. And then also, if I can walk away with some kind of resource that will help me with whatever I'm doing. So even a couple of years ago with our equity sessions that we have in our school district, we had some students attend and we were, we had a session around supporting our LGBTQ plus community, and one of the kids just really broke some things down and I was like, whoa, I, I need to do some reading. So, I got some more information, found some books, did some reading, learned some things that I had not considered before. (Educator 10)

Educators recognize the value of professional development both in their personal and professional lives and also attribute their learning to early socialization. Educator 4 agreed with other participants that indicated the DEI training helped them embrace a different perspective for children by promoting cultural competence, promoting equity, building empathy and understanding.

> So, just if you want to look at it through the DEI lens, I suppose. That was when I started teaching in a charter school, especially that kind of environment opened my eyes to the inequities that were there, so then that you know once you see things you can't unsee them. So, then you see, then you see the same inequities mirrored other places that you had missed them before that didn't see them in. So, when I find the training, like I said, my end goal of any training is how can this make it better for my students? How can I be a better teacher for my students? So, when I find something that I will go out and I'll search for things specifically related to math. So, if you look at the list I sent you, there's the one about black

> girls in math? One about black boys in math? So, looking at how I can actually translate that into action in my math classroom. (Educator 4)

While the sessions may have been effective, the accumulation of their life experiences contributed more than a single training. Educator 7 reported positive experience with DEI training, and underscored the importance of ongoing training sessions that equip educators with a diverse range of skills to effectively implement training in the workplace.

> [DEI training] gave us tools of like, you can do this, this, this and this. Here are some physical things that you can do. If this happens, this is a way to show people that you would see them. I made it so that it was relevant, but I know that I wasn't like. I don't know, I felt kind of like on the outside looking in. To the conversation that was happening. It definitely is helpful for my personal life, my professional life for sure because, I need to be able to have those conversations with students. If something comes up where they're not being kind to somebody because of their background or not being kind to somebody because of the way they look or speak or what have you. So yes, for my professional development, yes. But I don't think that the one training did that. I think the accumulation of all of my experience has helped me with that. Because I also seek out information if I need to find out more. I'm not afraid to talk to people either, to ask them like, hey, can you help me understand this thing? And then, you know. It's coming from curiosity, not like judgment. (Educator 7)

Educator 9 reported that the DEI training was interactive, explored a wide range of topics, integrated role plays, examined curriculum materials and reviewed resources in the school that could support the needs of diverse learners. Understanding the role of representation in the literature and curriculum allowed educators an opportunity to consider how to best utilize their resources to support their learning.

> [DEI training] would be different topics in different structures. Often it was having us go back and maybe look at our curriculum. If there was some particular issue that we needed to address, looking at the books that we use, what do we have in our libraries? And, or that could be like role playing kinds of things. So, it was very varied. We believed in experiential learning at my school. So, our committees were structured around that idea of experiential learning. We were experiencing what we wanted to learn or needed to learn. (Educator 9)

DEI training can aid educators with embracing different perspectives and applying these principles in their practice can create a more inclusive learning environment that benefits all students, including students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Law Enforcement

The structure of diversity, equity, and inclusion training programs, and the facilitator's role in delivering the training influences participants' ability to acquire the skills. Participants indicated that DEI training, is designed to help law enforcement officers recognize and address their own biases, enhance community relationships, give officers a greater awareness of cultural differences and support safety. Several participants indicated that when effectively implemented, DEI training can contribute to positive community relationships. Law enforcement officers expressed dissatisfaction with diversity training due to the absence of meaningful discussion, engagement, and diverse perspectives.

As civil servants, law enforcement officers garner a high level of public scrutiny. Consequently, their ability to navigate the nuances of the political landscape while serving a diverse community is essential. Officer 4 highlighted the importance of DEI training that helped broaden their perspective on the needs of diverse members of the community.

> I think I use it [DEI training] every day because we're dealing with so many different people as far as staff of all ages, races, I mean sex, everything. You deal with lesbian, gay, we have everybody around, but then on the side of the table desk, you got our offenders that come from various levels of walks. They're rural, they're city, they're Black, they're White, they're Bosnian, they're Hispanic, they are trans. I mean, you get different people all over socioeconomics. (Officer 4)

The structure of the training program and the facilitator's role in delivering the professional development plays a pivotal role in creating an environment for skill

acquisition. Law enforcement officers that participated in this study highlighted the need for training that does not merely check the box but provides effective professional development facilitation. Participants called attention to the need for training to be responsive to the diverse needs of the audience and the communities they serve. Officer 5 noted that DEI programs encouraged positive and proactive community interaction.

> So, it's some kind of diversity training or what they call this sensitivity training, something to alleviate the clashing with the community. So it is, I feel like since if I had to put a date on it since Mike Brown, since 2014, it seems like we're playing catch up. We're playing. We are always on the, what's the word I'm looking for? We [are] always, on the defensive side, we are reacting instead of acting. We're not very proactive when it comes to these kinds of things. And I think we are, as a department, behind most departments or all departments, that gap has to close, and we have to do a lot better than what we do. (Officer 5)

Officer 6 discussed the resistance that some trainers face when providing DEI training. He explained that his “White coworkers generally do not like to participate in diversity training.” While Officer 6 did not believe these feelings and attitudes were the responsibility of DEI trainers, he understood and had some sympathy for the source of the resistance. "...When my White coworkers hear DEI is just like you know, we have to hear about that again. Or thinking like you know, I get along with, with everyone fine, and obviously DEI is much deeper than just getting along with people." Officer 6 then explained how he addressed the resistance and noted that a purposeful approach was the most effective. “You have to be very purposeful about, about using you know, the information that you've gained through your lifetime or through your training. You have to be purposeful about using that particularly in a work setting.” Officer 6 noted that trainers need to acknowledge the resistance.

> ...And just acknowledging that in situating it and understand, you know, letting the audience know that it's more than just getting along with people and just saying it right, like just to say it. And I've worked in an agency where we talked about

> separating, you know, people for training based on race which is, you know, really controversial, but could also be really helpful. Because generally, I would say why people are not going to speak out in a DEI training because they're uncomfortable... (Officer 6)

Political pressures may influence the department's ability to implement and sustain DEI efforts. Some law enforcement officers may perceive DEI training as an indictment of their personal beliefs, professionalism or as an implication that they are inherently biased. Overcoming these challenges requires a comprehensive and sustained commitment by police departments to address systemic issues, engage in open dialogue with communities and implement targeted strategies to promote diversity, equity and inclusion within the organization. DEI training entails fostering a culture of accountability, ongoing learning and transformation to changing societal needs and expectations.

Utilizing a plethora of effective teaching methods can create a dynamic learning environment that supports the acquisition and development of a variety of skills. A deliberate training, coupled with a skilled facilitator, may significantly enhance the learning experience and increase the probability of participants acquiring, retaining and applying new skills. Participants noted that it is important for professional development to be ongoing, for facilitators to make participants accountable, encourage critical thinking and provide support to help process information for several reasons.

> It has to be a shift in the way some of the people are found or hired. Okay, we have the people here. How can we change the people that are here? It is really everybody is stuck in they ways. Nobody is really open for change really. So you go to these trainings, you do your eight hours and that's it. It is, no let me check in. Two weeks later it is no, let me check in a month later. It's just once a year. Alright. Now I got another year to be stuck in my ways. There's no real change. We go to therapy. We go to therapy at least two times a month. It has to be something more than these basic eight hours. What are you implementing into our daily shifts, our daily hours at work, it's nothing. So, you do that eight hours and

> just see how fast you forget about it within a week, the next week, the next month, and it's gone. You go back to the regular scheduled program. So, it has to be some consistency within the department on the consistency within us to either go out and get some additional training if you feel like that's needed. (Officer 5)

Encouraging participants to think critically about the information being presented helps them analyze and evaluate the content, potentially leading to a deeper understanding of the training and the ability to apply it in the workplace, rather than passively receiving the information. These approaches can lead to more engaged and motivated participants, increased retention and application of new knowledge and skills, and ultimately, a more impactful learning experience that affects the workplace. Most officers indicated that the annual training has not been beneficial. Officer 8, when questioned about the effectiveness of DEI programs, indicated that they were not beneficial.

> To be honest, no. I don't feel like they've been beneficial. I think they could be more effective by doing exercises like that particular exercise. I feel like we need things that really make us think and really make us look at the elephant in the room and really dive into how is it that African Americans only make up a certain percentage of the population in the U.S., but we make up the largest percentage of people who are incarcerated, and that's the elephant in the room. So, I'd like to see exercises and materials that really address that and really get down to the core of it. And as the old folks, they call a spade a spade. And so no, I don't feel that it's very effective. (Officer 8)

While participants recognized that ongoing professional development in diversity, equity and inclusion is essential for public servants to effectively serve diverse communities, build trust, create inclusive policies and practices, foster a diverse and inclusive workforce that is responsive to the needs of the organization and community. Officers indicated that ongoing professional development was not commonplace in their organization.

> I think if it's done right and done well, it could only be positive, because you're learning how to respect people, you're learning about new cultures. It is just the educational thing. So, the more better you could be as a person and the better

> rapport you build with the people you're working with, whether it's your coworker, whether it's the offender that you're trying to help or whether it's your family member. So, all around I think it is a plus for a person. (Officer 4)

When participants are held accountable for their learning and development, they are more likely to take the process seriously and actively engage in the activities. This can lead to better retention of information and improved application of new skills in the workplace. Providing support to participants helps create a positive learning environment where participants feel comfortable asking questions, seeking clarification and examining new ideas. This may lead to increased confidence and motivation, as well as a greater willingness to take risks and try new approaches. Professional development training often necessitates applying new concepts, skills and strategies. Facilitators play a vital role in aiding participants with processing new information; facilitators can ensure that information is understood, retained, and integrated in participants' existing knowledge and experiences.

Law enforcement officers that participated in this study indicated which formats their training entailed. Three participants receiving virtual training, and five participants receiving a combination of virtual and instructor facilitated sessions. The vast majority of participants indicated the training was ineffective. Perceptions of participants that attended instructor facilitated training varied with the instructor's approach.

> I think that has a lot to do with how the material is presented. I think that has a lot to do with the presenters. I think it has a lot to do with the agency on how, if the agency holds that in high regard, if it's a priority for the agency. But if we're going to just rubber stamp and we're just going to go through these classes because we have to satisfy this requirement. So, I think a lot of it has to do with how it's presented and then the material itself. Is it something that really makes me think that really makes me look at myself in the mirror and say, Hey, am I guilty of doing this? Am I guilty of not just being racially profiling, pulling over a black person because they're in a black neighborhood and you just think they're up to no good…? Really looking at yourself and really taking an interpersonal look at your

> heart and at your ethics and where you draw your line at. So, I think that has a lot to do with it. (Officer 8)

The deaths of unarmed People of Color have led to increased scrutiny on issues such as police brutality, racial bias and the need for law enforcement reform, leading agencies to implement mandatory implicit bias training. External pressures, such as political polarization, public scrutiny and media coverage of law enforcement can create challenges for police departments seeking to promote diversity, equity and inclusion. While law enforcement agencies have required implicit bias training, participants in the study indicate that the training is merely fulfilling training formalities and not impacting significant changes to policing.

Theme Three: Relevance and Applicability

This theme examines the perspectives of educators and law enforcement regarding the alignment of cultural competency training to their professional and personal practices. Both motivation theories and adult learning theory speak to the needs of adult learners, who better acquire information and skills they find applicable to their daily lives (Flowerday, 2016; Knowles, 1984). Our interviews revealed that both educators and law enforcement officers view cultural competency training favorably when they perceive that its content is relevant to their professional duties. Participants expressed a desire for training content that is practical, enabling them to apply the acquired knowledge effectively in their roles. This theme was evident in interview responses with law enforcement officers and educators alike.

Educators

In this study, motivation refers to the participants' willingness to engage in cultural competency training. Out of the 10 educators interviewed, seven participants highlighted

aspects related to motivation, particularly focusing on relevance and applicability. There were more than 25 codes noted regarding relevance and applicability. Even when educators expressed reluctance to undergo the training, their responses were consistently linked to these two terms.

Two participants articulated their reservations about the training sessions. One educator candidly admitted her lack of motivation to engage in the professional development opportunities provided by her employer. Educator 9 stated, “If I felt something wasn't relative, it would just go in one ear and out the other, and I wouldn't remember it.” Another educator delved into the topic of motivation while sharing insights from their encounters with DEI training as yielding positive or negative experiences. Despite recognizing the dual nature of these encounters, the educator expressed feeling a lack of enlightenment from their sessions. This deficiency dampened their enthusiasm for engaging in similar training endeavors.

> I think both. Negative because if it was something truly profound, I think I would have taken something away from that. Then able to remember maybe a little bit more. But then the feeling of course I walked away with was not super positive, but at the same time I do believe I learned something and it kind of started those uncomfortable conversations in my head. (Educator 1)

In light of these observations, it is unsurprising that educators demonstrated a heightened inclination to engage in training sessions that directly related to their roles, particularly when the training content was tailored to benefit their students, assisted in mitigating their own biases, or aligned with building a positive school culture. When discussing the factors that served as motivators for educators in relation to students, educators expressed a keen interest in understanding the cultural nuances and identities of their students. Moreover, they acknowledged the value of such training in preparing them to effectively guide students in navigating the complexities of diversity within the

classroom. One participant expressed a candid perspective on this theme when discussing how the training impacts their professional and personal practices.

> Definitely. My professional life, well both. Professional and personal, but professional life. We have a really diverse student body, and this year, I have more African American, more black kids than I've ever had in my class. Just as the way the classes, you know, every year is sort of different. And I think that that was very like those trainings really helped to prepare me. For this group of students who I have this year. So, I was really grateful. Because I want to have a good relationship, you know, like by nature teachers and their students that you can teach a lot better if you have a strong relationship personally. So, I've been trying to connect with the kids, all the students, not just the black students, but I feel like having the training helped to prepare me a little bit more and for families, too. Parents and grandparents and extended family of the children. So, I do think it has been helpful and even personally too, you know… (Educator 8)

In agreement, another educator emphasized that motivation stems from personal relevance before aligning with the objectives of professional development.

> The most effective I've found has been really when people can connect whatever they're learning to themselves, connect it to whatever the goal is and then implement. So, thinking about, because I'm in an educational setting, like when teachers can see something that they can find a way to connect it to themselves, then they get invested when they can understand that this is affecting our children in a negative way, which means it's impacting you as an educator, impacting the kids. And then when they're like, okay, here's what I can do, those have been the most effective pd. (Educator 10)

Discussions surrounding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training are often challenging, prompting individuals to avoid such dialogues. Nonetheless, educators have expressed a profound interest in undergoing this training when equipped with practical tools applicable to their professional settings. Participants have emphasized the necessity of tangible solutions to effectively address DEI training topics. Examples include the significance of utilizing relevant literature to address diverse needs, receiving language framework for discourse, and engaging in role-playing exercises to navigate challenging conversations related to DEI matters. Furthermore, when prompted for additional insights,

an educator highlighted how the provision of tools could enhance individuals' motivation to actively participate in training sessions.

> I feel like one thing, one quick thing, when we were told to have courageous conversations. A lot of people still are not comfortable with having them. And I don't think that's because they don't want to. I just think that's out because they're not in practice of doing it. So even having a simulation of where they have…. It's complete drama, like acting out, like hearing a scenario and you're in it like acted out or what is that TV show like What Would You Do Something like they have people in that scenario and they're like, what would you do? So, I think like more something like that where if you're put in the situation, what would you do? But it has to feel real. It can't just feel like you're, you know, I don't know, try to say something because that's what they want you to say. Like I feel like stuff like that, like social experiments, something like that, would be helpful because then you're kind of forced to have this conversation and talk or like act a certain way and like or not act a certain way and try to get out of repetition or comfort again. (Educator 7)

Educators seek clarity on how to utilize the presented information effectively. They are eager to understand the resources available to them and where to access them. One educator emphasized the importance of relevance and applicability, stating the necessity of meeting students' needs in relation to LGBTQIA+ understanding while also wanting to be equipped with the necessary tools for success.

> I still feel like I'm on the very surface of learning. So, when I've gone to those kinds of sessions, I really have tried to just think about what am I learning about? What's the impact on kids, what's the impact on staff members, and if… are there, is there something we need to think about that we differently? And then I'll try to figure out like, are there some resources I need to access or what? Cause it's just not a, it's not an area of familiarity for me. (Educator 10)

The educators' motivation for the cultural competency training was palpable as they recognized its potential to meet the diverse needs of all stakeholders and provide them with the necessary tools to effectively introduce innovative learning approaches. However, in instances where this key element was absent, educators appeared hesitant to fully immerse themselves in the training content. This underscores the importance of

tailoring professional development programs to address the specific needs of educators, fostering a more collaborative and engaging learning environment for all involved.

Law Enforcement

Likewise, law enforcement officers generally emphasized the need for cultural competency training. They expressed a broad consensus that cultural competency improved the ability to gain respect and establish a connection, and that this rapport is vital to serving and protecting the public. Specifically, officers believed that cultural competency trainings addressed divides in religion, race, gender, and language that act as barriers in deescalating highly contentious interactions. Still, many also qualified their sentiments by describing instances where they found training less relevant. Where this was true, most officers felt a disconnect between themselves and those who mandate training, with nearly half of law enforcement participants suggesting political trends placed too much emphasis on cultural competence. Some officers went further, expressing a higher need for other types of training, and many reframed cultural competence as an ability to relate to people in general.

Participants frequently began interviews affirming the applicability of cultural competency training by listing a broad range of characteristics they see each day. Officers widely acknowledged that one's level of cultural competence ultimately impacts safety for officers and the public. Accordingly, they expressed a desire to avoid negative perceptions or unfavorable responses that could result from missteps in cultural communication or behavior.

> I mean, you know, we see the public 24 hours a day and you know, the difference in our city, the different religions, we have, like different cultures we have here. So, I mean, it plays a big impact dealing in my profession. Absolutely. Because it's, we deal with a wide variety of individuals. (Officer 3)

Several officers said they had applied training around gender roles within particular faith traditions. Multiple officers described approaching members of their shared gender identity in an effort to avoid a perception of disrespect. Here, a male participant stated he would intentionally address a male counterpart as a signal of respect when interacting with couples or families of the Muslim faith.

> When it was Muslim couples, regardless of their national origin, I will talk to him. It's not because I'm like, it's not because I prefer to talk to him if it's bad for the whole situation. I'm respect to him while I'm doing that. (Officer 2)

Some participants recognized cultural competence transcended their interactions with the public to hold relevance in other aspects of their professional roles and even in their personal lives. One officer found they had applied concepts they learned in a training concerning implicit bias in hiring practices.

> The most recent one of the—it wasn't really even a training. It was a presentation at a meeting about hiring and retention practices and how purposeful organizations need to be about attracting and retaining a diverse workforce…. that was definitely something I took away from a training. (Officer 6)

Some participants even identified the relevance of cultural competency in their interactions with their coworkers and family members:

> So, the more better you could be as a person and the better rapport you build with the people you're working with, whether it's your coworker, whether it's the offender that you're trying to help or whether it's your family member. So, all around I think is a plus for a person. (Officer 4)

Interestingly, despite wide recognition among the participants that cultural competence training was an asset in their professional and sometimes private lives, participants also described situations where they did not find training relevant. The dominant reason given for this lack of applicability was a mismatch between the officers and those with the authority to mandate training topics. Several officers felt facilitators or

decision makers were too far removed from the experiences of the average officer, or worse, that the parties had no experience in the profession at all.

> So, it's been pushed on the department, pushed on the commanders. Hey, now it's been pushed on the academy. Hey, get your officers into this training. We need this. Again, it's not the department saying, "Hey, this seems like a good training. I think we could use this…. I think our officers can benefit from this." It's from the outside that's telling us, "Hey, to do this." So, you either get on board or more bad press, more bad publicity on the department instead of us actually going out, finding people to do the training or find the training that would benefit us, that we think will benefit us. (Officer 5)

Referencing the prevalence of mental health challenges for officers, some participants emphasized a particular need for sessions related to mental health, saying this topic was as much if not more urgent than cultural competency in officer training. Though some departments required this training for their employees, others did not.

> But then you are, let's say they teach you how to detect suicidal behavior. And while we listen to the instructor, it's important and it makes him—because I overlooked several— twice, twice in my life I overlooked that behavior… One was coworker and the other was person like I personally knew. But I did not, I could not read those. I could not even address an issue on the after effect. I've seen something I just couldn't explain. So, the training will help you. Alright, this is a problem. Where was my resources, what's my staff? Where, where can I go? Like what's my first step? (Officer 2)

Despite literature suggesting those with higher self-efficacy may seek out training more often, we also found that several officers with a strong sense of self-efficacy (including those who had previously described specific examples of applying training) minimized or reduced the cultural competence to a less specialized ability to relate to people generally. In the words of Officer 2, "The key, always, was just like communications. When you establish a bridge, it's easier to have communication." Additionally, where many began interviews with sweeping lists of cultural differences that justified a broad application of training, officers simultaneously recognized the

limitations of cultural competence when it is addressed as a broad knowledge of cultural norms. Like the following participant, many remarked about changing norms within cultures, shifting cultures in a given population, and a need to remain humble and open to differences.

> So, I see cultural competence as having a responsibility to self-educate myself about generally people who are different than me. Doesn't mean that I'm going to know everything, but it's also a reminder to stay humble. And I think humility is part of cultural competence, understanding that you don't know everything about every, every type of person or every group's history or political significance, but having the humility to say I don't know and, and being open to receiving information and feedback. That's how I see cultural competence, but I see it as an—it's a personal responsibility. (Officer 6)

Our analysis found that both educators and law enforcement officers attached some level of relevance and applicability to the perceived efficacy of cultural competency training. Law enforcement officers widely expressed a perception that cultural competency training was effective in improving their communication and interactions with the public, as well as their coworkers and families, and they pointed to this improved communication as highly impactful in fostering public safety. Where officers found training less relevant, they often pointed to a disconnect between participants and the facilitators or authority figures, such as lawmakers.

Yet despite a largely favorable characterization of cultural competency training as relevant and applicable, officers seemed to reject cultural competency as a finite knowledge applied to distinct populations. Rather, these participants emphasized their perception that a more effective application of cultural competency requires an open, or humble, approach. Indeed, their nuanced perceptions indicate a more favorable reception and application of cultural humility than cultural competence alone.

Theme Four: Choice and Autonomy

Theme four explores how participants preferred to be given choices in relation to the format and content of a training, providing greater autonomy during their learning as opposed to engaging in box checking to complete diversity training. This finding also aligns with the theories of motivation and adult learning, which each capture the need for adult learners to have choice and interaction in their learning experiences (Flowerday, 2016; Knowles, 1984). When participants experienced fulfillment during professional development, they tended to find it more applicable to their profession or personal life. Law enforcement officers and educators who received diversity training from their employers responded with varying degrees of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. One recurring theme was the opportunity for choice in their learning. When participants have greater autonomy in their ability to choose, they reported being more engaged, thus increasing satisfaction with the professional development sessions. We found that mandated training was typically not well received and ineffective, which contributed to a sense of box-checking. Participants in our study reported that providing choice and autonomy over their learning increased their willingness to participate and influenced the perceived effectiveness of the training.

Educators

Educators attend professional development typically with their colleagues in a group setting. These sessions happen frequently, as mandated by the school district and by the state. When asked about the sessions that involved diversity, equity and inclusion, teachers had experienced more sessions than law enforcement, either made mandatory by their district or self-initiated. Educators reported that depending on the format of the

training being offered, choice is sometimes provided, but that is not appearing to be a standard practice, especially when diversity training is a requirement.

This educator discusses how DEI training is typically focused on race, and no other options are offered. They also talk about how DEI training has many facets, but most trainings attended by our participants had a single focus.

> Umm…well choices as far as specifically if they're saying, this is a DEI training. And then we only talk about racism, then that wasn't really a choice that was offered. This is like, this is what we're doing. And so, no kind of but not really but then again like I don't know. I feel like if you're talking about DEI, [you] have to do all of it. Like, just like one thing. Because yeah, like I said, it's huge, but at the same time, like, there's a lot more to it than displaying one facet of it. (Educator 7)

Another educator talks about their experience in training with a workshop model, where there were sessions that allowed for further insight and deeper understanding after receiving information, and a variety was offered. A variety of offerings was perceived as an inadvertent type of choice for participants.

> Then you would attend workshops. And then you would go to breakout sessions at the end of the day where you would have a chance to. Sort of process within a group what you heard and your interpretation of it and listening to others and maybe getting more insight into meetings. So that was a variety. (Educator 9)

In contrast, this educator talks about how, "There wasn't an option. It was just here's what we're doing. Break up in the groups, talk about this…we all did the same thing" (Educator 1). They further explained that it would be more beneficial if they were provided a choice about how they participated in activities regarding sharing their experiences.

> Maybe giving people more of a choice if they would like to share. Everybody kinda comes out with it, come out [in] their own time, especially someone like me. It takes me, it just takes me a little while to process things, the way that I learn, the way that I talk, if I'm given, you know, a prompt or something on the spot and I have to tell people about my life, that is incredibly nerve racking. So, I would say give people a choice whether they want to speak or not. Because it

> could be, I mean, it could be detrimental to some people, especially if they have issues they don't wanna speak about right now, that could affect their mental health. (Educator 1)

When educators experienced both mandated topics and trainings that offered choices, they felt that the training that offered choice was the most effective in giving participants autonomy over their learning. In contrast, mandated trainings lacked participant buy-in and were perceived as less effective.

> I would say the stuff that I've had at school—that's the faculty meeting stuff—has not been super effective. But again, it's mandated, and there's little choice. So, I do think that that is, that has been the least effective. Out of all the trainings I've gone to, I think the ones who [I] have chosen have been the most effective ones. But I mean, that goes for learners of knowledge, right? That you give learners agency and what they're doing. So…. But I don't know how to get around that. Because as a school, you also need to communicate the message. We value diversity. That this is important to us, and so I don't know how to get around that issue that maybe someone's first encounter will be at a faculty meeting.
> (Educator 4)

At times, participants reported that mandatory DEI trainings felt like box checking on the part of the school district and provided little to no insight into the application of the content being discussed. Another educator felt strongly that if a choice was offered, they would feel more engaged. They wanted to be included in the process of creating growth as opposed to a box checking experience with a scheduled deadline.

> Yeah, I think choice is a really, really big deal like cause if you got, if I was to ever get a choice, I mean, because I keep talking as if, like I'm talking about people, I'm sorry. If I were to ever like get choice on something, I would be more engaged because I feel like you're not talking at me, but you're talking with me and we're like creating this beautiful thing of where I feel in our growth areas are needed or where I'm like I'm really, really struggling and you're providing this expertise that you have and giving you to support to grow rather than like you coming in with a set strict deadline and like a set schedule…(Educator 5)

Educators often feel like cultural competency professional development sessions lack engagement and choice, causing participants to complete the process with less regard for

learning. Educators had to read between the lines on the purpose and outcomes of DEI trainings that they had attended. One participant expressed confusion about the goals of the training and those that lacked discussion were perceived as unfulfilling.

> I think that they just want us to be more aware before we are put into a classroom with so many different students coming from so many different backgrounds. I don't really know. Sometimes I don't really know what the goal is. Other than to say, okay, check. We did that with these people, and they didn't really, you know. A lot of the ones that I have attended, there is no discussion. There is no courageous conversations. They just kind of give you all this information and they're like, okay, you did it and it doesn't feel very fulfilling. (Educator 7)

Law Enforcement

Law enforcement officers and personnel receive training frequently to remain up to date on protocols and policies. This training can take place individually or in a group setting. The majority of officers we interviewed discussed training that they had completed independently. In the four years since the pandemic, professional development has remained virtual for several of our participants. When officers were asked whether choice was involved in diversity training, most stated that options were not available. Training for officers is mandated by politicians and elected and non-elected officials. Officers reported little to no initiation of further professional development or education within the DEI realm. There was also the sense of box checking in regard to the topic, versus a feeling of connection to the information as it applied to their profession.

We know that understanding the role of andragogy in adult learning allows for participants to have a stake in their learning, leading to greater satisfaction (Knowles, 1984). While participants may not be aware of what they do not know, being self-directed is essential to the learning process. This participant explained how officers are typically

not given choices regarding their training, however their department did conduct a survey to find out what officers would like to focus on in addition to mandatory training.

> For some of the trainings, yes. For some of 'em, no. And I think that's okay because sometimes you don't know what you don't know. We did send out a survey last year here in our office to find out what people wanted to learn about. So, we thought that was important. (Officer 4)

When one participant was asked about training specific to diversity, their response was, “It's pretty much one and done and check it off” (Officer 3). The phenomenon of box checking was a familiar notion that educators and law enforcement officers experienced. This officer describes how diversity contrasts with other training content that officers receive. Diversity training is commonly felt as a mandatory training, box checking instead of valuing the information for application in the workplace.

> You won't hear any fuss about going to firearms training, but man, I got to go in here [diversity training] and sit in this classroom for eight hours. Can we leave early? What time are we leaving? It is never really about the training. Hey, I'm just going to check this box. That's it. So, are we really open to what we're receiving? Then we go into classrooms and now it's just, I don't want to say it's blacks versus whites, old versus young, new school versus old school. But it is more clashing or it's more gossiping about what's being said and how it's being perceived. So, nobody is really listening. If you ask me, we're going in with one mindset and we're leaving with the same mindset. The eight hours that we get once a year, if that, it might be four or four hours that we get that because they split it up. Okay, if you do four hours diversity, all right, now you do defensive tactics for the next four hours. So, it is really, we're just checking off a box, checking off a box. (Officer 5)

One participant referenced their experience with mandatory professional development and felt a lack of cohesion between the officers on the ground and the decision makers who are far removed from the actual day to day experiences of the officers. This seems to influence the buy in of officers and their perceptions of whether or not they truly require the training.

> …law enforcement does not have the training that they need. Unfortunately, people that decide what kind of training that law enforcement gets are not law enforcement officers most of the time. Usually they're politicians, there's their mayors, their board members, their governors, and they have no idea what a police officer sees on a day-to-day basis. (Officer 1)

Multiple officers mentioned that virtual training was ineffective due to the impersonal nature and repetitive content. This participant felt that the mandatory diversity training that was offered online was boring and did not apply to him. He describes how people do not pay attention, and little is accomplished during mandatory virtual training.

> We've been virtual. So, we've switched away from in-person learning to virtual learning, so it's all computerized. We'll get an email and it'll say, we need to do this two-hour course. Online diversity in half the time we've been watching is so boring, because, you know, I think police were thinking that didn't apply to us. You know, put it this way. If in fact, you are racist, and you do have implicit biases or biases that you don't even know about, you still not going to pay attention to them. Because how you feel is how you feel that no one's gonna change your mind. You know what I'm saying? So, when you make it virtual, you're definitely not going to pay attention… (Officer 1)

Officers felt that while online training is more convenient, it did not offer connections with others or meaningful interactions. This was a common response to discussing online or virtual training. The ability to be in person creates opportunities for greater connection and cultivates more vulnerability when people can see and experience the emotions of others.

> I feel like the online trainings are convenient. The in-person trainings get more interaction maybe more specific examples. So, I'm glad those two are kind of still being used. (Officer 7)

This participant describes how mandatory trainings do not work for people on their DEI journey. They felt strongly about not being able to train certain biases or prejudice out of people. And yet the inferred expectation is that once you attend/participate then you will somehow be absolved of your biases and enlightened on

parts of your socialization that may contribute to a disconnect between you and others in community.

> I definitely have moments in training where a coworker will say something, and I think oh, my gosh. I am surprised. Not surprised, but I can't believe they said that out loud. You know, little, I would say maybe a little self-awareness of where their thought processes on the DEI journey. So sometimes, yes, it negatively impacts my view of coworkers or our colleagues. Not necessarily in my agency but across agencies. But then I remember they have to start somewhere, but, but I also really strongly feel you cannot train certain biases prejudice, isms out of people. You can't mandatorily train people at work. And, and train that out of people. (Officer 6)

Both law enforcement officers and educators reported attending mandatory diversity training provided by their employers. Both law enforcement and educators reported limited choices were offered within diversity training. When choices were offered, participants felt more invested in their personal and professional growth. Participants also talked at length regarding the need for connection and interaction as opposed to checking off a box that a training had been provided. Training that had been provided via virtual methods was perceived as an ineffective method to diversity training. As discussed in the previous chapters, the learning theory of andragogy highlights and illuminates what characteristics motivate and shape adult learning (Knowles, 1984). Self-directed learning and collaborative, interactive learning are two components of andragogy that participants discussed in the form of being provided choices and increasing the need for connection and interaction in order to learn effectively.

Chapter Four Summary

Chapter Four presented descriptive findings from a qualitative study of Midwest law enforcement officers' and K-12 public educators' perceptions of cultural proficiency training. The participants included ten educators and eight law enforcement officers. Our

findings resulted in four main themes which lead to an ability to apply the training to their professional practices: socialization, facilitators' approach, motivation, and format. The themes identified in this analysis align with the theories of andragogy, socialization, theory of planned behavior and motivation. Chapter Five will present a discussion of the findings as well as conclusions drawn to provide recommendations for future research and practice.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of cultural proficiency training attended by law enforcement officers and K-12 public educators. Chapter Five begins with a discussion of our findings from 18 interviews. This is followed by a synopsis of the limitations and implications associated with our study. We will conclude the chapter with recommendations for future research.

Discussion

Our research question was, "What is the perceived influence of cultural proficiency training on the professional practice of law enforcement officers and K-12 public educators?" We found that law enforcement officers and educators responses could be captured in four themes: Identity and Socialization, Challenge and Accountability. Relevance and Applicability, and Choice and Autonomy. These core themes influenced how participants applied cultural competency training to their professional practices. We found that law enforcement officers were inclined to engage in limited discussion regarding how the diversity training applied to them in contrast to educators who responded with more robust, thick descriptions of the activities and engagement. This inclination may be attributed to a key difference between our law enforcement and educator requirements for professional development.

First, law enforcement attended the majority of training online or virtually, versus educators who had more experience with in-person training, Second, though educators had no specific mandate for cultural competency training itself, they are generally required to complete higher more hours of professional development, with less

experienced educators being required to complete upwards of 20 hours per year. Officers are required to have 4 hours cultural competency training per year, with a total of only 8 hours of mandated professional development hours.

Professional development focusing on implicit bias, cultural competency, cultural proficiency and diversity, equity and inclusion have become both a lightning rod and a beacon of light for those required to participate (Baum, 2021; Wallace-Wells, 2021). Our study provided examples of training experiences participants considered engaging and valuable as well as sessions they completed begrudgingly. Family and community messaging about different identity groups, both social and cultural, had an influence over how individuals showed up in various professional development sessions. Their ability to apply the information from the sessions was in part due to how and when they were first introduced to these conversations. For many of the educators, specific moments in their upbringing/socialization provided flashbacks of bias they heard from loved ones about people from backgrounds different than their own. They recalled stories and language, memories and discourse that would later be disproven through their own lived experiences and exchanges. The law enforcement officers shared less about their childhood messages but more about the impact of the biases they face from media outlets, secondary and systemic trauma, and the communities' experiences with others that wore the uniform. Freire (2014) describes educating young people as more than teaching literacy, but of cultivating a critical consciousness of the structural inequities that exist in societies. For educators and officers, when and how they were introduced to topics of difference or inequities played a role in how they valued or dismissed their professional

development experiences. Early exposure to these conversations allowed more time to process and reflect on the applicability and nuance in their own lives.

Though all participants were shaped by formative or recent personal experiences, factors of andragogy and motivation also impacted participants' perceptions of training efficacy (Knowles, 1970: Ryan & Deci, 2000). Specifically, educators and officers alike referred to autonomy, active learning, and relevance as characteristics of training which shaped the effectiveness of their experiences. As adult learners, educators and officers signaled a desire to direct their own learning by choosing a topic or format they felt aligned with their interests and learning preferences. They consistently use words around box-checking or one-and-done experiences. The participants indicated that stand-alone sessions made them less likely to transfer their learning to practice, with officers describing a four-hour training requirement per year, where the same online module may be assigned for their completion annually. Educators spoke to emotionally charged sessions which left staff members reeling and unsure of how to proceed.

In keeping with adult learning theory and elements of motivation theory, participants also expressed a desire for an active learning format (Knowles, 1970; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Despite noting convenience, they had particularly strong words for the inadequacy of online cultural competency training and emphasized the importance of interaction and discussion. They also broadly acknowledged the need for a skilled, authentic facilitator who, themselves, would possess the autonomy to guide and direct such challenging, vulnerable conversations. In addition, the relevance or practical application to the responsibilities of their professional roles also drove perceptions of cultural competency training. Educators felt trainings were more effective when they

could relate concepts from training directly to their students or to their own instruction. Officers similarly believed training to be more impactful when the facilitator had a background in law enforcement and expressed a distaste for decision-makers or facilitators who were out of touch with the demands of their profession or with a significant need for training in other areas.

Whether officers and educators embraced diversity training or felt it unnecessary, they seemed to converge in their opinion that while cultural competence may add some benefit when it is taught as a comprehensive understanding of varying cultural characteristics, this information alone was insufficient to accomplish the desired impacts of training. Instead, participants consistently referred to a kind of humility or openness required for successful professional practice. In this way, our public service professionals held a high regard for behavior that demonstrated cultural humility, an emerging concept in the field of cultural competency training (Lekas et al., 2020).

Limitations

While qualitative research offers a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, limitation lie in the challenge of replication. The sampling and selection method employed in our study had constraints, as it did not fully represent the target population. Notably, in selecting law enforcement officers, we overlooked the restricted access we would encounter with these professionals. By disseminating information about our study to organizational leaders and allowing individuals to volunteer, we may have unintentionally influenced participant selection, potentially skewing the perception of workplace training. This method may have limited our ability to capture a holistic view of individuals' perspectives on training. Additionally, the interview questions chosen may

have restricted participant responses and narrowed the study's scope. The decision to limit the number of interactions with each participant to one interview also hindered our exploration of participant responses within the theoretical framework. A more in-depth approach involving multiple interviews with participants could have provided a richer understanding. While phenomenological research seeks to investigate the essence of a phenomenon, our own implicit biases may make it challenging to analyze and interpret the results objectively. Finally, our varying levels of experience in public sector workplaces, may have limited our understanding of workplace training.

Implications and Recommendations

This research study holds implications for educational institutions, law enforcement agencies, and the advancement of cultural competency training. This study enriches the evolving discourse on how to implement professional development aimed at enhancing cultural competency and fostering change. By interviewing participants from both law enforcement agencies and educational institutions, we gain a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural competency training influences agencies serving diverse communities. In this section, we will present the professional implications of our research on education and law enforcement institutions as well as its relevance to developers of cultural competency training programs.

Implications for Law Enforcement and Educational Institutions

When considering the implications of our research on law enforcement agencies and educational institutions, it becomes evident that it is crucial for these organizations to comprehend their employees thoroughly. Specifically, these institutions must gain insights into the identities of their employees and the effects of their socialization. This

could lead to a better response to cultural competency training programs. It is also imperative for institutions to genuinely emphasize the importance of cultural competency training so that individuals are more willing to engage in the process (Alhejji et al., 2016; Moretto, 2021). As departments and decision-makers emphasize the need for training, their organizations may benefit from a reframing around the goals and objectives of training by presenting a more nuanced expectation of humility and respect for differences, as well as the need to understand specific characteristics or varying abilities, identities and cultures. Furthermore, institutions should actively pursue professional development opportunities that prioritize sustainable learning practices over mere adherence to institutional mandates. Some specific recommendations for institutions and organizational leaders may include:

- Allocating resources and time for continuity in professional development or training opportunities that build upon previous sessions.
- Reviewing training models to ensure they provide choice, challenge and accountability.
- Consistently evaluating and refining programs to assess whether sessions are meeting participant needs.
- Wherever possible, offering in-person rather than virtual training.
- Providing follow up support or resources for professionals to process reactions and reflections as needed.
- Identifying measurable goals and measures as well as accountability processes, such as accountability partners, check-in intervals, etc.

Implications for Developers of Cultural Competency Training Programs

Our analysis of the interviews with participants has yielded implications that could prove advantageous for individuals involved in developing cultural competency training. As facilitators approach their topics and sessions, a consideration of cultural humility would be valuable. Yeager (2013) defines cultural humility as "a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby the individual not only learns about another's culture, but one starts with an examination of her/his own beliefs and cultural identities." By consistently engaging in self-reflection, trainers have the ability to revisit approaches and learn from each session.

One strategy to enhance the perceived value of such training is to focus on offering diverse content options. Additionally, developers should carefully consider the support mechanisms provided during and after training. Research indicates that brief training sessions may not adequately address diversity issues (Khalid & Snyder, 2021); hence, incorporating post-training tools can significantly improve training effectiveness. Similar to law enforcement and educational sectors, developers of cultural competency training must tailor materials to suit the specific workplace environments of participants, ensuring relevance and applicability. Participants derive greater benefits from a variety of learning models (Harrison-Benard et al., 2020). Our study demonstrates that when cultural competency training programs include a multitude of options and support, individuals perceive the training positively. Specific recommendations for developers or facilitators of cultural competency training may include:

- Gathering information about participants' background, attitudes, beliefs, or prior experiences with diversity

- Identifying what topics or strategies professionals deem relevant to their everyday practice (possibly by conducting preliminary surveys)
- Providing elements of choice in topics, strategies, or activities
- Developing methods to differentiate for varying participant backgrounds and readiness
- Building in opportunities for practice and accountability

Future Research

Future research may consider expanding the study to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the perceptions, experiences and impacts of diversity training for law enforcement and educators. These insights can inform the development, modification and implementation of diversity training programs and policies in law enforcement and education sectors. There appears to be a discrepancy between participants' responses regarding the importance of training and their views on the effectiveness of DEI training, as well as the perceived value of the training to themselves compared to their colleagues. More than half of the participants perceived that cultural competency training was less effective for their colleagues despite indicating value for themselves. The discrepancy between participants' responses on the value of training, their views on DEI training effectiveness and the perceived value to their colleagues may be attributed to perceived relevance, personal bias, social desirability bias, individual goals and motivation or communication and understanding.

Participants may understand the importance of DEI training in theory but may not see the direct relevance in their personal development or daily work experience. This disconnect may have contributed to participants' varied responses. Participants may hold

personal biases that influenced their perception of the effectiveness of DEI training. Several participants reported that they were already knowledgeable about DEI issues or may not see the need for training, which may have impacted their responses. Participants may have provided responses that they believe are socially acceptable or they think the researchers or their organization wanted to hear. This perception could have contributed to inconsistent responses on the perceived value of the training. By delving into the factors below and conducting more research or surveys to gather additional insights from participants, organizations can enhance their understanding of the discrepancy and customize training programs to address the issue.

- Consider conducting a multi-case study; a multi-case study would delve deeper into why law enforcement and education environments have similar or different outcomes. A researcher may observe student and teacher interactions in a classroom or ride-along with police officers as they engage the community.
- Expand the study to include participant observations during the diversity training sessions, with a focus on the dynamics of training, participant engagement, and interactions in sessions.
- Consider a longitudinal approach to the study by following participants over an extended period of time in order to gain a long-term impact of diversity training on attitudes, behaviors, and organizational culture within law enforcement and education settings.
- Explore the intersectionality of identities within the participant groups by race, gender, age ability and how participants intersecting identities potentially influence their experience with diversity training.

- Consider how the organizational culture and policies of leadership impact the implementation and effectiveness of law enforcement and educational workplaces.
- Conduct a quantitative analysis of teacher application of DEI training as it relates to student outcomes (disciplinary incidents, academic achievement, etc.)
- Conduct a quantitative analysis concerning the relationship between cultural competency training for law enforcement officials and the level of cultural disparities in officer interactions or use of force.
- Explore the impact of DEI training from the perspective of various stakeholders, such as community members and students.

Conclusion

> *"We all have a sphere of influence. Each of us needs to find our own sources of courage so that we can begin to speak. There are many problems to address, and we cannot avoid them indefinitely. We cannot continue to be silent. We must begin to speak, knowing that words alone are insufficient. But I have seen that meaningful dialogue can lead to effective action. Change is possible."*—Beverly Daniel Tatum, Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?

These prescient words of Beverly Tatum are apt as we summarize our research. Professional development is a mandated requirement for many law enforcement and educational organizations. While participation may be mandatory, learning is not required. Due to watershed moments involving racial discrimination in America, the prevalence of cultural competence as a leading area of required training, especially concerning racial bias, has increased (Dong, 2021). This study sought to determine the perceived efficacy of cultural competency training for law enforcement officers and K-12

educators, with research conducted in a sprawling, Midwest metropolitan city. Our participants span both urban and suburban settings. Participants responded to questions regarding their perceptions before, during and after training and whether they had applied information gleaned from training sessions. Ultimately, participants were asked to describe training as generally positive or negative and effective or ineffective and to discuss elements of their sessions which contributed to their overall opinion of the training's influence.

Our literature review informed the powerful influence of identity and socialization (Adams, 2023). In addition, theories related to motivation and adult learning offered a framework explaining which aspects of training may move participants to engage or disengage (Knowles, 1970; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Finally, the theory of planned behavior added a layer of insight concerning how the participants' movement toward a particular objective might be influenced by social norms and power dynamics which exist in each workplace (Ajzen, 1985). Despite a plethora of frameworks that may contribute to an understanding regarding the effectiveness of training and the likelihood it may be embraced, the literature was lacking in phenomenological research which might inform decision makers' approach to professional development in the area of cultural competency.

Our study found that educators and law enforcement officers largely considered cultural competency itself to be highly relevant in their profession. Participants broadly recognized the power of socialization in shaping one's attitudes and behaviors but also described cultural competency training as a catalyst for personal growth and change. Despite a general characterization of their experiences as positive and multiple anecdotes

surrounding specific applications of content from training, all participants noted experiences where they felt training had been ineffective for themselves or others. This was particularly true concerning the concept of cultural competency. Our participants highlighted the need to shift the view of cultural competence from one of finite characteristics attributed to specific identities to one that prioritizes a humble approach when encountering values, norms and cultures different from one's own. These sentiments represent a shift from cultural competence to cultural humility (Lekas et al., 2020).

This study adds to a body of literature concerning the influence of training aimed at cultural competency and informs tangible changes decision-makers can make to meet the learning needs of professionals and thus increase positive experiences with training in these two public sectors. Our research shows that encompassing the needs for choice and autonomy within adult learning, allowing for the reflection on one's socialization and identity, and partnering with high quality instructors who provide on-going support, differentiation and accountability could be impactful in participants' response to cultural competency training and thus, likely improve the cultural competence of participants and their organizations.

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APPENDIX A

Participant Interview

Alright, so, [participant] do I have permission to record? This interview with you today.

Yes.

Right on. Thank you. Well, I appreciate you for agreeing to meet with me today. My name is Tabari Coleman. I'm a doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri St. Louis. And we are interested in learning about the experience that people are having with diversity training. And so, the study is voluntary. So, at any time you can opt out or if I ask a question that you don't wanna answer, you can skip that question. I am recording this. The transcript of the interview can be sent to you for you to review, within like a week, and at any point you can add further information or ask me to edit things that you. May look back on and say, oh, I don't want that in there for whatever reason, but I just want to make sure that you know. Again, none of your personal information is going to be used in the study. Myself and 5 other colleagues, actually 4 other colleagues. Are capturing information for our dissertation. So, I need to also go over with you. The informed consent that I sent you. Just saying that you agree for me to be. Recording this and what this information is gonna be used for

Okay.

Alright, perfect. Share a little bit about your background with me. Tell me a little bit about you, Any information about yourself you can tell me about you personally and professionally. How long you been teaching, what you teach, where you're at, how long you've been there.

As far back as you what? How far back do you want me to go?

It's up to you.

Ok, well I grew up in [Midwest, suburban Illinois area]. With my mom, dad, brother, sister, kind of typical Not middle class, probably a little below middle-class family, but we always, you know, had what we needed. I went to public school. And then, I lived in [Southern state] for a little while for My high school years because my dad got a job down there. But then we moved back after I graduated. I grew up in a very religious household, kind of sheltered, well pretty sheltered And if someone were to tell me back then you're gonna work in East St. Louis someday, I'd be like, you're crazy because that was always kind of reiterated as a place of danger. In my household, you know the people that we all associated with also thought it was a dangerous place. In my environment we were [religious] and then we started going to Church in [Midwest, rural area in Illinois] and I actually started working there in early…

My parents moved to [West Coast] about 8 years ago. And then I graduated from [University] in 20xx with a [Bachelors degree]. I don't have a teaching certificate, but

since it's a charter school through [university], I saw the ad that they needed teachers and I'd always wanted to be an art teacher.

I really hated school and so I didn't want to go back to get that certification and when this opportunity just showed itself, I wasn't really even looking for anything, but I did want to get out of ministry because it was not good. But then this just kind of fell in my lap and I was so thankful it did because I love it. So, I've been at the [high school] for I think this is my [number] year. [redacted]

Anyway, you can probably tell by the way I described my family growing up that I'm probably your typical White middle-class American who has grown up in an environment where people that are different are not talked highly about.

And I really tried to get away from that. My parents, my dad especially, is very conservative. And They are not hateful people, but they're what you would say are… ignorant people. With definitely some bias and prejudice and, it's definitely been work on my part to get out of that head space.

So. Yeah, and I'm married.

Awesome.

I have a daughter. [redacted] She was in private school for many years, but for many reasons, diversity being a very big factor, we wanted her to start in public school.

Yeah. Well, thank you for that. So, I want to talk to you a little bit about some of the diversity trainings that you might have participated in. How many would you say that you've attended during your tenure as an educator.

Yeah. I really can only think of one or two specifically. And it was kind of, well my memory… I only recall bits and pieces of it. Of course, we've been in lots of trainings. But there's only one in particular that I can really remember was like specifically for diversity and inclusion.

Just one?

Yeah, I think.

Okay. And were these, required sessions or ones that you were able to choose Whether or not you would participate it?

It was required.

Can you tell me a little bit about the purpose of that training? What do you think the employer hoped that you all might get out of the session?

From what I remember, I think it was trying to help us realize our biases. if I'm remembering correctly. That was basically what I took away from it, it was trying to recognize what kind of biases you have and how that can help you better understand your students and where they're coming from.

Yeah, that makes sense. Are you familiar with the term cultural competency?

Okay. So, the way I would describe cultural competency is sort of the ability to learn about people from different cultures, different backgrounds and being able to apply that learning in the work environment. Right, so having a certain level of awareness. Right? It's the term competency I struggle with because I don't think that we can be culturally competent. Right, I think, cultures continue to evolve, but that is a term that's often used.

Can you tell me anything about the speaker, the facilitator and instructor? What did you think about their approach in that training?

You know, I don't remember the specific instructor. I can't picture who it was. I remember we broke out into groups, and We had to speak about our own like personal background About what we think our own biases are. And we talked about like the difference in prejudice, racism and bias and like the differences in some of those words. I struggle with remembering specific words, but you always kind of remember the feeling you have when you come away from something. And in my opinion, I hate to say this, but It’s kind of the way that things were brought across, it almost sounded accusatory.

Kind of like. I mean, I can't help the way I was brought up. I can't help the environment. I was brought up in… that wasn't really my choice. But I feel like the way that the information was given, the way it made me feel was like I'm a bad person and why did I let that happen?

I didn't feel like there was a lot of empathy or sympathy for me not knowing. More of like a why why, why couldn't you know or why didn't you educate yourself? Like I can't really educate myself on something I don't know exists. Until I do.

Which I do now. So that's why I do what I do. But it kind of came across in an accusatory sort of way towards you know particular people.

Yeah, thank you, So, you said earlier that this was one session that you remember in particular. Do you know if this was a part of a series of training or just a single training that was offered to you all.

I feel like it was a single training. Like I can remember the space that we were in, and I can remember who was in my group. But I don't remember who the instructor was. And it was one of those half days where we, you know, we ate lunch and then we had training.

And I feel like there were 2 people, maybe they came from the [university], but I don't remember who they were.

OK, thank you. You mentioned a little bit about some of the activities or at least the way the activities made you feel. Can you think of any other activities that you all engaged in during that process?

No, I don't remember. I just remember the group activity because it made me really nervous because I was in a group with my director and there were 2 other teachers from the charter school. And so, I think I had just started maybe the year or 2 before and so I was still really nervous like talking to people because I don't want to be perceived in a certain way you know so you kind of overcompensate and try to say what people want you to hear.

So, I just remember being really nervous like, oh my gosh, what were people gonna think of me? Because the director was in the group, I just tried to be, you know, honest and because we were supposed to talk about how we were brought up. Or like if we had remembered people telling stories about their family and what their family thinks about. Diversity and if they're prejudice or if they have bias and so I just kind of talk to all my parents and you know how I was brought up.

And I don't know, I don't remember really getting any feedback on that, it was just really uncomfortable. And I know it's okay to be uncomfortable. You gotta have uncomfortable conversations, but that's just, that's how I was feeling just probably because I hadn't really been a part of anything like that yet. And that was my first well first and only really one.

I appreciate that. So, you mentioned being nervous. Would you say that that impacted your level of participation and engagement?

Were you quieter than you normally are? Were you more outspoken?

Probably quieter. No one wants to admit it. Kind of where they came from if it's not something they're proud of, especially in front of people that could take it the wrong way if I say it the wrong way. I tend to say things sometimes without thinking and I didn't want to mess it up. Yeah, it was a little nerve racking to say certain things out loud, which was probably a good thing to start being uncomfortable with having those sorts of conversations.

Maybe it could have been, you know, eased in there just a little bit more though, instead of like, oh groups let's talk about our lives and your messed up past right away.

Yeah, there. Did you feel like you were offered a choice about the content or activities or was it that everybody basically had to do the same thing that you didn't have an option about what you were doing or not doing.

No, there wasn't an option. It was just here's what we're doing. Break up in the groups, talk about this.

That was definitely just, well we all did the same thing.

Yeah. Did you feel like the training was interesting or that it held new information with you for you and if so in what ways.

I'm trying to remember.

Okay.

I don't know if it was this training or not, but. Maybe it was being in the environment I'm in now and talking about your past and your biases and I mean it could have been with this training. It definitely has changed my perspective on the world.

But that might just be more the environment I'm in now instead of that training specifically. Because they all start to run together after a while.

But it was interesting to hear other people's perspectives on, you know, growing up and what maybe their parents thought about certain people. And I remember one coworker, he has a Caucasian wife, he's African American and you know, he talked about how she's like integrated with his family and what his family thinks about her, and it was interesting to hear everybody's perspective.

Yeah. How did this experience fit with your background and personality?

I'm definitely not one to talk in public, so that was not fun. I do speak out more now after becoming a teacher has really helped me start, you know, speaking more.

But those kinds of trainings are definitely good for me. It helps point out certain things that I might have in my head from, you know, years and years and years of, just what's been said to me, trying to look at things differently. So, I think for someone of my background, those sorts of trainings are definitely important and necessary.

How would you say that diversity, equity and inclusion has had an impact on your thinking, your behavior, or your professional practices?

The impact on my thinking is. I mean, I think completely differently than I used to be. My parents will, my dad specifically, will still make remarks about a particular person if they're driving erratically or they got pulled over by the police and it was someone of a specific race, so make little comments that are inappropriate and you know, a long time ago, I never would have thought about anything like, okay, whatever, but now it's like. That's awful. Like why would you say that? Like it helped me to recognize some of those ignorant statements that's what's poisoning society.

So, it's definitely changed the way I think. And as human beings it's different.

Sorry, I don't know how to put that into words. This is just open my eyes to realize there's other people that really think this way. And they might not realize. What they're doing is harmful.

Like there's other people like me who didn't realize the way that they think was bad.

They're not a bad person. They've just been raised in an environment that puts a value on someone because of the way they look or their culture. And I know that that's wrong now. And it is definitely helped me think in a different way.

And I don't know if that's that specific training or not, but you know over the years of just working where I do and seeing so many good people.

I love the city that I'm working in. It has helped me. to think differently.

Yeah.

Sorry I'm getting emotional. Because the people I work with are super, for the students I work with.

They just… they mean so much to me and I can't ever imagine anyone thinking a certain way about them.

So definitely over the years, whether that training or a different one. Has helped me realize some things the ways that I thought, the way my family thinks, it's just completely untrue and it makes me sad.

Yeah, I appreciate that and the vulnerability. You know, when, we go through, when participants go through diversity training, sometimes there's specific tools or strategies that they offer, right, that might help people professionally or in their personal lives.

Can you think about whether or not there were any tools that you. You took away. Whether they were effective or ineffective.

Would you recommend any of those tools to others?

Oh gosh.

I can't think of anything specifically that, that I took away. I did read your questions beforehand and I was trying to think about this.

It's okay.

So, [participant]there is not a right or wrong answer. Right, the beauty of doing the research is that we just take what we take from what people share. So, you know, the expectation isn't that everybody is gonna walk away with something.

And when you don't, then that's just something that we'd note, like well that wasn't as effective or there wasn't specific tools.

And that's okay, right?

Yeah, I definitely I cannot think of anything, and I guess that that means something that I can't think of anything specific to walk away with.

Yeah.

Okay.

Yeah, fair. Have you experienced any counterproductive or negative information? Or activities you started to share a little bit about that earlier when you were discussing you know, almost like making people feel bad.

Would you, do you think about that as potentially counterproductive? The way that they approach the training.

I think so. Maybe, and I don't. Sorry, it's hard to, I don't know how to explain this. And I don't know, I'm not trying to say anyone thinks this way, but. I would just hope that they would understand that there are people. Out there that are in this training that may have never heard this before and I wouldn't want anyone to ever feel like they're a bad person for thinking specific ways that they don't know are wrong. And being accusatory towards that person is only going to make them fight back more. And maybe coming with more of a loving approach of education and not crucifixion.

Thank you. Can you think about ways you might have observed the training to be Effective or ineffective for your colleagues?

And when you said you don't remember it specifically for you, but did you observe like, oh, You know, my colleagues were more engaged or less engaged or applying any of those things to their personal or professional lives?

I feel like everyone was engaged. I wouldn't know. How everyone else was affected though.

Would you say in general that your experiences with the DEI professional development were positive or negative or both.

I think both positive and negative.

Because if it was something truly profound, I think I would have taken something away from that. Then be able to remember maybe a little bit more.

But then the feeling of course I walked away with was not super positive, but at the same time I do believe I learned something and it kind of started those uncomfortable conversations in my head.

Do you have any recommendations or suggestions or suggestions? That might improve the trainings you've experienced.

Hmm. Maybe giving people more of a choice if they would like to share. Everybody kinda comes out with it comes to it on their own time, especially someone like me, it takes me, it just takes me a little while to process things, the way that I learn, the way that I talk, if I'm given, you know, a prompt or something on the spot and I have to tell people about my life that is incredibly nerve racking. So, I would say give people a choice whether they want to speak or not.

Because it could be. I mean, it could be detrimental to some people, especially if they have issues, they don't wanna speak about right now that could affect their mental health.

So that would be my only suggestion, I think.

Is there anything else you'd like to share regarding your experiences with? DEI or diversity training.

Just that I think it's a great thing just as long as it's structured in the in the right way and structured for everybody and not seeming like it's targeting certain people or coming in a negative light and just purely as educational in a loving way.

Thank you. I started the closed captions. Probably 60 seconds after you started, I forgot to click it.

So, I just want to have it noted. Did you give permission for me to record this conversation?

Yes.

Thank you. Well, I'm gonna stop the recording now.

APPENDIX B: Interview Protocol

Semi-structured Interview
(approximately 60-90 minutes in length)

Communication prior to interview
Dear Participant,
Thank you for scheduling an interview with our researchers! Our interview will focus largely on your experience with diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings and how they may have shaped your practice. We'll be asking questions about the structure and content of the training, as well as your opinions of the sessions. Feel free to jot down any thoughts you feel are important in preparation for our meeting and bring them with you. As a reminder, there are no right or wrong answers during our interview. We are simply interested in your opinion and experience.
Thank you,
Communicating Researcher's Name

Beginning Interview Checklist:

- Thank the participant for agreeing to meet.
- Introduce yourself as the interviewer, as well as our topic: "We are interested in learning about experiences people are having in diversity training."
- Remind participant that study is voluntary, and they can opt out (or skip questions) at any point.
- Ask for permission to record. If given, press RECORD to cloud and confirm consent again while recording.
- Inform participant that a transcription of the interview will be sent for their review within a few weeks. At that point, they are welcome to add further comments or make other edits as they see fit.
- Ask if there are any questions before beginning the interview.

Introduction: Identity, self-awareness, and reflection (10-15 minutes)

- Do you want to start by sharing a bit of background information on yourself?
- Personally (family/ hobbies, etc.) but particularly professionally (length of service, specific role)

Questions concerning Cultural Competency Training (30-40 minutes)

- Now I'd like to talk about the diversity sessions you've participated in.
    - How many would you say you've attended?
    - Were some or all of these sessions required, or did you choose to attend on your own?
    - Can you tell me a little bit about the purpose of these trainings? What do you think your employer hoped for folks to get out of the sessions?
    - What does cultural competency mean to you in your profession?
- Tell me about your (speaker, facilitator, or instructor). What did you think of them or their approach?
- Can you describe how your session was structured?
    - Was it in person/online?
    - Was this a single training or a series of sessions? Could it be described as a workshop?
    - Can you describe any interaction/discussion?
    - What kind of activities, if any, did you engage in?

- Can you describe some of the content, discussions, or activities in these sessions that stood out to you?
    - Tell me about your level of participation/engagement in the training?
    - Did you feel you were offered choices about content or activities during the session?
    - Did you feel like the training was interesting or held new information for you? In what ways?
    - How did the trainings apply to you personally? Did you find them relevant to your personal or professional life? How so?
- How did this experience fit with your background and personality?
- Has DEI or cultural competency training had an impact on your thinking, behavior, or professional practices?
- Has cultural diversity training impacted your interactions with colleagues or how you serve the public?
- Would you say you have applied any specific tools or strategies from a training session in your personal life or professional practice? Please share more about this. Which tools? Have you found them effective or ineffective? Would you recommend them to others?
- Have you experienced any counterproductive, negative information or activities in training? If so, please explain.
    - In what ways have you observed training be effective or ineffective for your colleagues?
- In general, would you say your experience in cultural competency training or professional development has been positive or negative? What components of the training or your prior experience do you feel contribute to your opinion?
- Do you have recommendations or suggestions that may improve the trainings you have experienced?

-What do you wish trainers knew?

- Is there anything else you would like to share?

Concluding Interview Checklist

- End recording.
- Thank participant for their time.
- Provide follow up contact information if they have any questions.
- End session.

Follow Up Checklist:

- Review Transcript and edit errors.
- Send a cleaned transcript to participant with invitation for additional comments/ clarifications.
- Review interview/ brainstorm themes for codes.
- Share interview recording and transcript and collaborate with the team concerning codes.
- Complete coding of the interview using team-generated codes.

APPENDIX C: Informed Consent

University of Missouri–St. Louis
Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities
Project Title: Participation Mandatory, Learning Not Required: A Phenomenological Study of Diversity Training in Education and Law Enforcement
Principal Investigators: Tabari Coleman, Jamie Martin, Toni Fall, Crystal Isom, and Jennifer Niebrzydoski
Department Name: Department of Education Sciences and Professional Programs
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Thomasina Hassler
IRB Project Number: 2098754

1. You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to identify what aspects of diversity, equity and inclusion trainings that you have attended, shaped your practice or profession.
2. Your participation will involve one interview conducted over Zoom and will be recorded in order to be transcribed at a later date. The interview will take approximately 1.5 hours.
3. This study will be confidential and personal identifying information will not be published in the research. We will use pseudonyms to address the participants to ensure the protection of their identities.
4. This study is confidential. There is a loss of confidentiality risk associated with this research. This will be minimized by data being stored in confidential password-protected files labeled with numbers and non-identifiable information. All data collected and videos taken will be destroyed at the conclusion of this research study.
5. There are no direct benefits for participating in this study.
6. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate in this research study or
withdraw at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide to withdraw from
this study.
7. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not
be revealed in any publication that may result from this study. In rare instances, a researcher's study may undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for Human Research Protection) that would lead to disclosure of your data as well as any other information collected by the researcher.
8. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the investigator [redacted] or the Faculty Advisor, Thomasina Hassler [redacted]. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the University of Missouri-St. Louis Office of Research Compliance, at [redacted] or irb@umsl.edu.

APPENDIX C: IRB Approval

December 13, 2023

Principal Investigator: Jamie Martin
Department: Center for Teaching & Learning

Your IRB Application to project entitled Participation Mandatory, Learning Not Required: A Phenomenological Study of Diversity Training in Education and Law Enforcement was reviewed and approved by the UMSL Institutional Review Board according to the terms and conditions described below:

IRB Project Number	2098754
IRB Review Number	399014
Initial Application Approval Date	December 13, 2023
IRB Expiration Date	December 13, 2024
Level of Review	Exempt
Project Status	Active - Exempt
Exempt Categories (Revised Common Rule)	45 CFR 46.104d(2)(ii)
Risk Level	Minimal Risk
Approved Documents	informed_consent.pdf interview_protocol_questions.pdf study_recruitment_messages_1.pdf

The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects and conduct of this study. The PI must comply with the following conditions of the approval:

1. Enrollment and study related procedures must remain in compliance with the University of Missouri regulations related to interaction with human participants at https://www.umsystem.edu/ums/rules/collected_rules/research/ch410/410.010_research_involving_humans_in_experiments.
2. No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date.
3. All changes must be IRB approved prior to implementation utilizing the Exempt Amendment Form.
4. The Annual Exempt Form must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval at least 30 days prior to the project expiration date to keep the study active or to close it.
5. Maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date.

If you are offering subject payments and would like more information about research participant payments, please click here to view the UM Policy: https://www.umsystem.edu/ums/policies/finance/payments_to_research_study_participants