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Teacher Perceptions of Ability in Implementing a Culturally Responsive Educational

Practice for Culturally Linguistically Diverse Students with Dis/Abilities

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ABSTRACT

All children in the United States have the right to an equitable education, regardless of gender, religion, class, race, culture, language, or dis/ability. The literature demonstrates that financial, educational, and legal outcomes are disproportionately negative for those students falling outside of white able-bodied norms and that educational institutions often perpetuate exclusive policies and practices that disproportionately impact culturally linguistically diverse students with dis/abilities. A critical examination of the sociopolitical and contextual factors that fortify the barriers faced by marginalized groups highlights the need for a culturally responsive approach to educating students with multidimensional identities.

To serve the needs resulting from the shifting demographics of today's classroom, educators are tasked with implementing educational practices that are responsive to the unique constellation of diverse learners in their classrooms. Unfortunately, the practice of cultural responsivity is not actualized by simply following a prescribed list of strategies or implementing a specific curriculum, rather, implementation is predicated on building a critical consciousness willing to examine the cultural discord and power differential reproduced and maintained by educational and societal institutions.

This study employs the theoretical framework of Dis/Ability Critical Race Studies (DisCrit) to examine how teachers perceive their ability to implement culturally responsive educational practices (CREP) for their Culturally Linguistically Diverse (CLD) students with dis/abilities, (e.g. Emotional Disturbances, Intellectual Disabilities, and Learning Disabilities). The focus of this research is not only the experiences that inform teachers' perceptions of preparedness to implement CREP and the actions taken

by teachers to implement CREP in their classrooms, but also on the described understandings and meanings of dis/ability, race, culture and language as examined through DisCrit theory. Using qualitative research methods, interviews of twelve teachers of culturally linguistically diverse students with dis/abilities were conducted and analyzed, producing a total of eleven themes addressing the influence of life experiences, formal educational and training experiences, created meanings and understanding, and actions taken toward implementing a culturally responsive educational practice for their culturally linguistically diverse students with dis/abilities.

The research results found that teachers of CLD students with dis/Abilities described their understandings of the impact of *race* and di*s/ability* labels as negative and identified a range of barriers to implementing a culturally responsive practice. Teachers respond to those barriers by engaging in self-reflection, establishing open communication, building relationships, providing instruction toward empowerment, expressing a desire for training related to multidimensionality, and taking actions toward equitable educational practices. The analysis of themes revealed that teachers did describe their perceptions of their ability to implement CREP as largely positive and impactful and recognized the significance of implementing a culturally responsive educational practice. Furthermore, teachers responded with actions taken toward building an optimal learning environment, supported by open communication, strong relationships, and instruction toward empowerment.

Implications for future research include using qualitative methods to explore perceptions of involvement and inclusion of students and families in classrooms that

strive to be culturally responsive. Potential training topics are discussed as well as

opportunities to expand conversation around difficult topics such as race and dis/ability.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

All children in the United States have the right to an equitable education, regardless of gender, religion, class, race, culture, language, or dis/ability. The actualization of this right has yet to become a reality for all students, particularly for those of culturally linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds identified as having a dis/ability (Blanchett, et al., 2005; Cramer, 2015; Losen & Orfield, 2002; Sullivan & Artiles, 2011; Waitoller, Artiles, Cheney, 2010). CLD students with dis/abilities encounter many obstacles in their paths; financial, educational, and legal outcomes are disproportionately negative (Artiles, Trent, & Palmer, 2004; NCES, 2011; USDOJ, 2015) and educational institutions are marred with historical and current exclusionary policies and practices for this population (Klingner et al., 2005; Losen & Orfield, 2002; NCES, 2015). A critical lens on the socio political and contextual factors that fortify these barriers focuses on the need for a culturally responsive approach to educating students with multidimensional identities (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012; Solorzano and Bernal, 2001).

Critical Race Theory in Education has identified systemic oppressions operating in the following ways: (a) the normalization of racism that is embedded in our cultural consciousness and is a factor in the inequities experienced in schools (Crenshaw, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn & Dixson, 2013), (b) cultural, psychic and physical systems not only ensure white privilege and whiteness as property, but almost effortlessly perpetuate it (Bell, 1987; Gillborn, 2005; Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1998) and (c) D. Bell's (1980) theory of interest convergence which states that "racial equality and equity for people of color will be pursued and advanced

[only] when they converge with the interests, needs, expectations, benefits, and ideologies of White people" (Milner, Pearman, & McGee, 2013).   Acknowledging the need to improve outcomes for all students, some schools have offered professional development to redress the inequities created by systemic oppressions by supporting implementation of culturally responsive practices. Teachers are charged with implementing these culturally responsive educational practices (CREP) in order to meet the diverse learning needs in their classrooms.

Context for this Study

Imagine an excited graduate from a middle-class family, accepting her first teaching position in a high-poverty area where there are many teaching positions available due to high staff turn-over. She reads the list of enrolled students and wonders how to pronounce some of the names. She attends Parent Night but meets only a few of the parents of her students. She begins the year full of enthusiasm and wonders why her attitude isn't reflected back in the faces of her students, who regard her with reservation. Many students are performing years below grade level. She struggles with classroom management and wonders how she can better connect with her students and families. For this teacher, building a culturally relevant teaching practice is vital in her efforts to connect to students and families, increase student investment in classroom activities, and empower students to examine their positionality in their own education.

Classroom Composition

The reality of today's public classrooms is that teachers will teach students with identities that differ from their own. The majority of regular and special educators are younger, monolingual, White middle-class females. During the 2011-12 school year,

approximately 83% of the teaching force identified as White, 76% of public-school teachers identified as female, and 44% fell under the age of 40. Fifty six percent of those teachers have a master's degree or higher (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Student demographics during the same period reflected that 50% of students identified as White, 25% of students met criteria for free or reduced lunch, 13% of students had a dis/ability label, and between 9% and 16% of students were English Language Learners (ELL), depending on the size of the city (NCSE, 2015). Hence, the current composition of the education workforce fails to reflect the cultural and ethnic composition and frequently, the socio-economic composition of the majority of students.

Diverse learners.

The current cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic composition of student populations are experiencing a shift away from traditional distributions. Between fall 2003 and fall 2013, the number of White students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools decreased from 59 to 50 percent, Hispanic student enrollment increased from 19 to 25 percent (NCES, 2015), Black student enrollment decreased from 17 to 16 percent, while the number of American Indian/Alaska Native students enrolled remained around 1 percent, and English Language Learner (ELL) students increased to over nine percent of the total student population (NCES, 2015). The transformation from traditional demographics is projected to continue. By 2025, Hispanics are projected to account for 29% of total enrollment, Asian/Pacific students are projected to account for 6% of total enrollment, and Black students will comprise 15% (NCES, 2015). Unfortunately, the shifting demographics of today's classrooms have been regarded as a problem rather than an asset, as evidenced by the disproportionate exclusion of

marginalized students from their peers, resulting in educational inequities in the education system.

In 2013–14, the number of children and youth ages 3–21 receiving special education services was 6.5 million, or about 13 percent of all public-school students (NCES, 2015).   The percentage of students served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was highest for American Indian/Alaska Native students (17 percent), followed by Black students (15 percent), White students (13 percent), students of Two or more races (12 percent), Hispanic students (12 percent), Pacific Islander students (11 percent), and Asian students (6 percent) (NCES, 2015).   The raw data may not immediately convey the disproportionality of representation of diverse students receiving special education services. For example, the percentage of Asians receiving special education services is less than half of that of the general population. American Indian/Alaska Native children receive special education labels and services at twice the rate of the general student population (NCES, 2015). The disproportionate representation of CLD students has been a cause of concern for educators (Klingner, et al., 2005), particularly given the lowered outcomes for those students following graduation (NCES, 2011).

Postsecondary outcomes

Outcomes for CLD students with dis/abilities are dismal and a cause for concern. CLD students often demonstrate lower academic progress resulting in referrals for special education services and higher dropout rates than normative peers (Artiles, et al., 2004). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, fifty-five percent of young adults with dis/abilities report having continued on to postsecondary school

since leaving high school, as compared to 62 percent of non-disabled peers (NCES,

2011). CLD students with dis/abilities are less likely to be engaged in employment,

postsecondary education, or job training after leaving high school, less likely to be living

independently or with roommates, and less likely to have achieved financial

independence, as measured by having a credit card or bank account (NCES, 2011). CLD

students with dis/abilities also experience an increased possibility of incarceration,

evidenced by prisoners reporting having at least one dis/ability at rates three times higher

than that of the general population (USDOJ, 2015). Viewed collectively, these

educational, employment, financial, and legal outcomes signal a need to explore the

conditions and factors that may contribute to diminished postsecondary outcomes for

CLD students with dis/abilities.

Operational Definitions & Acronyms

An examination of the composition of today's classrooms and the outcomes for

CLD students with dis/abilities is a starting point for an exploration of issues related to

equitable access to education. Before addressing the complex factors that influence

students and educators in public schools, terms central to this study are defined in order

to aid the reader in understanding the context in which they are used throughout this

study.

Culturally and/or Linguistically Diverse (CLD) Students with Dis/abilities- The
intersectionality of Culturally Linguistically Diverse Students with Dis/Abilities is
intentionally considered throughout this study. For the purpose of clarity, a definition of
each term in isolation is included here, leading into the definition of this term in its
entirety.

- **Culture** is a term taken from Brown-Jeffy & Cooper (2011) who noted that
  people see themselves through lenses of language, behavioral expressions,
  interpretations of actions, and societal expectations, which are all born and
  implemented through culture. Therefore, "Culture includes ethnicity and race, as

well as gender, class, language, region, religion, exceptionality and other diversities that help to define individuals as multicultural beings and shape a person's multicultural identities" (p. 72).

- **Diversity** is a term generally used to refer to variance from normative standards.

- **Culturally diverse students** is used to refer to those students whose culture varies from that of the normative standards (typically white, middle-class, Christian, non-dis/abled, and English-speaking).

- **Linguistically diverse students** will be used to refer to "students whose first language is either a language other than English or a language other than the middle class, mainstream English used in schools" (Perez, 1998, p. 5). Though *linguistic diversity* is encompassed in the working definition of *cultural diversity,* the literature uses the term CLD, and the author has chosen to use terminology consistent with the contemporary literature.

- **CLD students with dis/Abilities** are defined as having a culturally and/or linguistically diverse identity in addition to qualifying for an educational diagnosis of a high-incidence dis/ability such as a Specific Learning Disability (LD), Intellectual Disability (ID), and/or an Emotional Disturbance (ED) or Behavioral Disorder (BD) addressed by an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Culturally Responsive Educational Practice (CREP)- A system of instruction and educational practice that asks of educators (a) the constant examination of one's own beliefs, values, and behaviors, that hinder or facilitate the process of students learning; (b) the linking of material with thematic, cross-disciplinary units to provide constructive opportunities for integrating cross-cultural materials into curriculum and instruction; (c) the incorporation of students' cultural orientations and language/dialect to design culturally and linguistically relevant classroom environments; and (d) the assessment and modification of instruction to meet the needs of students' diverse learning styles (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001).

Dis/Ability: For the purpose of this study, the term dis/ability refers to the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organization which takes no or little account of people who have [impairments] and thus excludes them from the mainstream of social activities (UPIAS 1976: 14) The term "dis/ability" rather than "disability" has been intentionally selected, in accordance with the terminology of DisCrit (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012) in order to "disrupt the association that the inability to perform specific tasks to a specified degree is associated with being 'unable' to perform those tasks altogether (such as in the case of learning) or to participate fully in society" (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012). This paper uses the form "dis/Ability" to further disrupt the focus on an inability to perform specific tasks and to invite the reader to reframe thinking around ability and defining individuals by a single attribute. Further modification of the word has been implemented. The specific categories of educational dis/ability labels that are the focus of this study include Specific Learning Disabilities

(LD), Intellectual Disability (ID)- formerly categorized as Mentally Retarded (MR), and/or Emotional Disturbance (ED) or Behavioral Disorder (BD).

Disproportionality- Disproportionality is defined as the "overrepresentation" and "underrepresentation" of a particular population or demographic group relative to the presence of this group in the overall population (Herzik, 2015). For the purpose of this study, the term is used to focus on the disproportionately high number of CLD students labeled as having a dis/ability in the high-incidence categories of Intellectual Disability (ID)- formerly categorized as Mentally Retarded (MR), Emotionally Disturbed (ED)/ Behavior Disordered (BD), and Learning Disabled (LD) as compared to white peers (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higareda, 2005). These dis/abilities are identified by school personnel, rather than medical professionals, and so great is the concern surrounding the misidentification and over-representation and, to a lesser extent, under-representation, that disproportionality has been the subject of study by two National Research Councils (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Heller, Hotlzman, & Messick, 1982).

Disability Critical Race Studies (DisCrit)*:* Developed by Annamma, Connor, & Ferri (2012), DisCrit combines Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Disability Studies (DS) in 7 proposed tenets. DisCrit is the chosen theoretical lens for this study because it provides a framework for examining the intersection of dis/ability and race in Western culture.

Intersectionality- "Intersectionality examines how socially and culturally constructed identity categories interact to produce discrimination on multiple, and often simultaneous levels" (Young, 2016).

Multidimensional Identities- For the purpose of this study, multidimensional identity (Solorzano and Bernal 2001) acknowledges the numerous ways that various aspects of identity intersect, rather than singular notions of identity, such as race, dis/ability, social class, or gender (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012).

Oppressions: Oppression is an issue of subordinate and dominant relationships that marginalizes one social group for the social, economic, and political benefit of the more powerful social group. "Social oppression is a concept that describes a relationship between groups or categories of between groups or categories of people in which a dominant group benefits from the systematic abuse, exploitation, and injustice directed toward a subordinate group. All members of dominant and subordinate categories participate in social oppression regardless of their individual attitudes or behavior. Social oppression becomes institutionalized when its enforcement is so of social life that it is not easily identified as oppression and does not require conscious prejudice or overt acts of discrimination" (Johnson, 2000). "We cannot eliminate this structural oppression by getting rid of the rulers or by making some new laws, because oppressions are systematically reproduced in the major economic, political, and cultural institutions. While specific privileged groups are the beneficiaries of the oppression of other groups, and thus have an interest in the continuation of the status quo, they do not typically understand themselves to be agents of oppression" (Deutsch, 2006).

In addition to the inclusion of the Operational Definitions in the first chapter, a Table of Acronyms has been created to aid the reader in referencing educational terms (Table 1.1).

Equitable Access to Education

With an understanding of the terminology used in this study, we are able to proceed with an exploration of two of the issues facing CLD students with dis/abilities in the pursuit of equitable access to education: disproportionality and exclusion.

Disproportionality

Segregation of students who do not fit the normative profile of able-bodied and White continues to be an embarrassing practice for schools throughout the U.S. Though the quest of special education policy is to give dis/abled students greater educational opportunity, policy has more often served to segregate CLD students with dis/abilities in restrictive settings (Losen & Orfield, 2002), away from their non-dis/abled white peers (Klingner et al., 2005). If a greater or fewer number of students are identified as dis/abled and receiving special education services than their proportional rate within the general population, they are considered to be overrepresented or underrepresented in special education, a phenomenon termed "disproportionality." An example is Native American/Alaska Native and African American children are more likely to receive special education services than the general population while Hispanic children are less likely to receive special education services than the general population (NCES, 2015). The disproportionate number of CLD students in special education has been well documented and CLD students are particularly vulnerable to misidentification (Dunn,

Table 1.1

Acronyms

Acronym	Long Form
BD	Behavior Disorder
Brown v. BOE	Brown v. Board of Education
CLD	Culturally Linguistically Diverse
CREP	Culturally Responsive Educational Practice(s)
CRT	Critical Race Theory
DS	Disability Studies
ED	Emotional Disturbance
ELL	English Language Learner
FAPE	Free and Public Education
ID	Intellectual Disability
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Act
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
LD	Learning Disability
LEA	Local Educational Agency
LI	Language Impaired
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
PAL	Parent Partnership for Achieving Literacy
PD	Professional Development

1968; Donovan & Cross, 2002; Artiles, et al., 2005; Klinger et al., 2005).

Disproportionality is problematic in that students in special education may be denied

access to the general education curriculum, and if inappropriately identified and

improperly placed, may receive services that do not meet their needs (Klingner et al.,

2005), face lowered expectations, separation from peers, and poor educational and life

outcomes (Patton, 1998).

Diagnosis.

The quest for equitable access to education for CLD students first warrants a brief

look at the diagnosis of a dis/ability. CLD students are disproportionately represented in

three high-incidence categories of dis/ability- Intellectual Disability (ID), Emotional

Disturbance (ED), and Specific Learning Disabilities (LD) (Artiles, et al., 2004; Donovan

& Cross, 2002) and are not disproportionately represented in low-incidence categories

such as hearing impairment or visual impairment (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Klingner, et

al., 2005; Sullivan & Bal, 2013). So great is the concern surrounding the

disproportionate labeling of CLD students as dis/abled, the matter has been twice studied

by a National Research Council (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Heller, et al., 1982), both

concluding that considerations of race and ethnicity are significantly related to the

probability of an inappropriate identification of a dis/ability (NRC, 2002). These high-

incidence categories of dis/ability are not identified by medical professionals, but rather

by school personnel, who use discretion and professional judgement in determining who

is a good fit for educational diagnoses (Gottlieb, Alter, Gottlieb, & Wishner, 1994). The

confusion of dis/ability and diversity may result in the inappropriate diagnosis of children

of different racial, cultural, social, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds (Echevarria,

Powers, & Elliot, 2004; Gay, 2002; Patton, 1998). Testing practices are often reflective of

the dominant culture's belief systems and worldviews. The misunderstanding of

diversity and dis/ability may manifest in the form of discriminatory testing practices,

such as in the case of *Diana v. State Board of Education* (1970/1973), in which the

plaintiffs challenged the use of non-Native language IQ testing as a basis for the labeling

of Mexican American students as ID, resulting in the placement of those students in

special education classes designed to teach functional skills rather than academic

curriculum. Because student performance is often viewed through White middle-class

normative parameters of competence, it can be seen as deficient when it does not align to

the basic assumptions about race, belief systems, and worldviews (Patton, 1998).   For

example, Harry and Klingner's (2006) study found that, in a district manifesting an

overrepresentation of CLD students with dis/abilities, teacher and clinician bias, societal

expectations, and inappropriate policy played a significant role in the misidentification of

CLD students as having a dis/ability.

This story is about Edwin, an African-American boy who started school in a Head

Start program when he turned four.   By his 5th birthday, Edwin had received a Young

Child with a Developmental Delay (YCDD) diagnosis and received services from a

Speech Pathologist, a Special Education teacher, an Occupational Therapist, and a

Physical Therapist to address his needs. When Edwin turned six he was evaluated and

received a school age diagnosis of Emotionally Disturbed and a secondary diagnosis of

Language Impaired (LI- Sound System Disorder). Edwin's social emotional goals and

language goals were addressed in separate settings with a special education teacher and a

speech language pathologist.   Following an incident in the general education classroom,

Edwin was placed in a self-contained room where he continued to struggle both academically and with rules and routines despite the small group setting and individualized programming. Separated from his grade level peers and placed with students with a variety of needs and age levels, Edwin continued to resist following rules and routines and demonstrated difficulty with academic tasks. In 4th grade, Edwin was re-evaluated, and his primary diagnosis changed to Intellectually Disabled (ID). Language services were eliminated as were physical and occupational therapy. Academic supports and interventions were continued, as was his placement in a self-contained classroom and Edwin made minimal improvements toward his reading, math, and social emotional goals. During 5th grade, redistricting moved Edwin to a new elementary school and at the end of the year his transition team decided to place him in a functional classroom for middle school while acknowledging it was likely too socially restrictive. Sixth grade was a terrible year for Edwin at his new school, socially aware of the stigma of a self-contained room, Edwin was depressed, angry, and failing. In 7th grade Edwin was re-evaluated and again his primary diagnosis was changed, this time from ID to Specific Learning Disability (LD) in the areas of basic reading, reading comprehension, reading fluency, math calculation, and math reasoning. A secondary diagnosis of Language Impairment was reinstated. His IEP was rewritten and he was integrated for the first time since first grade into academic classes in the general education setting.

Edwin's story is included here not to be hyperbolic about the ambiguity of the diagnostic process, but to illustrate the relativism of diagnoses. The services, accommodations, and modifications provided under the four dis/ability labels are not

markedly different from each other. The marked differences occur in how Edwin is

perceived by peers, by teachers, by his family, and by himself. Artiles, Trent, & Palmer

(2004) point out that questions sourcing the historical, cultural, and structural antecedents

of the systemic link between poverty, race, and disability are often (p. 721) and Patton's

(1998) socio-political and historical perspective suggests that inequities in the referral,

assessment, and placement process, as well as the subjectivity of high-incidence

disabilities categories, are reflections of the oppression of minorities in the larger

society.   Inequities in assessment and placement have significant consequences for

students and continue to manifest as a disproportionate representation of CLD students in

special education (NCES, 2015; Parrish, 2000).

Deficit thinking models.

In a consideration of equitable access to education for CLD students with

dis/abilities, the role of deficit thinking models cannot be ignored.   Educators make

decisions based on their core beliefs and attitudes (Martin & Baldwin, 1992) and these

beliefs are a greater predictor of a person's behavior than professional knowledge

(Nelson & Guerra, 2014). These beliefs and attitudes are rooted in the traditional vantage

points of the dominant cultural group, evidenced through a continued disparity in the

quality of education for CLD students with dis/abilities. Theorists point out that schools

operate in a system in which race structures the operation and outcomes of schooling

(Ladson-Billings, 1999), and that repeated exposure to stereotypes and prejudices create

pairings of social groups and characteristics which reproduce racism and prejudiced

attitudes in educators and society (Marx & Pray, 2011) via automatic processing that is

typically unconscious (Peterson, 2016). Klinger et al. (2005) noted that "deeply held

assumptions about inferior intelligence among students of color represent one of the most enduring legacies of Western racism" and that the decontextualized IQ testing used to identify students as deficient are measures of "the cultural, social, and linguistic knowledge of society's mainstream" (pp.6-7). Categorical views of intelligence as a measurable construct influence how teachers perceive and respond to their students. Researchers have found that many teachers hold negative beliefs about their culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students and that those beliefs result in lowered expectations, blame, and deficit thinking models (Nelson & Guerra, 2014).

Deficit thinking models focus on the weaknesses of the individual, as opposed to considering analysis of the environmental or instructional practices of the school or educational institution (Artiles, Harry, Reschley, & Chinn, 2002; Young, 2016), attributing failures to the student and successes to the teacher. Chu (2011) further discusses the deficit model as one that "suggests CLD students who fail in school do so because of inherent internal, cultural, social, and linguistic factors, which deflect responsibility of education away from systemic factors such as school segregation, inequalities in school financing, educational tracking, increased use of standardized testing, shortage of highly qualified teachers, and curriculum inconsistencies" (p.6). Deficit thinking is characterized by the ethnocentric belief that dominant norms are inherently correct, and that children and families are to blame for students' low achievement and failure, thereby absolving educators of the need to modify their practices (Garcia & Guerra, 2004) because they believe that students and families are the source of the problem (Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Teachers may focus on ameliorating deficits transmitted through minority cultural values and families (Solorazano & Yosso,

2001) so completely that "they omit opportunities for content acquisition or opportunities for higher order thinking" (Young, 2016) and "fail to look beyond traditional solutions for real and meaningful change" (Garcia & Guerra, 2004).

Deficit thinking is not easy to overcome. Garcia and Guerra (2004) noted that "deficit thinking permeates society; schools and teachers mirror these beliefs" (p.154). These deficit perspectives are interwoven throughout the hegemonic structure of schools, mirroring "the missionaries of the past, practicing an unconscious form of cultural imperialism imposed indiscriminately on others" (Hall, 1976/1989, p. 206). Well-meaning teachers convey these unconscious deficit thinking models in the classroom, masked in cultural messaging, communicated through master narratives, unintentionally clouding teaching practices and solidifying institutionalized oppressions. Before relocating to upper New York state to work with the Mohawk Nation at Akwesasne and the non-Native Farmington school leadership in a collaborative action research study, Sharon V. Williams considered her own shortcomings as a non-Native teacher of Native students. Williams (2013) reflects on her prior experience as part of the non-Native teaching staff in New Mexico and the deficit paradigm that permeated the general and unspoken assumptions toward Native students' cultural way of knowing. She considered how her lack of cultural competency training negatively impacted her ability to meet the needs of her students and recognize the cultural strengths the students brought to the educational environment. Williams shares her insight, "Only after becoming familiar with the research on Native education was I able to make sense of my own complicit role in the destructive legacy of school for Native students" (p. 29). Determined not to continue this legacy of deficit model interaction with the Mohawk

community, Williams used a qualitative data collection methodology, a TribalCrit framework, and a participatory action research model to establish a dialogue between the Mohawk community and the non-Native teachers in Farmington regarding intercultural relations.   This project helped bring to light the ways in which contrasting conceptions of cultural competency, systems promoting mistrust, cultural disconnections, and intercultural miscommunication perpetuate deficit thinking models still present within heterogeneous educational communities. From this study, the points of contention were used to address highlighted issues through teacher education, with participants ultimately creating a PD for non-Native teaching staff, a handbook of Mohawk cultural practices for non-Native educators, and a forum on the district's webpage for addressing potentially sensitive cultural questions, in the hope of establishing a more positive educational environment for Native students. Deficit models are deeply entrenched in American educational systems and thought processes. Just as centuries-old transgressions are not easily mended, a lifetime of messages about the superiority of the dominant culture often impacts the ability of educators to think first about the strengths and resilience of our CLD students and families and operate from a strength-based perspective.

At times, even direct professional development (PD) experiences designed to promote cultural awareness are not successful at dismantling strongly ingrained negative perceptions. Colombo (2007) conducted PD workshops as part of the Parent Partnership for Achieving Literacy (PAL) within the public-school district of Riverdale, a program implemented in response to the lack of cultural awareness between the almost all white middle class staff and the CLD student population. PAL was selected for the purpose of building bridges between home and school by providing literacy nights twice weekly to

help parents communicate with teachers and providing PD for the purpose of increasing

cultural competency for teachers working with Latino and other CLD students. Colombo

makes several salient observations about the deficit thinking models that suffused the

thinking of the staff during the PD, including the persistent focus on CLD students' skills

that were lacking, rather than focusing on the numerous strengths brought to the

classroom (e.g. bilingualism and biliteracy). The most notable examples of the

endurance of deficit perspectives came through educators such as Ms. Jeenan, who did

not seem to connect the explicit strengths and needs of the CLD families and the PD

activities designed to bring an understanding of challenges faced by English Language

Learning (ELL) students. Ms. Jeenan's interactions with CLD parents seemed to

perpetuate her deficit perspectives, stating that she wanted to learn some "cultural

specifics" like "why *their* culture is so different from *ours*, why [those] parents come late

for meetings, and the differences between cultural values for education" (Colombo, 2007,

p.14). Her comments, made after participation in PD designed to increase cultural

competencies, exemplify the powerful nature of deficit thinking and the challenging work

of dismantling internalized systemic biases. The lingering influences of the deficiency

model signals a need for ongoing PD around culturally responsive instruction and

culturally responsive classroom management in schools and classrooms serving diverse

student populations.

Referrals.

Educators who are not acquainted with culturally responsive practices may be

unaware of the role they play in the disproportionate exclusion of CLD students from

equitable access to general education curriculum, increased segregation from peers, and

from beneficial practices that draw on the rich experiences brought by diverse student abilities. Classroom teachers often initiate the referral process and interpret CLD students' performance through white middle-class normative parameters of competence (Klingner et al., 2005) and may view differences as abnormalities (Chu, 2011). "Children of color, poverty, and disability are highly variant on the criteria of normalcy, and are subjected to greater unfair teacher attitudes, expectations, and actions" (Gay, 2002). Disproportionate identification of students from certain ethnic and racial groups may begin in general education where teachers' personal and cultural norms shape views about which behaviors are acceptable, to whom, and under what circumstances (Klingner et al., 2005) and consequently view a child's poor academic performance and/ or behavior as a problem inherent to the child (Echevarria, Powers, & Elliot, 2004).

One prevalent interpretation of the cause of disproportionality is that educators who stand at the gateway to special education services may not be aware of the differences between dis/ability and diversity, and that some of the behaviors of CLD students that are acceptable by cultural standards of the home culture are incongruent with the school culture, resulting in the behaviors being viewed as biological malfunctions or intellectual limitations (Chu, 2011; Gay, 2002). Background experiences comprise much of what students are able to understand and do, and most academic tasks and curricula reflect middle class values and experiences, and student strengths may differ significantly from those of the teacher and curriculum (Echevarria, Powers, & Elliot, 2004). An example of a misalignment between teachers' behavioral, academic, and/or linguistic expectations and different ethnic groups' patterns of task engagement and organization of ideas can be found in classroom communication styles. Schools

often promote a topic-centered communication style, characterized by parsimonious talking and writing, dispassionate arguments, logical case building, focused and sequential fact reporting, and direct, precise, and linear discourse (Au, 1993; Kochman, 1981). Many African, Asian, Latino, and Native Americans use a topic-chaining style of communication, characterized by innuendo, symbolism and metaphor, full of background information, and conveyed in a conversational or story-telling style (Au, 1993; Kochman, 1981) that sounds, to those who are unfamiliar with this style, "rambling, disjointed, and as if the speaker never ends a thought before going on to something else" (Gay, 2000, p.96). Because referrals for special education diagnoses are initiated primarily based on academic and behavioral performance, the contributing factors of cultural misalignment and deficit thinking cannot be ignored.

The intersections of culture, learning, language, socio-political systems, and educational policy have contributed to exclusionary educational practices toward CLD students with dis/abilities and deeply influence the ways in which educators provide services for the wide spectrum of learning needs in today's classrooms.

Exclusion

The story of equitable access to education for CLD students with dis/abilities is examined from the vantage of exclusion from peers. This story of exclusion encompasses the parallel struggles for civil rights and disability rights that built the foundation of current oppressions in our educational system. A brief examination of these historic oppressions is offered here.

Historic oppressions.

The historic Supreme Court decision in the 1954 *Brown v. the Board of Education* (BOE) case mandated an end to school segregation according to race and advanced civil rights in America. Prior to the Brown v. BOE decision, schools were completely segregated by law, and black schools received markedly fewer resources than white schools (Reber, 2010). While mandated desegregation did improve outcomes, it also placed African American (and later, other CLD students) in settings that maintained inequitable educational practices (Artiles, et al., 2004; Skiba, et al., 2006). Progress toward equitable distribution of funding and school desegregation peaked in the 1980s, followed by structural efforts to rezone, and modify school attendance policies, resulting in the 1990s attendance of Black students in majority White schools to constrict to levels noted in the 1960s, prior to court-ordered desegregation (Orfield & Lee, 2004). Separate education systems for students with dis/abilities were noted in the years following the *Brown* decision. For example, disproportionately high percentages of African American students in New York and Mexican American students in California were labeled as having a dis/ability and were placed in separate classrooms (Dunn, 1968, Mercer, 1973), and in Washington D.C., 24% of the newly desegregated African-Americans were labeled as having special needs and came to represent 77% of the special education population (Banks, 2017; Connor & Ferri, 2005). In this fashion, the practice of separate systems of education for marginalized populations continued.

The progress of the Civil Rights movement modeled, for advocates of people with dis/abilities, a method of enacting legal changes toward equity. Public Law 94-142 or the Education for All Handicapped Children Act followed in 1975, ensuring students with

dis/abilities the right to access special education and related services in order to address their needs. This act is now known as The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). The law assists local education agencies (LEAs) and state education agencies (SEAs) in providing for the effective education of these students, and screening and identifying all students with dis/abilities in order to provide them with a free and appropriate education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE), mediating disagreements between families and schools (due process), and providing for parent participation in all aspects of the development of the individualized education plan (IEP) including services and placement decisions (Artiles, et al., 2004). In 1997 more amendments to IDEA were enacted to address the needs of CLD students due to the noted unfavorable outcomes such as higher dropout rates and disproportionate representation of CLD students receiving special education (Sped) services (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments, 1997). These amendments include measures of efficacy and transition services by SEAs and LEAs for CLD students with dis/abilities (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments, 1997). These advances in the law have served to stymie the exclusion of students with dis/abilities from the general education environment but have fallen short of the goals of the attainment of equitable education for all Americans.

Continued exclusion.

Historic battles for gains toward equitable access to general education classrooms can be traced through the 1954 *Brown v. BOE* decision and the IDEA Amendments of 1997, to the unfortunate convergence of these struggles in the continued exclusion of CLD students with dis/abilities from the general education setting. An example of racial

segregation maintained under the guise of dis/ability segregation is found in the class action suit of *Larry P. v. Riles* (1979), in which the plaintiffs won their argument that the over-representation of African-American students labeled as ID was the result of inappropriate intelligence quotient (IQ) testing, assessment practices, and teacher bias, resulting in placement that was stigmatizing, provided inadequate education, and limited the skills of the students.   Most CLD students with dis/abilities continue to be educated in settings that are separate from those of the non-dis/abled peers for at least part of the school day (NCES, 2015). For example, only one-third of Black students with dis/abilities spend 80% of their day in general education settings, as compared to 55% of their White peers (Fierros & Conroy, 2002) and Black, Hispanic, American Indian, and ELL students are more likely to be taught in separate classrooms and schools as compared to their White and Asian/Pacific peers (Skiba, et al., 2003; de Valenzuela, Copeland, Huaqing Qi, & Park,2006). In comparison to public rhetoric abhorring racial segregation, exclusion based on dis/ability is often seen as warranted (Kauffman, & Hallahan, 1995). "While segregation by race and class are not officially sanctioned, separation according to disability *is"* (Connor, 2006) and is often viewed as acceptable and necessary (Kaufman & Hallahan, 1995). "Such labels [ED, LD, ID] allow schools to circumvent school desegregation and busing orders and to maintain racially segregated education and, at least initially to curb White flight from urban to suburban schools" (Ferri & Connor, in press). Ferri (2004) argues that for CLD students, the "present-day data on overrepresentation in special education must be understood as building on a legacy of White resistance to racially integrated education" (p.512).   Thus, the exclusionary practice of segregation in schools continues for students labeled with a

dis/ability. The systematic practice of segregating CLD students based on dis/ability further signals the need for an integrated CREP.

Discipline.

A more limited access to general education curriculum is not the only disadvantage faced by CLD students with dis/abilities. Inequitable discipline policies particularly disadvantage CLD students with dis/abilities, subjecting them to harsher penalties for behavioral infractions than white non-dis/abled peers, resulting in further separation from the general education environment. For example, during the 1999-2000 school year, Black students with dis/abilities were more than three times as likely as Whites to be given short-term suspensions (Osher, Woodruff, & Sims, 2002). Differences between home and school culture may negatively influence educators' personal views of student behaviors (Klingner et al., 2005) and result in a behavior being judged as a biological malfunction or intellectual limitation rather than a judgement occurring through the lens of an incongruent understanding of cultural norms (Chu, 2011, Gay, 2002) resulting in a disproportionately harsh outcome (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994). The skewed and exclusionary discipline practices levied against CLD students with dis/abilities often contribute to substandard educational attainment expectations (NCES, 2011), unequal access to instruction and materials (Losen & Orfield, 2002), and the pushing through educational systems with diminished outcomes (NCES, 2011; USDOJ, 2015). These outcomes signal a need for educators to more carefully consider cultural norms, oppressions occurring in educational institutions, and how deficit thinking models influence decisions about outcomes for CLD students with dis/abilities.

Disability Critical Race Studies (DisCrit): A Theoretical Lens

Critical theories have long been applied in the examination of systemic oppressions in education (Artilles, Harry, Reschley, & Chinn, 2002; Ascher, 2007; Banks & Banks, 2001; Bell, 2006; Blanchett, 2006; Connor, 2008; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Ferri & Connor, 2005). Critical theory was selected as the theoretical lens for this study due to its ability to critique structures that subordinate and privilege people. Beverly Gordon (1995) offers a definition for critical theory,

> Critical theory seeks to understand the origins and operation of repressive social structures. Critical theory is the critique of domination. It seeks to focus on a world becoming less free, to cast doubt on claims of technological scientific rationality, and then to imply that present configurations do not have to be as they are (p. 190).

Operationalizing this definition, critical theory seeks to question social structures and analyze power relationships, asking, "What constitutes power?" "How is it used to benefit those holding power?" Building on the work of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and other subsequent Critical Theory scholars and Disability Studies (DS) theorists, Annamma, Connor, & Ferri (2012) construct a theoretical framework of Dis/ability Critical Race Studies (DisCrit) that offers a dual analysis of *race* and *ability* and through which the intersections of *race* and *dis/ability* can be examined. Annamma, Connor & Ferri (2012) have acknowledged complicated ways that dis/ability and race intersect and the lack of an existing cohesive theory through which to examine this intersection, thus prompting the need to add an additional branch to CRT and DS.

Rationale for DisCrit.

DisCrit expands the understanding of oppressions by providing a theoretical framework through which the interconnectedness of race and dis/ability can be expanded

upon and the structures and systems, historical movements, contemporary practices, and contemporary educational reforms can be critiqued and examined (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012). DisCrit is the theoretical connection between Disability Studies (DS) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) that attempts to academically and practically bridge the separations between the two fields and forge an understanding of "the lived realities of people" and how concepts of race and ability are connected (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012).

In the context of this study, DisCrit provides a theoretical lens for the examination of how teachers perceive their ability to implement CREP for their CLD students with dis/abilities, the ways in which teachers describe their meanings and understandings about dis/abilities, race, culture, and language, the experiences that prepared them to utilize culturally responsive instruction, and how they describe their actions toward implementing the goals of CREP.

Tenets of DisCrit.

Annamma, Connor, & Ferri (2012) have outlined seven tenets of DisCrit: (1) Notions of **Normalcy** are upheld by the interdependently circulating forces of racism and ableism, white, middle-class citizens. Lastly, (7) DisCrit requires **activism** and supports all forms of resistance (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012).

working often in neutralized and invisible ways. (2) **Multidimensional Identities** are valued above singular notions of identity such as race, dis/ability, class, gender, sexuality, etc. (3) *Race* and *Ability* are emphasized as **social constructions** and yet recognized as having material and psychological impacts, setting those who are labeled as "raced" or "dis/abled" outside of western cultural norms. (4) DisCrit **privileges the voices** of marginalized populations, not traditionally acknowledged within research. (5) Legal and historical means have been used

Table 1.2

Tenets of DisCrit Defined

Tenet	Definition	Citation
1) Normalcy	Notions of Normalcy are upheld by the interdependently circulating forces of racism and ableism, often in invisible and neutralized ways.	Ladson-Billings, 1998
2) Multidimensional Identities	Value is placed on multidimensional identities, and troubles singular notions of identity such as race or dis/ability or class or gender or sexuality, and so on.	Crenshaw, 1993
3) Social Construction	Emphasis is placed on the social construction of *race* and *ability* while recognizing the material and psychological impacts of being labeled as raced or dis/abled, resulting in a status set outside of western cultural norms	Delgado & Stefancic, 2001
4) Privileging marginalized voices	Traditionally not acknowledged within research, voices of marginalized populations are privileged in DisCrit and counter-narratives are emphasized.	Gloria Ladson-Billings; Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012
5) Denial of Rights	The consideration of the legal, ideological, and historical denial of the rights of some citizens based on dis/ability or race	Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001
6) Interest Convergence	Recognition of Whiteness and Ability as property and that gains for people with dis/abilities have been the result of interest convergence of White, middle-class citizens	Derrick Bell, 1980
7) Activism	Activism is required, and all forms of resistance are supported.	Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012

both together and separately to **Deny the Rights** of some citizens. (6) Whiteness and

Ability are recognized as property and that gains for people labeled with dis/abilities have

largely been made as the result of **interest convergence** of white, middle-class citizens. Lastly, (7) DisCrit requires activism and supports all forms of **resistance** (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012).

The tenets of DisCrit are summarized in Table 1.1 (above) and the ways in which DisCrit broadens the scope of Critical Theory are elucidated upon here.

Tenet One: Normalcy The first tenet of DisCrit examines the ways in which race and ability have been jointly used to marginalize certain peoples through shaping notions of the composition of normalcy (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012). An area of agreement among critical scholars lies in the notion that the "white experience" and the experience of of the "able body" dominate the status quo and that "whiteness" and "ability" are able to dictate the ideological systems that are inclusive or exclusive of otherness (Bell & Hartman, 2007; Anthony, 2012). White normativity and white privilege are linked to racism and white identity via the supporting systems of whites' privileged social status (Anthony, 2012). When whiteness and ability are established as the normative traits, "everyone is ranked and categorized in relation to these points of opposition" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p 9). DisCrit further rejects the notion that all persons falling outside the standards of whiteness and/or ability want to achieve those standards (Erevelles, 2000).

Tenet Two: Multidimensional Identities DisCrit highlights multidimensional identities, citing the work of Solorzano and Bernal (2001) and eschews one-dimensional identity concepts such as race, dis/ability, social class, or gender (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012). The problematic ways in which the singularization of multidimensional identities have contributed to the exclusion of certain groups have been considered and critiqued by

some researchers (Bell, 2006; Blanchett, 2006, 2010; Connor, 2008), who note that this singularization of identity ignores the ways in which race factors into Disability Studies and how dis/ability factors into Critical Race Theory (Bell, 2006; Blanchett, 2010) and leaves critical aspects of identity unexplored and unaddressed in the research. DisCrit explores the ways in which the identity markers of race and dis/ability are interdependently connected and how "their embodiment and positioning reveals ways in which racism and ableism inform and rely upon each other in interdependent ways" (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012). DisCrit further acknowledges how these varied identity markers have played a role in in shaping deficit thinking by teachers, school administrators, and society (Collins, 2003) and how these markers of difference from the norm (e.g. race, culture, language, immigration status, gender, sexuality, class) contribute to the complexity of the multidimensional identity experience through varied experiences of stigma and segregation (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012).

Tenet Three: Social Construction The third tenet of DisCrit rejects the notion that concepts of *race* and *dis/ability* are genetic or biological facts (Mirza, 1998) while recognizing that these assignments have a profound influence on the lives of people (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012). Of particular significance is the rejection of the notion that *race* is a social construction while *dis/ability* is a biological fact, a notion that strongly contributes to the continued marginalization and segregation of students with multidimensional identities (Ferri & Connor, 2005; Fierros & Conroy, 2002). A discussion of *race* and *dis/ability* are included here for the purpose of illuminating the

import of this tenet for the reader and examined separately to allow for the inclusion of research that examines these concepts independent of each other.

The social construction of *race* is evidenced by its lack of connection to genetic or biological reality, and though people sharing common ancestry present similar physical traits such as skin color and hair color or hair texture, they do not share common higher order traits such as moral behavior, personality, or intelligence (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). A product of social thought and relations, categories of race can be "invented, manipulated, or retired when convenient" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), play a significant role in defining a person's life experiences and opportunities (Shih, Bonam, Sanchez, & Peck, 2007; Goodman, 2000; Zack, 1995), can be used to make assumptions about intelligence and performance (Jenson, 1969), are prominent in the consideration of identity development (Brown-Jeffy, & Cooper, 2011), and are "malleable and rooted in both macro and micro social processes, and have structurally and culturally defined parameters" (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002, p. 115). These parameters are often used to identify and limit the "*other*" thus serving to maintain privilege for those in power. Tatum (1997) asserts, "The parts of our identity that do capture our attention are those that other people notice, and that reflect back to us. The aspect of identity that is the target of others' attention, and subsequently of our own, often is that which sets us apart as exceptional or *'other'* in their eyes" (p21).

Similar to those oppressions experienced by persons of color, students with dis/abilities experience *otherness* through various forms of ableism. Ableism is the perspective that able-bodies are normative, variations are deviant or subordinate rather than an embodiment of human diversity, and that dis/abilities are to be fixed or

overcome. The continuum of ability is often treated as discrete or categorical and, like race, can also be manipulated, invented, and retired as needed. An example of this manipulation occurred in 1973 when the AAMD (American Association of Mental Deficiency) revised the definition of mental retardation [now labeled ID] from those with a measured IQ score of 85 to an IQ score of 70, immediately rendering many people non-dis/abled with a sudden policy change (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2013). The false categorizations of normality ignore the socio political and cultural factors that regard *other* identities as impediments and ignore the rich funds of knowledge brought by CLD students with dis/abilities. Citing the work of Lloyd (2008) and Wedell (2008), Anastasia Liasidou (2012) noted that, "In schools, the focus is on enabling dis/abled students to "overcome" barriers to learning and participation by devising "specialist" educational measures and interventions allegedly intended to respond to students' right to education, rather than addressing the barriers to learning and participation endemic to the curriculum, the assessment regimes and institutional conditions of current schooling" (p. 171). Dole (2001) observes, "The view that academic problems have intrinsic causes reflects the dominant culture's belief that normalcy is equated with academic success." Through the lens of social constructionism, *race* and *dis/ability* can be examined through the context of systemic barriers, negative attitudes and exclusion by society (purposely or inadvertently), thusly pinpointing society as the main contributory factor in oppressing people (Artiles, 2011; Anthony, 2012) through the maintenance of privileged and exclusionary systems.

Tenet Four: Privileging Marginalized Voices The fourth tenet seeks to privilege the

voices of marginalized people and disrupt the normative perspective that speaks *for* and

about marginalized persons (Dalton, 1987; Charlton, 2000; Matsuda, 1987). The

normalization of white able-bodied culture defaults non-white disabled culture as *other*,

and "*other* is often understood as abnormal, deviant, or exotic" (Anthony,

2012). Because this aspect of their identity (i.e. their *otherness*) is unchangeable and

defined for them, people of color do not have complete control over how the self is

conceptualized and hold a "unique and enlightened understanding of race and racial

inequality because of their subordinate status" (Anthony, 2012) and "a presumed

competence to speak about race and racism" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). It is for this

reason that traditionally unacknowledged voices, those of marginalized populations, are

privileged in examination of race though the theoretical lens of DisCrit.   Instead, DisCrit

emphasizes the use of counter-narratives as a contrast to master-narratives (Annamma,

Connor, & Ferri, 2012).

Tenet Five: Denial of Rights The fifth tenet of DisCrit considers how the rights of

citizens have been denied based on legal, ideological, and historical aspects of race and

dis/ability due to the belief in the superiority of whiteness (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Delgado

& Stefancic, 2001; Menchaca, 1997; Valencia, 1997). Historically, scientific knowledge

(e.g. phrenology, anthropological physiognomy) was used to create and reinforce racial

hierarchies (Menchaca, 1997) as today's clinical assessments or responses to 'evidence-

based' interventions are used to reinforce similar hierarchies about race and ability

through laws, policies, and programs (Baynton, 2001). DisCrit challenges notions of a

racialized intellectual and cultural hierarchy propagated by pseudo-sciences and

maintained by contemporary educational assessment measures (Annamma, Connor, &

Ferri, 2012). Legal policies have been historically connected with the association of race

and dis/ability such as Reconstruction-Era codes that criminalized African-American's

refusal to work as due to dis/ability or mental illness rather than unfair labor practices

(Alexander, 2010; Davis, 2003). Legal policies have also linked *other* languages and

dis/ability, for example, labeling limited-English speaking children dis/abled based on

English-only instruction (Baca and Cervantes, 2004; Baker, 2001). Currently, IDEA

monitors the over-representation of students of color receiving special education services

(Kim et al., 2010), highlighting the continued racialization of dis/ability through the

segregation and stigmatization of separate educational services (Hart et al., 2009). "Thus,

DisCrit renounces imposed segregation and promotes an ethic of unqualified belonging

and full inclusion in schools and society" (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012).

Tenet Six: Interest Convergence The recognition of Ability and Whiteness as

'property," which allows the claim of economic benefits for those claiming whiteness

and/or normalcy (Harris, 1993) and disadvantage for those unable to make these identity

claims, is the foundation of the Sixth Tenet, which holds that political interests of

oppressed groups make gains through interest convergence. Derrick Bell (1980) first

made this assertion noting, "the interests of blacks in receiving racial equality will be

accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites" (Bell, 1980, p.

22). Protections for people with dis/abilities were extended in 1990 by the Americans

with Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide access to public accommodations and protection

from discriminations. Removing barriers that disable people from society must be marketed as beneficial for the greater good (Asch, 2001; Guinier & Torres, 2002) such as in the case of wider cut sidewalks which are useful for baby strollers, wheeled suitcases, as well as wheelchairs or in the expansion of inclusive classrooms that save money (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012). DisCrit also illuminates the how the labels of dis/ability spell out different opportunities for different races, potentially offering more support to whites in general education settings and further segregation from the general education curriculum for those of color, limiting access to higher education (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012).

Tenet Seven: Activism The seventh tenet of DisCrit is the promotion of diverse forms of resistance, the support of activism, and the shaping of critical sociopolitical consciousness. This tenet highlights the need to support "diverse expressions of resistance that are linked to and informed by the community, whether that be academic or theoretical, pedagogical, or activist (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012). Included here is an example of activism, selected to elucidate the capacity of CREP and tenet of Activism to transformationally empower students to take pride and ownership in their education and connect them to the community in which they live.

Critical consciousness reinforces the efforts of educators in helping students to transform their views to include themselves as members of a global community, to realize the usefulness and value of education, and to utilize their education to promote social justice (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2010). The power of transforming communities through education is documented by Cati de los Rios and Gilda L. Ochoa (2012) who writes about

the movement that created the Chicana/o Latina/o studies program at Pomona High

School and Pomona College during the 2008-09 school year and how that program led to

community building across racial, class and geographic divides. The classroom of Ms.

Cati de los Rios is thick with images of heroes, martyrs, and leaders of Latina/o and

African descent, likenesses that her students see in their heritage, images that connect

them to a desire to understand their past and present. Cati understands the conditions that

build community, the conditions that inspire students to become agents of change. The

Chicana/o Latina/o Studies class in Pomona was born from a collaborative effort on the

part of students who pressed administrators, community members, district curriculum

committees, and the superintendent about the need for culturally relevant classes and Ms.

de los Rios, who wrote the curriculum template and submitted it for accreditation, taught

a rigorous course of the conquest of the Americas, addressing race, class, gender, culture,

colonialism, and oppression, and then organized a social justice *encuentro*- a joining of

the working class immigrant high school students with the neighboring affluent college

students for the purpose of disrupting longstanding race/class disparities, building

community, and joining together in resistance and celebration. The course drew to a

close and the night of the encuentro expressed the promise- drumming and Aztec dancers,

skits depicting students in class, deportation raids, historical events, and calls to action,

poetry, mariachi music, and a powerful open mic session that involved the community

audience. It was the promise of a program delivered, born from a desire to see one's own

heritage acknowledged, reflected, taught, shared, and celebrated. Ms. Cati de los Rios

shares the success of their culminating activity,

> Students walked in the beauty of resistance that day, reaffirming their struggle
> through groundbreaking creation and dialogue. Students saw this project as an

> *ofrenda*, an offering to our communities for generations to come—an example of people power, student power, and community power. The transformational potential of Chicana/o–Latina/o studies was alive during our collaboration. Students from varied backgrounds worked together to learn about the multiple histories, perspectives, and experiences of Chicanas/os–Latinas/os. They developed their critical-thinking skills, were knowledge producers, and became change agents as they united communities. Our experiences of working together attest to the power and possibility of transforming education and decolonizing relationships. Perhaps it is precisely this transformational power that fuels the movement to ban ethnic studies and confiscate books in places such as Tucson, Arizona. Fortunately, as students have taught us, el pueblo unido, jamás será vencido—the people united shall never be divided (pp.278-279).

Thus, teachers can respond to the diverse needs of their CLD students with dis/abilities by embracing the transformative power of CREP and utilizing the metamorphic principles of DisCrit to empower students to critically examine the various societal and educational oppressions they face, to take pride and ownership in their education, and shape their socio-political consciousness and connect to their communities.

Culturally Responsive Educational Practice (CREP)

In order to best serve the diverse needs of all students, educators are tasked with creating and implementing educational practices that are responsive to the unique constellation of learners in their classrooms. To address these diverse needs, educators are entrusted to build a culturally responsive educational practice (CREP). Unfortunately, this practice is not actualized by simply following a prescribed list of strategies or implementing a specific curriculum; the personal and individualized nature of building a CREP precludes the development of an exhaustive or explicit list of techniques describing CREP within classrooms. The implementation of a CREP requires the building of a critical consciousness willing to examine the cultural discord and power differential that educational institutions reproduce and maintain.

An Overview.

CREP is a term used to encapsulate the evolution of a practice that strives to expand current educational operations to include as valuable the culture of diverse students and families traditionally oppressed in the education system. Culturally relevant, resonant, and responsive teaching has been credited with the power to create social consciousness, affirm the views of students from diverse backgrounds, awaken teachers to their individual responsibility to bring educational change, increase the understanding of how learners construct knowledge, expand their understanding of the lives of their students, and use knowledge about students' lives to design instruction that builds on their knowledge (Allen et al.; Gay, 2002, 2010, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Voltz, Brazil & Scott, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The review of literature here is in no way exhaustive but attempts to provide an impression of CREP informed by the research of Gay (2000), Ladson-Billings (1994), Nieto (1999), and Villegas & Lucas (2002). Several terms including Culturally Responsive Teaching, Multicultural Education, Culturally Responsive Instruction, and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy are included here in the term CREP in an attempt to unify various aspects of an evolving practice under a term that allows the consideration of the larger entity rather than the examination of its parts. CREP is closely aligned with DisCrit in its attempt to address the widespread inequality faced by CLD students with dis/abilities. Nieto (1999) stresses the need to look beyond cultural differences in order to examine the sociopolitical context of education including "societal ideologies, governmental policies and mandates, as well as school financing," in addition to school policies and practices including "curriculum, pedagogy, tracking, testing, discipline and hiring" - all of which "promote or hinder

learning among students of different backgrounds" (p. 6). Ladson-Billings (1995) also refers to the sociopolitical context of teaching calling it the "pedagogy of opposition," expanding on critical pedagogy in its commitment "to the collective, not merely the individual empowerment" (p. 160).

A primary assertion of a CREP is that it is formulated on the belief that all CLD students with dis/abilities are capable of achieving academic excellence when provided access to educational resources that are responsive to and value their culture, language, experiences and perspectives (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1999). Klingner et al. (2005) posited that "instead of determining how to 'fix' CLD students' deficits, professionals' biases, or society as a whole," educators can "promote the creation of conditions, produce resources and tools, and support multiple stakeholders in the creation of educational systems that are responsive to cultural diversity" (p.8). This attempt to eschew the deficit model and embrace and learn from the cultural funds of knowledge brought by CLD students with dis/abilities is an attempt to enact sociopolitical change in a local and impactful way.

The initial work of CREP begins when educators engage reflexively and critically with our own personal identity narratives and the ways we embed our identity and privilege (Gay, 2000). Ladson-Billings (2006) encourages educators to examine educator dispositions and assess the historical, economic, political, and moral debts that have been levied against underrepresented groups in the US and have shaped educational outcomes throughout the founding of our public-school systems. This examination can include reviewing the notions of Whiteness and Ability as valuable property (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2013; Bell, 1995; Crenshaw, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and how

these privileged narratives of personal identity serve to transmit to students, the value conferred to [White Able-Bodied] groups (Fasching-Varner & Seriki, 2015). Teachers, particularly white female educators, who comprise a supermajority in the profession (NCES, 2015), can work at disrupting privilege to create equitable learning opportunities for all students through high expectations- in other words, become culturally relevant teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2005, 2006).

Another critical focus of CREP is the empowerment of students toward sociopolitical awareness and action, expressed by Ladson-Billings (1995) who asserts, "students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the current status quo of the social order" (p. 160). The development of critical consciousness is directly supported through the lens of critical theory and is not limited to students. Gay (2002) suggests that "teachers must "become critically conscious of their own cultural socialization, and how it affects their attitudes and behaviors toward the cultures of other ethnic groups." Villegas and Lucas (2002) assert that teachers of CLD students must be socio-culturally conscious, have affirming views of their students, believe themselves to be capable of effecting change in order to make schools more equitable, must understand how students construct knowledge and be capable of promoting knowledge construction, know the lives of their students, and design instruction around the familiar and then push students beyond that (p. 321). Thus, CREP provides an avenue through which the oppressions of race, culture, language, and disability can be addressed, and students and educators can work toward an equitable education for all students.

Central components.

CREP is a vastly different approach to the traditional methods of instruction

historically designed to serve students with diverse needs and abilities. CREP systems

have a transformative goal that creates spaces for teacher reflection, inquiry, and mutual

support around issues or cultural differences (Klingner, et al., 2005) and is concerned

with valuing the knowledge and experiences of peoples from underrepresented

populations (Fasching-Varner, 2009, Ladson-Billings, 1998). The central components of

CREP require teachers to (a) constantly examine their own beliefs, values, and behaviors,

that hinder or facilitate the process of students learning; (b) link material with thematic,

cross disciplinary units to provide constructive opportunities for integrating cross-cultural

materials into curriculum and instruction; (c) incorporate students' cultural orientations

and language/dialect to design culturally and linguistically relevant classroom

environments; and (d) assess and modify instruction to meet the needs of students'

diverse learning styles (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001). Put another way, CREP

begins with high expectations for student success (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994,

2005, 2006), requires that teachers must be culturally competent (Gay, 2000; Dixson &

Fasching-Varner, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2005, 2006) and mandates that educators

become sociopolitical agents of change (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2005, 2006).

In order to be an agent of change, educators must commit to the cultural and political

realities that affect policy, curriculum, and the outcomes in students' lives (Fasching-

Varner & Seriki, 2012).

Counterstory.

Within the literature, one of most salient examples of a CREP strategy is the use of counterstories. Counter-storytelling is defined as "a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26). Brown-Jeffy & Cooper (2011) found that, "By listening to the counterstories told by students, teachers are provided a vehicle by which they can see what has, in some cases, been consciously invisible to them before (p. 79). Counterstories can be used to legitimately challenge deeply entrenched master narratives of dominance or characterizations of privilege. The focus is not on "cultural inclusions at specific points of the year (such as Black History Month) but interweaving the acknowledgement and inclusion of culture throughout the entire academic process" (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Villegas & Lucas (2007) offer an example, "In U.S. history classes, teachers can help engage students from historically marginalized groups by having them examine the curriculum to determine whose perspectives are and are not presented. This would work well, for example, with a textbook treatment of slavery." This example of critical examination of curriculum embodies the tenets of DisCrit and CREP through its focus on sociopolitical awareness.

For a closer exploration of counterstorytelling, we can turn to Solorzano & Benal's (2001) qualitative study, that uses critical race theory and Latina/Latino critical race theory (LatCrit) as a framework to examine the transformative potential of student resistance examined through two historical events- the 1968 East Los Angeles school walkouts and the 1993 UCLA student strike for Chicana and Chicano studies. The authors analyzed a series of individual and focus group interviews with participants that

participated in the East Los Angeles high school walkouts and then created composite

characters to depict the stories of transformational resistance. LatCrit was selected as a

theoretical lens for the study because it addresses the multidimensional identities of

Latinas/Latinos and the intersection of multiple forms of oppression as well as a

commitment to social justice expressed through internal and external transformational

resistance. Solorzano & Benal create two characters, the Professor, and Gloria, for the

purpose of allowing the reader to "listen for the story's points, test them against your own

version of reality (however conceived), and use the counterstory as a theoretical,

conceptual, and pedagogical case study of student resistance" (Solorzano & Benal, 2001,

p. 328). Included here is a summary of the conversation, infused with some quotes:

> Gloria enters the Professor's office, upset by the recent arrest of her roommate at
> a sit-in protesting the lack of support for a Chicana/Chicano studies department at
> UCLA, feeling uncomfortable about her lack of open resistance while expressing
> a desire to participate behind the scenes in the resistance. Gloria mentions her
> friend in class who is afraid to speak or act with resistance and endanger her
> immigration status and the Professor replies that there are indeed many people
> simmering in silence, and offers Gloria articles by Lani Guinier [1990-1991] and
> Regina Austin [1986] that speak to the feeling of being silenced in classrooms, in
> order to assure her that "others may have been in similar situations and dealt with
> these issues in similar and different ways." Attempting to pull the information
> together and help Gloria before meeting with another group of students, the
> Professor pulls the poem 'Litany of Survival' by Audre Lorde (1978) and reads
> aloud, "and when we speak we are afraid/ our words will not be heard/ nor
> welcomed/ but when we are silent/ we are still afraid/ So it is better to speak/
> remembering/ we were never meant to survive" [pp. 31-32]. The story closes with
> the Professor reflecting on her own past and present work with Chicano social
> justice issues and muses, "Over the years, I keep being reminded that each of us
> defines and struggles for social justice in our own way" (Solorzano & Benzal,
> 2001, p. 334).

Counter-storytelling is used by Solorzano & Benzal (2001) to elucidate upon fluid and

multifaceted forms of resistance and the intersectionality of multiple issues (e.g. language

rights, cultural rights, the influence of immigration), structured by the methodology of

LatCrit for the purpose of critiquing oppressive social systems and expressing a desire for

social justice, expressed by Gloria and the Professor, who represent the experiences shared by numerous individuals in numerous interviews by the authors.

Implementation.

The difficulty for educators in enacting a CREP is that it is not something that can be "given"- rather it is dispositional, attitudinal, and political (Dixson & Fasching-Varner, 2009). That is to say, a practice centered on high academic expectations, sociopolitical commitments, and cultural competence, cannot be taught to educators "through orchestrated strategies" but instead must be built out of the belief in the humanity of all students and a desire to foster the innate and latent talents of their students, while engaging in the real-life experiences of their students and critically examining how their own experiences shape their understanding of students (Fasching-Varner & Seriki, 2015). Research educators suggest that in order to increase students' success for CLD students with dis/abilities, teachers can no longer expect that students simply adapt to majority culture. CREP is needed in classrooms to increase the academic success of all students through the inherent belief that all students are capable learners and rich in cultural funds of knowledge, are valuable members of society, are navigating a system of institutionalized oppressions, and are inherently better prepared when examining socio-political forces with a critical eye (Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Gay, 2000, 2002, 2010, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2006).

Purpose of Study and Research Question

CLD students with dis/abilities are often marginalized from peers and denied access to general education curriculum as a result of systemic barriers impressed upon them by a variety of exclusionary policies and practices. Teachers have been charged

with implementing an educational experience that is responsive to the unique learning styles of those dynamic learners in their classrooms, as informed by PD on cultural responsiveness. This research seeks to provide insight into how teachers of students with multidimensional identities perceive their ability to implement culturally responsive instruction in the classroom. The focus of this research is not only on the experiences that inform teachers' perceptions of preparedness to implement CREP in their classrooms, but also on the actions taken by teachers to implement CREP in the classroom.   Additionally, this study seeks to examine the ways in which teachers describe their understandings of dis/ability, race, culture, and language as examined through the lens of DisCrit, a theory that bridges the gap between Disability Studies and Critical Race Theory in an attempt to establish an understanding of how race and ability are connected.   The overall purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe how teachers of CLD students with dis/abilities in a mid-west school district perceive their ability to implement CREP in the classroom. In this research, I set out to answer the following central question:

Research question.

How do teachers of culturally linguistically diverse (CLD) students with dis/abilities perceive their ability to implement culturally responsive educational practices (CREP)?

Conclusion

This chapter is composed of four primary sections. The first, outlining the barriers that comprise equitable access to education for CLD students with dis/abilities. The second, an overview of the scholarship of DisCrit and why it provides

an appropriate theoretical lens through which the research question and sub questions can be examined. The third section includes an explanation of CREP, its alignment with DisCrit, and its emphasis on the examination of privilege and sociopolitical responsiveness. The final section concludes with the introduction of the purpose of study and research question and includes a discussion of the scope of this study.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

The quest for equitable educational outcomes for children spanning the spectrums of ability and culture and the actualization of these goals meet in the classroom with those teachers entrusted to enact a culturally responsive educational practice. This study sought to gain insight into teachers' perceptions of ability to provide CREP to CLD students with dis/abilities. In order to develop a better understanding and insight into the meaning that teachers ascribe to this process, the researcher employed a qualitative methodology. Merriam (2009) states that qualitative research attempts to understand the "meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p.13). The research question that forms the basis of this study sought to explore the "lived experiences" (Van Manen, 1990, p.9) of in-service teachers and the ways in which they described how their life experiences and formal trainings have impacted their ability to provide CREP for their CLD students with dis/abilities, how they described their meanings and understandings about race, dis/ability, culture, and language, and how they described their actions toward implementing the goals of CREP. Qualitative methods allowed study participants to share their awareness, impressions, and recognition of their own processes of examining their beliefs and attitudes about dis/ability and race, culture, and linguistic differences as well as their life experiences, feelings of preparedness, actions, and motivations toward implementing CREP to students with multidimensional identities. A qualitative methodology is befitting of the goal of providing a rich description of this phenomena and the interpretation of the phenomena and meaning constructed by the participants.

Research Design

A phenomenological study describes the "common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon" (Creswell, 2013, p. 76)**.** The theoretical framework for this study is informed by the designs and methods of Transcendental Phenomenology, a qualitative approach to research drawn from the work of philosopher Edmund Husserl. Transcendental phenomenology is a conceptual framework that seeks to understand the human experience by excluding preconceived ideas, prejudgment, and supposition in order to see phenomena openly, through an unclouded lens, thus allowing the true meaning of the phenomena to emerge naturally within its own identity, through the development of descriptions of the essences of these experiences (Moustakas, 1994).   Moustakas further explains that intuition and self-reflection are used to describe things as they are, to understand meaning as it is created when the object appears in our consciousness.   Transcendental phenomenology is concerned with what can be discovered through reflection on subjective acts and that "what appears in consciousness is an absolute reality while what appears to the world is a product of learning" (Moustakas, 1994, p.27). Deliberate use of first-person language is used in the remainder of this study to acknowledge my role in the research process and to embrace the components of phenomenology.

Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) is an emerging theoretical framework that analyzes the interdependence of racism and ableism. DisCrit acknowledges that students have complex multidimensional identities, that racism and ableism are frequently presented in invisible and normalized ways, that race and dis/ability are social constructs generated by systems that privilege white, middle-class, able-bodied norms,

that rights of some citizens are denied based on dis/ability and race, and that gains for

people with dis/abilities are often made as a result of the interest convergence of white,

middle-class able-bodied citizens. Therefore, DisCrit promotes diverse forms of

resistance and activism (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012). This study applied the

theoretical framework of DisCrit and the methodology of Transcendental

Phenomenology in the attempt to answer how teachers of CLD students with dis/abilities

perceive their ability to implement CREP.

Research Question & Sub Questions.

Qualitative research asks *how* and *why* questions in order to gather

information. According to Schram (2003), phenomenology is a study of people's'

conscious experience of the life-world, that is, their "everyday life and social action" (p.

71). The developed research question and sub-questions were designed to be open-

ended in order to leave space for descriptions that arose as teachers shared their

awareness, impressions, and recognition of their own processes of examining their ability

to implement a CREP for CLD students with an educational diagnosis of ID, ED/BD,

and/or LD. I sought to answer the following central question:

> How do teachers of culturally linguistically diverse (CLD) students with
>
> dis/abilities perceive their ability to implement culturally responsive educational
>
> practices (CREP)?

Additionally, I sought to answer the following sub-questions:

- How do teachers describe the ways in which their life experiences prepared them

   to implement CREP to students with multidimensional identities?

- How do teachers describe the ways in which their formal educational experiences prepared them to implement CREP to CLD students with dis/abilities?

- How do teachers describe their meanings and understandings about dis/abilities, race, culture, and language as outlined by the tenets of DisCrit?

- How do teachers describe their actions toward implementing the goals of CREP?

Sampling

In order to access participants that met criterion specific to this study, I applied purposeful sampling, in which I selected information-rich cases in a strategic and purposeful manner (Patton, 2002). Also referred to as *criterion-based selection*, LeCompte and Preissle (1993) note that in criterion-based selection, a list of the attributes essential to the study are created and then the researcher "proceeds to find or locate a unit matching the list" (p.70). I completed a field investigation of the group, prior to purposeful sampling, to ensure that participants meeting specific criteria were selected for the study. The criteria delineated for this study included employment in a midwestern school district, comprised of a student body containing a population of students identifying as culturally and/or linguistically diverse and identifying as having an educational disability of LD, BD/ED, or ID, that has provided professional development on the topic of culturally responsive educational practices for its teachers.

The district selected for this study works in partnership with another district that provides all the special education services for students. To facilitate the ease of comprehension, the district selected for this study will be referred to as the *selected district* and the partner district that provides all of the special education services for students will be referred to as the *support district.* Teachers employed by both the

selected district and the support district attended the same cultural competency training, provided by the selected district. The trainings were facilitated by outside trainers comprised of large group sessions that included elementary, middle, and high school staff and later smaller sessions held within individual buildings. Additional trainings were facilitated by the leadership within some buildings and were held at the discretion of the administration. Trainings occurred over a minimum of one year and spanned three years in some schools.

Participants

The participant criterion for this study included the following: Certified in-service teachers serving CLD students with dis/abilities with a minimum of two years of teaching experience in a classroom, working with CLD students with dis/abilities. Students with dis/abilities were defined as having an IEP written to address a diagnosis of a high-incidence dis/ability of LD, ID, or ED/BD. Teacher participants were employed either by the selected district or by the support district and worked in the same buildings. All interviewed teachers participated in PD on the topic of CREP offered by the selected district.

I applied criterion-based selection by first contacting the selected and support districts via email and phone to discuss the purpose of the research and to seek access to possible participants for the study. After receiving permission to collect data from each district, I contacted building principals in the selected district via email. I provided information about the purpose of study and a letter requesting responses from teacher that were willing to participate to principals and asked principals to use their listservs to distribute the information to teachers. The support district sent the email to all teachers

working in the selected district through their research department. Twelve participants

from seven schools within the district agreed to participate, including one high school,

two middle schools, and four elementary buildings. Two participants self-identified as

African-American females, eight self-identified as white females, one participant

identified as a white male, and one participant identified as a biracial female. All schools

in the selected district represented in this study are Title I schools. Title I schools receive

federal financial assistance, in amounts determined by census poverty rates and the cost

of education in each state, to assist with the cost of educating high percentages of

children from low-income families. The participants completed a *Consent to Participate*

form and were notified of the risks, procedures, and benefits of the study (see Appendix

B). Additionally, they were told about the measures taken to ensure confidentiality and

the right to refuse or withdraw from the study at any time (see Appendix B).

Interview Protocol

An interview guide served as the outline for collecting the participant's

perceptions in a consistent approach in order to address the research question at the heart

of this study. The interviews began with open-ended questions designed to minimize the

influence of the researcher on the ways the participants conceptualized their answers

(Clark & Schober, 1992). An example of an open-ended question opener was, "Tell me

about your classroom." The focus of the interviews narrowed through the use of probes

and closed ended questions to help participants describe their perceptions in a more

detailed manner. The interview protocol was designed to narrow the focus and elicit more

information about a topic to bring to the surface something that was not expected

(Brenner, 2006) and kept the interviews focused on the prescribed topic and offered

probes and prompts that motivated the participants into elaborating on their perceptions

(Clark & Schober, 1992). Glesne and Peshkin (1992) note that probes take numerous

forms, including silence, sounds, single words, and complete sentences (p. 85). Probes

were used to ask for more details, clarification, and examples during the interviews (see

Appendix C for detailed Interview Protocol). Individual interviews were conducted in a

conveniently located setting that allowed for audio recording. All interviews ranged in

length from 1.25 hours to two hours. The interviews concluded by asking the participant

the best way to contact them via email in order to follow up with a member

check. Interviews were recorded in view of the interviewer and participant, in their

entirety, on a handheld digital audio recording device and later transcribed. No archival

documents emerged as part of this study.

Transcription

Interviews were transcribed from the audiotape in their entirety. Interviews were

either transcribed by the researcher or by a graduate research assistant and reviewed by

the researcher. Multiple listenings of the recorded interviews and voice to text

transcriptions of the interviews occurred, verbatim, for each interview (Gilligan &

Brown, 1992). The format of the interview transcripts included a pseudonym of the

participant, the time and location of the interview at the top, and single spaced alternately

bolded text, double spaced between speakers to enable ease of reading (see Appendix D

for detailed description of Transcription Protocol). The transcription guide served to

provide consistency in editing notes (e.g. emphasis, volume, rate, pause, etc.).

Data Analysis

Bracketed researcher notions.

Transcendental phenomenology is concerned with describing the meaning of several individuals' experiences that relate to a particular phenomenon or concept. Because transcendental phenomenology focuses primarily on the essence of the experiences of the participants, and less on the interpretations of the researcher, I needed to study and identify my own biases to decrease the risk of understanding the participants based on my own experience (Creswell, 2007). Bracketing my own notions was a critical step in the acknowledgement of my own bias before and during data collection, as well as in the process of analysis. Prior to interviewing participants, my own experiences were *bracketed* through the utilization of personal exploratory writing and the interview process, following the interview protocol and transcribing my own answers, "In part to become aware of the dimensions of experience and in part to become aware of personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions" (Merriam, 2009, p.25). By making my biases overt and examining how my knowledge may bias me in the understanding of participant responses (Creswell, 2007), I was better able to distinguish information I previously held from new information gathered from participants.

I am a white, middle socioeconomic status, female doctoral student, parent, wife, and teacher. I was raised by two parents that valued religious education and struggled to send their five children to Catholic schools. Though financial difficulties were part of my parent's reality, my childhood was stable and insular. My childhood awareness of white privilege was undeveloped though I grew up in an almost completely white neighborhood nestled inside an almost completely black district. The schools I attended were

predominately white in student demographics and culture. Markedly different from my personal educational experiences, the schools I have chosen to teach in have been systemically segregated and my teaching experience reflects the characteristically misaligned demographic divide between teachers and students.

Like the participants and in some cases, with, the participants in this study, I completed the culturally responsive training provided by the selected district. Large group training was led by guest presenters and professionals from outside the district and were largely standardized. Smaller break-out sessions were facilitated by principals and building administrators and varied in quality and content. Training sessions were offered for a minimum of one year and exact dates of participation varied for participants and the researcher. The culturally responsive training sessions were implemented in varying years throughout the selected district and the timing of participation in the training was dependent on building. Further professional development on the topic of cultural responsivity was optional for buildings and was offered by administration in only one building represented in this study. My insider knowledge of the training sessions offered a reference point that provided a common vantage point, facilitating a greater ease of understanding and connection during the interviews.

I was further connected to the participants through our shared experiences of teaching in the selected district and working for the support district. My work in both districts spans a decade and offered me a positionality that allowed teacher participants to recognize me as an insider. Working with CLD students with dis/ability labels provided a point of connection between myself and my colleagues that creates a common understanding of terms and expectations as well as a feeling of comradery. Although I

did not know all the teacher participants prior to the interviews, the connection of understanding the structure of both the selected and support districts facilitated the establishment of comfort and trust during the interviews because my positionality is collegial, familiar, and non-evaluative.

Transcendental phenomenology: Analysis process.

Following the tenets of Transcendental phenomenology as outlined by Moustakas (1994), an inductive and iterative process of analysis was used; data was collected and analyzed simultaneously (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Interviews were then read and re-read in order to gain a close experience and derive the inner structure or meaning of the data. The data was analyzed through *phenomenological reduction*, a process of reducing the information to significant statements or quotes, was used to isolate the phenomena (Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). This process is outlined in Table 2.1, Procedures of Analysis.

During the process of *horizontalization*, statements were read and reread, then coded into themes and recorded in a code book. *Horizontalization* is the process of laying out all the data for examination, treating each piece of data with equal weight in the initial phase of analysis (Merriam, 2009, p. 26), and then organizing the data into clusters of meaning or themes by "interweaving the person, conscious experience, and phenomenon" in which qualities were recognized and described; every perception is granted equal value, nonrepetitive constituents of experience are linked thematically, and a full description is derived" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 96). The multiple listenings allowed for convergence of themes within and across interviews (Seidman, 2005).

Table 2.1

Procedures of Analysis

Steps of Phenomenology	Phenomenological Analysis Process	Sources	DisCrit Analysis Process
Bracketing	Prior to participant interviews, my own interview was transcribed and analyzed to help me understand my bias and judgements and make them overt in order to raise my awareness of how prior knowledge and views may cloud the new knowledge brought by the participants.	(Merriam, 2009)	Researcher's interview was transcribed and coded with an awareness of the DisCrit tenets and research question (see Table 2.2 for preliminary codes). Interview questions were reviewed based on the results of coding this interview, to check for the elicitation of answers to the research question and sub questions. Coded answers were charted for analysis (see Table 2.2). The essence of the experience was written to explore bias and create an awareness of how presuppositions may cloud research.
Phenomenological Reduction:	Interviews were transcribed and coded	(Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994)	Transcriptions were read and re-read, and information was reduced to significant phrases and meanings and coded.
Horizontalization:	Examination of all data with equal weight: clusters of meaning emerged. Codes were recorded in the code book. Examination of all clusters of meaning with equal weight: themes emerged. Clusters of meaning were recorded in a code book. Themes were recorded in a code book.	(Merriam, 2009, p. 26) (Moustakas, 1994, p. 96).	Codes from each interview were aligned to DisCrit tenets for each research sub question & recorded on coding tables for each interview. Codes from intersecting tenets & sub questions were grouped together, recorded, and analyzed for emergent clusters of meaning. DisCrit-aligned emergent clusters of meaning were recorded in a code book then analyzed for emergent themes. Themes were recorded in a code book after several examinations.
Textural Descriptions:	Written: participants' experiences	(Creswell, 2013)	Descriptions of the participants' experiences were recorded through the lens of DisCrit tenets.
Structural Descriptions:	Written: how phenomenon is experienced in terms of the conditions, situations, setting, or context	(Creswell, 2013).	Descriptions of how the phenomenon was experienced through the lens of DisCrit tenets regarding situations, setting, or context was recorded.
*Essential, Invariant Structur*e:	Composite writing that conveys an overall essence of the experience	(Creswell, 2013).	Composite writing filtered through the lens of DisCrit was recorded. The composite writing was shared with the participants in a member check.

From the significant statements that were coded, clusters of meaning emerged. Those clusters of meaning were examined using the same process of *horizontalization*, laying out all the data for examination, treating each cluster of meaning with equal weight, (Merriam, 2009) and interweaving the phenomenon until themes emerged (Moustakas, 1994).

Textural descriptions of the participants' experiences and *structural descriptions* of how they experienced the phenomenon in terms of the conditions, situations, setting, or context, were included in the code book (Creswell, 2013). A combination of the textural and structural descriptions as well as the emergent clusters of meaning and themes were focalized into a composite writing that conveyed an overall essence of the experience, or an *essential, invariant structur*e (Creswell, 2013). This composite writing was presented to participants for member checks in order to ensure accuracy from the interviews. The composite writing was emailed to all participants with an invitation to offer feedback about the results of the analysis.

DisCrit lens: Analysis process.

As described above, an iterative and inductive process of data collection and analysis were used (Moustakas, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and filtered through the theoretical lens of DisCrit, described here.

Prior to interviewing participants, my own experiences were *bracketed* through the recording and transcription of my interview, coding of the text, the recording of emergent themes documented in a code book, the charting of the codes to align research question topics and DisCrit tenets in a coding chart (see Table 2.2 Coding Table, for an example of my preliminary codes). Participant interviews were also audio-taped and

Table 2.2

Coding Table

Researcher Interview			
Tenets of DisCrit	Research Sub Questions		
	Life Experiences	Formal Experiences	Meanings and Understandings	Actions
1. Normalcy	Absent representation in media & literature	Absent representation in literature	Awareness of stigma	Selecting representational materials
2. Multidimensional Identities	External Identity Markers		Culture shock	
3. Social Constructionism	Awareness of stigma	Shifting criterion for dis/ability labels	Waning support for label constructs	Translating labels
4. Privileging marginalized voices				Authentic communication
5. Denial of Rights				
6. Interest Convergence				
7. Activism				Surveying community needs

transcribed verbatim. The researcher listened to the interviews through the lens of the tenets of DisCrit, and then read the transcriptions through the lens of the DisCrit tenets, in order to gain a close experience of the data and derive the meaning of the data as it relates or, does not relate to the tenets of DisCrit. The data was reduced to significant statements for the purpose of isolating the phenomena. The significant statements were reduced into codes. Codes from each interview were recorded on a coding chart that demonstrated the intersection of sub questions and DisCrit tenets and provided a visual structure to aid in analysis. Each interview did not necessarily produce codes for each intersection of sub question and tenet. For example, the analysis of interview ten did not produce any codes for the intersection of life experiences and interest convergence and is represented by a blank space on the coding table. The gaps in data were reflective of the experiences, meanings, and actions particular to the individual teacher participant. The codes produced by the individual interviews were grouped together in each intersection and analyzed until clusters of meaning emerged. Multiple readings of interviews, codes, and clusters of meaning were read and reread throughout each part of this process. Clusters of meaning were recorded in the code book and examined in the context of each tenet and sub question. Clusters of meaning were analyzed across the tenet categories and analyzed for themes for each sub question. The related clusters of meaning were grouped together and analyzed for emergent themes. The emergent themes were recorded into the code book and charted into the coding table. The interviews were again compared for convergence of themes within and across interviews. Although clusters of meaning occurred for each grouping of codes aligned to each tenet, when viewed from the vantage of the examination of themes (as shown in the Tables included in the methodology

chapter) there appear to be gaps in the data, indicated by a blank space on the tables. The

blank space indicates that the codes and/or clusters of meaning for that particular

category align to a different theme. An example of this can be found in the results

chapter within the examination of sub question three: Actions. The table for theme one

(Table 3.9) does not show codes or clusters of meaning aligned to the tenet Denial of

Rights. Clusters of meaning and codes aligned to the Denial of Rights tenet occur for

themes two and three (Table 3.10 and Table 3.11).

Descriptions of the experiences and how the experiences occurred, as related to

situations, settings or context, as viewed through the lens of the DisCrit tenets were

written for each interview. Those *textural* and *structural* descriptions were recorded in

the code book and allied with the clusters of meaning for each tenet category. The

textural and structural descriptions were composited and examined through the lens of the

DisCrit tenets and recorded in the code book. A composite writing that conveyed the

essential invariant structure of the data was written and shared with the participants in

member checks.

The steps outlined here describe the analysis of data that followed the established

methodology of Transcendental Phenomenology and applied the critical lens of DisCrit

to each step of the process for the purpose of answering the research question and sub

questions and are outlined in Table 2.3, titled Methodological Overview.

Validation of Findings

Reliability, credibility, and validity measures are a concern for qualitative

researchers (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sandelowski, 1986).

Table 2.3

Methodological Overview

Research Paradigm & Strategies (Underlying philosophy & data collection methods)	Research Methodology & Methods (Principles that govern the use of research methods & the tools and procedures used to generate data)
Qualitative Research informed by Transcendental Phenomenology & Disability Critical Race Studies	*Qualitative Methodology* *Semi-Structured Interview*
Data Focus on in-depth description; Textural and structural	**Data Sources** Semi-structured Interview a) Develop protocol -use of open-ended questions at start
Analysis Data analysis using inductive approach	-use of probes and closed ended questions -use of second interviews for clarification b) Conduct & record interviews
Establishing Credibility a. Descriptive validity b. Collaborative analysis c. Member checks	c) Horizontalization method of coding and data analysis.

Several steps were taken to ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of this study. These steps are outlined in this section.

Descriptive validity.

The first step taken in assuring the *Descriptive Validity* of this study was the recording of each interview on a digital handheld audio recording device. The audio recording of each interview ensured an exact representation of the participants' statements and was preserved in the verbatim transcription of the interviews.

Collaborative analysis.

The second assurance toward establishing credibility was the use of *Collaborative Analysis*, which was used in the initial stages of coding the data. The primary researcher coded all data. A second researcher coded 33% of the data and we convened to discuss individual findings.   The second researcher was an intern under the direction of the research advisor. When disagreement occurred, a discussion continued until consensus was reached.

Member checks.

Additionally, the researcher employed *member checks*. Member checks, also called *respondent validation*, is the solicitation of feedback on emergent findings from the people interviewed (Merriam, 2002). The member checks involved emailing the summary of findings to all participants and asking questions to see if the analysis rings true. Member checks are the "single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstanding of what you observed" (Maxwell, 2005, p.111). Participants were contacted via email and the essential, invariant structure of the findings was shared with them. They were invited to give feedback regarding their opinions on the accuracy and results of the analysis. Of twelve mailed member checks, one participant provided a response to the respondent validation. Her response expressed a desire for a more detailed explanation of the themes that emerged in response to the research question and sub questions and the criticism that the "passion brought to the interview was not reflected in the end result." She felt strongly that culturally responsive

instruction is critical to education and wanted to see more passion conveyed in the emergent themes and clusters of meaning. Low response rates may have been due to timing; respondent validations were emailed to respondents during summer break, using the selected district's email server. Many teachers do not check district email during uncontracted months and may have first encountered the member check during back-to-school preparations and not prioritized responding while preparing for students.

Contextualizing the Data Analysis Process

Crafting a cohesive analysis of the data was challenging. Participants spoke about their experiences and meanings in overlapping and fluid descriptions that encompassed numerous aspects of both the research question and sub questions and theoretical framework at once. Some aspects of participant perceptions were applicable to multiple categories. The distillation that took place in the refined coding process produced many codes that repeated across multiple DisCrit tenet categories and represented similar or variant aspects of those codes. The process of data analysis included ensuring the exclusivity of each code and aligning it to the research sub question that it answered. For example, some respondents shared stories about the influence of life experiences when asked about the influence of formal educational or training experiences. Through the process of listening carefully to the interviews and the process of phenomenological reduction, careful attention was given to the categorization of codes and the exclusivity of each code was protected.

Comprehensive Textual Description

Data analysis involved carefully reading the participants' transcripts several times and breaking the text into significant sentences, passages, and meaning units in the

process of *phenomenological reduction*.   The next step was to assign each meaning unit

or significant statement an initial code or phrase to signify the meaning of the text. The

first round of coding produced an enormous number of signifying codes. The second

round of coding was centralized around the condensation of descriptions into their

essential meanings and unique codings that allowed for clustering of emerging

themes.   The results of the second round of codes was titled "refined codes" and

recorded in a code book. The refined codes were examined with equal weight and

grouped into clusters of meaning. Each meaning cluster was coded with its emergent

theme, aligned to a single DisCrit tenet, and recorded into a coding book during the

process of *horizontalization*. Additional notes about the conditions, situations, and

context about the phenomena of the participants' experiences were summarized in the

code book, labeled as *textural* and *structural descriptions*. For some codes, the essence

of the structural and textural descriptions was condensed into a single word or phrase

called a Descriptor. Descriptors refer to the conditions, situations, or context that

describes codes and offers further development of the codes without the inclusion of rich

descriptive language. A synthesis of these textural and structural descriptions was

included in the composite writing or *essential, invariant structure* that was shared with

participants during the member check.

Two sets of codebooks were developed based on the interviewed protocol that

followed the primary research question that guided this study: *How do teachers of*

culturally linguistically diverse (CLD) students with dis/ability labels of LD, BD/ED,

and/or ID perceive their ability to implement culturally responsive educational practices

(CREP)? The first codebook included initial codes, in vivo codes, significant statements,

refined codes, and textural and structural notes and descriptions. The second codebook included the refined codes answering each of the four research sub questions filtered through the tenets of DisCrit, the clusters of meanings, the themes that emerged for each sub question, and the answer to the primary research question.

Two sets of codebooks were developed based on the interviewed protocol that followed the primary research question that guided this study: *How do teachers of culturally linguistically diverse (CLD) students with dis/ability labels of LD, BD/ED, and/or ID perceive their ability to implement culturally responsive educational practices (CREP)*? The first codebook included initial codes, in vivo codes, significant statements, refined codes, and textural and structural notes and descriptions. The second codebook included the refined codes answering each of the four research sub questions filtered through the tenets of DisCrit, the clusters of meanings, the themes that emerged for each sub question, and the answer to the primary research question.

Summary of Methods

This study sought to detail teachers' perceptions of their ability to provide a culturally responsive instruction for students that identify as culturally and/or linguistically diverse and as having a dis/ability. It employed qualitative methods informed by transcendental phenomenology and examined through a DisCrit lens. Chapter 2 outlined the procedures for data collection, detailed the procedures for participant sampling, outlined the interview and transcription protocol, the method of data analysis, and discussed how rigor and trustworthiness were ensured throughout the study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS

Chapter Two presented a rationale for conducting a qualitative study utilizing phenomenological methodology to uncover the lived and formal experiences of teachers working with CLD students with dis/abilities as well as the meanings and understandings and actions taken by those teachers toward implementing the goals of culturally responsive educational practice. The specific methods and processes used to collect and analyze the data included participant recruitment, procedures for conducting the research, the description of data analysis, and the procedures for validating the findings.

Chapter Three presents the results of the data analysis and includes descriptions of the results, descriptions of the codes which comprised the clusters of meanings and themes, and examples of participant voices pulled from the transcripts. The themes which emerged from the analysis of the codes and subsequent clusters of meaning are connected to each sub question and presented in sequential order answering each of the four sub questions. The results of the sub question analyses connect to answer the primary research question and the chapter closes with a summary of the results section.

Life Experiences Description

The first research sub question: *How do teachers describe the ways in which their life experiences prepared them to implement CREP to CLD students with dis/abilities?* was born out of the recognition that our lived experiences shape our meanings and understandings (Van Manen, 1990) around race, dis/ability, culture, and language as well as feelings of preparedness, actions, and motivations for implementing culturally responsive practices. The life experiences shared by teachers included personal

experiences from childhood and adulthood, experiences that took place in a variety of settings and contexts, and experiences that directly impacted both themselves and others.

Initial coding of the first sub question produced 128 codes across the seven tenets of DisCrit. Those initial codes were distilled and refined into 33 refined codes across the seven tenets, then analyzed for clusters of meaning within the context of each tenet. A total of 12 clusters of meaning emerged across the seven tenets of DisCrit. Those clusters of meaning were further analyzed, using the process of horizontalization, until they produced two common themes: (a) Manifestations of Racism and Ableism Impact Those Labeled and (b) Increased Awareness of the Impact of Race and dis/Ability Labels Prompts Action. Those two themes represent a composite of the life experiences shared across all twelve interviews. The codes, clusters of meaning, and themes are represented in the Life Experiences Tables, specific to each theme above and will be elucidated upon here.

Life experiences: The impact of race & dis/ability labels.

"You're not my student."

The first theme *Manifestations of Racism and Ableism Impact Those Labeled* is comprised of four clusters of meaning: (a) Manifestations of Racism and Ableism, (b) Race and Dis/Ability Labels Impact Those Identified, (c) Experiences of Restriction, and (d) Continued Exclusion of Voices. Those clusters of meaning are significant because they highlight that the concepts of race and ability are deeply impactful for those that are labeled.

Table 3.1

Life Experiences: The Impact of Race & Dis/Ability Labels

Research Sub-Question: How do teachers describe the ways in which their life experiences prepared them to implement CREP to CLD students with dis/abilities?

Theme One: The Manifestations of Racism and Ableism Negatively Impact Those Labeled

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DisCrit Tenets	**Clusters of Meaning**	**Codes**
Normalcy	Manifestations of Racism & Ableism	Communication of low expectations Segregation by dis/Ability Experiences of Racism
Multidimensional Identity		
Social Constructionism	Race and dis/ability labels impact those identified	Defining dis/Ability Discriminatory practices Negative generalizations Impact of a dis/ability label Impacted outcomes
Privileging Marginalized Voices		
Denial of Rights	Manifestations of racism & ableism	Harsher consequences Restrictive settings Inequitable resources Unmet needs
	Experiences of Restriction	Grouping by ability Exclusion Restrictions for Teachers of CLD students with dis/Abilities
Interest Convergence	Continued Exclusion of Voices	Universalizing systems Increasing exposure Responding to diverse needs
Activism		

Teacher respondents discussed the *Manifestations of Racism and Ableism* through the context of the tenet Normalcy and secondly through the tenet Denial of Rights. In the consideration of how racism and ableism circulate in often invisible or neutralized ways, *Manifestations of Racism and Ableism* were described as (a) the Communication of Low Expectations, transmitted by society and schools, (b) the Segregation by Dis/Ability including separate classes, teachers, and districts for students with dis/ability labels, and (c) Direct Experiences of Racism including descriptors ranging from inclusion such as "the expected participation in racist jokes" (Marnie, p. 8) to exclusion or experiences of separateness, expressed by a biracial teacher,

> As I got older, I wished my skin was whiter so I would look like everyone else because when I invited a friend over, most of my friends were white, or all, until I got older. We would go to the store, go out to a restaurant, and society saw me as 'the friend.' If I would go to my friend's house, and we would go out, society saw me as the friend. I was always 'the friend' even when I was in my own family, because I didn't look like them. So I wanted to look like them. So white is definitely the standard to be. I don't think that it's intentional. I really don't. I don't think that white people walk around saying, "Everyone should look like me because I'm the norm." I don't think that. I think a lot of people are oblivious to the fact that they have that given clout. I don't think they know.
> (Abigail, p. 37).

Another range of expression of Racism spanned from innocuous,

> As a kid at school, I noticed that all the kids in the examples had white names like Sally and Bobby. I guess most kids now don't have those names, which is why we use them? But why is it that we don't just throw out Khaleel?" (Abigail, p. 36)

to more menacing example shared by Carleah,

> One boy, a white guy, brought a horse whip to school, and there was a girl who was very fair-skinned, and you might say she's a mulatto, but her mother and father were just fair-skinned black people, but I think her grandmother or grandfather was white, but he did the whip at her and said, 'Jump, jump!' Even at my age it still stands out to me that that happened (p.10).

Teachers evidenced how the manifestations of racism and ableism are normalized in their

life experiences and also discussed how their life experiences have led to the recognition

that legal and historical means are used to deny the rights of some citizens. The

manifestations of racism and ableism impacting the denial of educational rights for CLD

students with dis/Abilities includes descriptions of (a) harsher consequences, (b) unmet

needs, (c) more restrictive settings, and (d) inequitable resources. Harsher Consequences

for CLD students with dis/Abilities were described as being contextually unclear, more

frequent, issued as a response to frustration with behavior, evidenced by separation from

peers, perceived as targeted, implemented with fewer clearly outlined procedures, and

witnessed as the threatened denial of food or recess, as described here by Tia,

> I have heard teachers deny them [students with dis/abilities] lunch, during their
> lunch time. Instead the kid gets lunch with another grade level after they finish
> their work, but the student is led to believe that they're not gonna get lunch. I've
> heard teachers deny them the right to go outside and play at recess, when they
> only get 20 minutes a day anyways. That happens a lot, um, denying them the
> right to go to recess (p.30).

Five teachers described the Unmet Needs of students, detailing their unaddressed social

emotional needs, overpopulated classrooms grouping students lacking grade-level

reading proficiency, inefficient or dated tools used to prepare for standardized testing,

unaddressed outcomes connecting students and prisoners with disproportionately high

educational disabilities of ED, ID, and LD, and the difficult expectation of implementing

strategies and supports to access grade level curriculum to classes with compositions of

more than 50% of students reading more than three years below grade level. Restrictive

Settings, described by five teachers as inappropriate, often irreversible, disproportionate,

segregated, and disconnected from peers were described in this vignette by Angela,

It was alarming to walk into my self-contained classroom in a predominately white school and see 70% of the class was African-American. These students didn't meet the criteria for such a restrictive setting, but I was new and not in a place to question it (p.5).

Inequitable Resources were described as connected to dis/Ability, economics, districts, and race noted in terms of course offerings, materials, and curriculum, described here by a teacher of CLD students with dis/Abilities describing one of her classes,

There is no curriculum guide written for the Tier III class [student performing three or more years below grade level], which is mostly comprised of kids with dis/abilities. There isn't even a teacher's guide, and no modified settings to address their needs (Nicole p.30).

These teachers recount the normalization of discrimination toward their students and the denial of rights of CLD students with dis/Abilities, describing how these life experiences engendered an awareness of the negative impacts of race and dis/ability labels for those identified as such.

Not only do racism and ableism manifest as normalized practices used to deny the rights of certain populations, but they also deeply impact those who are identified and labeled. The second cluster of meaning, *Race and Dis/Ability Labels Impact Those Identified*, was coded as (a) defining dis/ability inconsistently (b) Discriminatory Practices, (c) Negative Generalizations, (d) Impact of a Dis/Ability Label, and (e) Impacted Outcomes. This cluster of meaning emerged through the tenet of Social Constructionism that rejects the notion that race and ability are discrete and categorical, and recognizes the potential to manipulate, invent, and retire the constructions of these continuums as needed. When asked to consider the impact of their life experiences related to the social constructions of race and dis/Ability on their ability to implement a culturally responsive practice, 25% of teachers discussed how the very process of

defining and labeling a dis/ability directly evidenced its nature as a social construction, describing the subjectivity involved in the determination of labels, the difficulty drawing similarities between similarly labeled individuals, and the high variance of qualifying criteria throughout the country, expressed here by Sharina, "Kids move in and out of qualifying for their labels between states" (p.4). The defining criteria ED, ID, and LD are not only soft, the application of race and dis/Ability labels can result in described discriminatory practices including overly restrictive settings that can limit access to peers and curriculum as well as the withholding of accommodations that provide tools to help how students access the same content as their non-dis/Abled peers. The application of the labels of race and dis/Ability were also described as contributing to negative generalizations about race relations and mistrust, the projection of stereotypes around misbehavior, preconceptions of capability and behavior such as defiance, based on labels. The impacts of a dis/ability labels were described as negatively impacting expectations and class placement described by Marlene who said, "the expectations [from administration] for Tier III students are low- keep them quiet and happy, the expectation is they will be in trouble most of the time (p.12) but also described by one Taniya as inconsequential, "I've met people my entire life who have different disabilities in which they didn't let that hold them back" (p.14). Finally, socially constructed race and dis/Ability labels placed on students were also considered in light of their impact on outcomes when combined with other external factors such as opportunities and circumstances, the impact of untreated needs and overly restrictive settings, and the acknowledgement of dis/Ability between diverse cultures.

Continuing the examination of the manifestations of racism and ableism and their impact on the denial of rights for those labeled, brings us to the third cluster of meaning, *Experiences of Restrictions,* comprised by (a) Grouping by Ability, (b) Exclusion, and (c) Restrictions for Teachers. Teachers described their experiences of teaching students grouped by ability, as either wrought with behavioral challenges when marred by low expectations or successful when accompanied by high expectations and appropriate support, as ineffective when marked by overly-divergent high needs and high numbers, and often characterized by an ineffective use of teacher expertise.

Life experiences defined by *Exclusion* were encompassed in two shared stories, one experienced by a student, the other experienced by a teacher, when she was a student. Tia shares her observation of one exclusion based on dis/Ability,

> Teachers, um, deny them... deny a student, this happened last year, she brought donuts from Krispy Kreme's, each kid got one donut and because the student's number of minutes, she perceived that student as my student and not hers, and didn't bring the kid a donut. Yes. The kid that was afraid of her. Even though he was only in her room for a half hour, the whole day... you know, and he naturally found out outside at recess when the kids were talking about it. And this was a kid with ED. So, everybody was talking about it outside at recess that when they come in they're gonna get a donut. And he was like "Awesome!" and he said, "Can I have my donut before I go to Ms. Miller's room?" and the teacher said, "No. You don't get a donut. You're not my student"(p.31).

This example of how multidimensional students can be treated as "other" inside their classrooms based upon receiving special education services also illustrates how exclusions impact students on multiple levels. The second shared story veers from the focus on race and dis/ability but is included here to illustrate the complex nature of multidimensional identity and the danger of partitioning aspects of identity into singular categories. Nicole's experience of exclusion based upon sexual identity occurred in her

high school, that determined there would be two proms: one for straight couples and a separate "gay prom," called a 10% Dance.

> I had a girlfriend in high school and I was not allowed to bring my partner with me to prom. So that definitely kind of threw me for a loop and that was a life experience that I wouldn't want someone to experience. To feel like they couldn't... And they're like, "Well, there's gonna be a gay prom, um, at the...whatever. And I felt... I didn't want to go to a gay prom. At my girlfriend's high school everyone was included, but I was literally told that I could not buy a ticket, a couple's ticket, for two females and my gay guy friend, he had a boyfriend and he was told the same thing. So, we ended up just going with friends but that's not the point. The point was the fact that like, I felt like I was being excluded from something and it was my right to be a part of it. So... It's still, and apparently today, it still hasn't not changed. That baffles me, because that's almost 20 years ago. (Nicole, p.33).

She went on to discuss the impact of that exclusion and how it motivated her to find creative avenues include students vulnerable to exclusion. Finally, the inquiry around the Denial of Rights and its impact on the implementation of the goals of CREP, produced a discussion about the separate systems of education in the selected district and the support district and its impact on teachers. Two teachers talked about restrictions placed on their ability to plan lessons for their students and the lack of latitude they are given as compared to colleagues that work with non-dis/abled students. A few teachers further elaborated on their experience of being excluded from planning meetings with colleagues that worked in higher Tiers (primarily comprised of non-dis/abled students) and were not allowed access to the provided curriculum and planning guides. These restrictions, whether levied against students in social situations or academic settings, or against teachers working with students with dis/abilities, deeply impacted the perceptions of inclusion and equity experienced by the interviewees.

Continued Exclusion of Voices is the final cluster of meaning comprising the theme *Manifestations of Racism and Ableism Impact Those Labeled* and occurred through the examination of Interest Convergence. When asked to consider their life experiences that impacted the desire to implement CREP, 25% of teachers interviewed talked about how elevating the voices of excluded peoples serves the goal of Interest Convergence. DisCrit describes gains made marginalized groups as born from the interests white able-bodied people in the tenet interest convergence. Although financial interests of the dominant culture are often the primary measure of interest convergence, some teachers in this study interpreted interest convergence to mean that the interests of the majority group benefit from the presence of marginalized groups. Teachers collectively illuminated the necessity of cultural competency as a vehicle for navigating social mores as an outsider and echoed the problems with low expectations. Teachers further described segregation of students with dis/abilities and of their teachers, noting that special education teachers bring a lot of expertise, but their voices are excluded, and lamented the lack of minority representation in materials, leading to the conclusion that gains for people with dis/Abilities have not yet converged with the interests of white middle-class citizens.

Examined through the tenets of Normalcy, Social Constructionism, and Denial of Rights, teachers described how their life experiences produced a recognition that the manifestations of racism and ableism negatively impact those labeled and that teachers perceived that those experiences better prepared them to implement CREP to CLD students with dis/Abilities. The second theme examines the response to the impact of those labels.

Life experiences: Increased awareness prompts action.

"If you recognize it, maybe then it will become normal"

Teachers not only described numerous impacts resulting from the labeling of race and dis/ability but also detailed how their *Increased Awareness of the Impacts of those Labels Prompts Action*, the second theme that emerged from the examination of the life experiences influencing teachers' ability to implement CREP for CLD students with dis/abilities. This theme is described in terms of eight clusters of meaning including (a) Communicated Messages of Acceptance, (b) Methods for Building Relationships, (c) Complexities of Multilingual Existence, (d) Desire to be a Voice for Marginalized People, (e) Promoting Equity, (f) Actions Promoting Activism, (g) Sources of Motivation, and (h) the Absence of Activism. These clusters of meaning and corresponding codes and theme are charted in Table 3.2.

When asked to describe the impact of their life experiences on their ability to implement CREP examined through the lens of Normalcy, 50% of teachers described how their *Increased Awareness of Impact of Race & Dis/Ability Labels Prompts Action* in terms of Communicating Messages of Acceptance, resulting from teachers' increased Awareness of Differences between CLD students with dis/Abilities and their white non-dis/Abled peers. The noticed differences included discrepancies in the allocation of resources, differing life expectancies, inequitable educational outcomes, and the lessened presence of opportunities for CLD students with dis/Abilities. The Awareness of Differences was elaborated upon by two teachers who discussed the impact of being a cultural outsider and its influence on their understandings of norms such as beauty standards and communication styles. Abigail talked about variant communication styles,

Table 3.2

Life Experiences: Increased Awareness Prompts Action

Research Sub-Question: How do teachers describe the ways in which their life experiences prepared them to implement CREP to CLD students with dis/abilities?		
Theme Two: Increased Awareness of the Impacts of Race and Dis/Ability Labels Prompts Action		
DisCrit Tenets	**Clusters of Meaning**	**Codes**
Normalcy	Communicating messages of acceptance	Awareness of differences Support
Multidimensional Identity	Implementing Methods for Building Relationships	Sharing identities & experiences Regarding the individual Teaching empowerment Increasing Representation in staffing
	Recognizing the Complexities of a Multilingual Existence	Multilingual experiences
Social Constructionism		
Privileging Marginalized Voices	Responding to the Desire to be a Voice for Marginalized People	Advocacy Motivations for teaching
Denial of Rights		
Interest Convergence	Promoting Equity	Universalizing systems Increasing Exposure Responding to Diverse Needs
Activism	Taking Actions to Promote Activism	Deliberate planning Building community pride
	Acting on Sources of Motivation	Motivations for teaching Personal causes
	Absence of Activism	Absence

> Some people don't understand that our kids don't come from whisper families, they don't come from the family where it's always quiet. A lot of families have multiple families living in the home, multiple siblings, and it's chaotic, and it's loud. So, to be heard they have to be loud, and that's what they know (p.18).

These Awarenesses of Differences were accompanied by an awareness of the significance of the presence or absence of *Support*, the final code under the tenet of Normalcy, characterized by financial, emotional, and familial support as well the impact of high expectations and open dialogue around dis/ability and shared experiences. Teachers described the importance of communicating messages of acceptance around noticed differences and offering various forms support as a response to ameliorating the impacts of race and dis/Ability labels, thus demonstrating actions toward implementing CREP for their students.

The lens of Multidimensional Identities, which explores the ways in which racism and ableism inform and rely upon each other in interdependent ways, was used to explore the ways in which teachers describe how their life experiences prepared them to implement CREP, producing two clusters of meaning describing the actions prompted by and increased awareness of race and dis/ability labels: (a) Implementing Methods for Building Relationships and (b) Recognizing the Complexities of Multilingual Existences. The described Methods for Building Relationships consisted of Sharing Identities and Experiences, including religion, linguistic similarities, dis/ability, educational experiences, race, and common residential areas, Regarding the Individual, described as eschewing stereotypes and celebrating what is unique, Teaching Empowerment, characterized by the promotion of gender equity, the utilization of restorative practices in the classroom and implementation of teaching methods designed

to promote independence, and Promoting the Increase of Diverse Representation Among Staff characterized by welcoming culturally and experientially diverse persons into educational teams. Teachers expressed that these four practices were critical components to building strong relationships with multidimensional students.

Communicated messages about *Recognizing the Complexities of Multilingual Existence* were common to 33% of teachers and were expressed through a variety stories about multilingual experiences including growing up speaking a language other than English at home, the employment of an additional language such as American Sign Language or Korean at home or at work, and living in a country that spoke a primary language other than English. The teachers all discussed the difficulties of navigating cultural norms in lived and teaching experiences. One teacher noted that, "Living two cultures isn't bridging, it's having a foot in two worlds" (Katrinka, p.7). The examination of multidimensional identities and the life experiences of teachers that impacted the communication and response to the impact of race and dis/ability labels shared by teachers, strongly influenced the methods for building student-teacher relationships, particularly for those teachers who lived and understood the complexities of living multilingual existences.

The discussion about life experiences around the tenet Privileging Marginalized Voices produced the meaning cluster *Responding to the Desire to be a Voice for Marginalized People* including the codes *Advocacy* and *Motivations for Teaching*. One teacher spoke fondly about her math teacher who saw past her circumstances and medical condition and advocated for her to get into upper level maths, positively impacting her

identity as a black female and producing in her the desire to advocate for students in similar ways.

> I am where I am because in sixth grade, I had a teacher that gave us a placement test and the placement test was in sixth grade, taking pre-algebra. I had a teacher named Miss Bea, and they took the test, and they ranked everybody according to score. Then, they had one classroom. and so, they filtered all the kids in that classroom based on scores. And I didn't make it. But then when I went down to the regular math class, I was bored, I was able to complete the assignment in 10 minutes and went to sleep. And because this woman looked past everything else, and actually went to bat and fought for me, and had it, they tried me out in the class. She's like, 'She's too smart, just because she didn't pass your stupid pre-determine test over stuff she didn't know, other kids probably guessed.' But she realized I had the ability and she fought for me. And I got into pre-algebra in sixth grade and I excelled from there (Taniya, p. 22).

Similarly, two teachers expressed the importance of providing opportunities to increase voice and equity for marginalized populations and described how personal experiences and witnessing difficult experiences marginalized peoples sourced their motivations for teaching. These experiences around advocacy integrated with and sourced motivations for teaching and were expressed as responding to the desire to be a voice for marginalized people.

Promoting Equity continues to be a critical aspect of Interest Convergence for teachers of CLD students with dis/Abilities. The ability to implement CREP was expressed in three active formats: (a) Universalizing Systems, (b) Increasing Exposure, and (c) Responding to Diverse Needs, all rooted in the quest to apply more inclusive practices. Researcher Derrick Bell tells us that Interest Convergence recognizes "Whiteness" and "Ability" as property, and that gains for politically oppressed groups occur only when their interests converge with those in the normative group (1980). Interviewed teachers described how implementation of Universalizing Systems

within schools works toward the goal of converging interests by eliminating stigma created by using dual, separate, or competing systems of data collection, information sharing, and goal setting. One teacher discussed the benefits of universalizing systems like point sheets for behavior,

> Just like the wheelchair ramp, the handicapped individuals can use it as well as parents with buggies or you know, a mom with a stroller or whatever. Um, a little kid riding a bicycle with mom walking behind. You know? Everybody uses the wheelchair accessible ramps now. If you recognize it, maybe then it will become normal, as opposed to it being a segregated thing. Like... instead of only people with a disability can use that ramp, everybody can use that ramp. I think it's important to recognize it, because it kind of does create equality. And a sense of.... a sense of equality. Just like with the behavior point sheet. I've had two teachers this week email me about, 'Hey, I really like this point sheet. Can I have an electronic copy to use with my other kids in my room?' Sure! If it became more standardized it would be... it wouldn't be everybody looks at the one kid with that point sheet and goes 'He's the behavior problem because he has a point sheet.' You know? (Tia, p.36).

Furthermore, sharing effective practices between general and special education teachers, while increasing the equitable use of materials, supplementals, and support mechanisms supports the interests of every student. Two teachers discussed how Increasing Exposure directly supports Interest Convergence by reducing confusion, fear, and misunderstanding related to culturally diverse and/or dis/Abled people, while increasing compassion and comfort, in contrast to the past and sometimes present educational practices of segregating CLD students with dis/abilities.

Finally, 16% of teachers reflected on how Responding to the Diverse Needs of CLD students with dis/abilities provided varied levels of support and benefits students in both inclusive classrooms and separate classrooms as well as their non-dis/Abled peers, and that environmental adaptations supporting the diverse needs of students are

beneficial to all students, not exclusively those students who have been labeled, thus demonstrating Interest Convergence as a responsive educational practice.

The final lens through which we discuss the theme, *Increased Awareness of the Impact of Race and Dis/Ability Labels Prompts Action,* is Activism, comprised of three clusters of meaning: (a) Actions Promoting Activism, (b) Sources of Motivation, and (c) Absence of Activism.   DisCrit authors Annamma, Connor, and Ferri tell us that activism is required and all forms of resistance are supported in a responsive teaching practice (2012).   Interviewed teachers described their Actions Promoting Activism as Building Community Pride and Deliberate Planning.   Building Community Pride, discussed by one middle school teacher and one high school teacher, emerged from the recognition that grouping students by dis/ability indirectly creates a community. The nature of ability grouping places students together in multiple classes, unifying schedules across subjects, and though not intentional, solidifies the group over multiple years of insulation from other students. Both teachers spoke about the significance of infusing pride into this accidental community and how the outgrowth of that community pride becomes activism. Deliberate Planning describes the actions of two teachers, who insisted that responsive planning is activism. One high school teacher talked at length about the thoughtful and deliberate planning that went into her lessons in response to socio-economic and social protests that were happening in the community. The second teacher, working with young elementary students, also insisted that her responsive planning was actively related to community and classroom events. She said that her planning was experiential, not based on her extensive training, but based on trial-and-error methodology, constantly evolving to match needs expressed by student behavior.

The second cluster of meaning, Sources of Motivation, is comprised of two codes: (a) Personal Causes and (b) Motivations for Teaching. Personal Causes included descriptions of activism outside of the classroom and its influence on teacher preparedness to implement CREP in classrooms. Three teachers revealed connections to providing disaster relief, participation in racial justice groups, working with outside groups to reduce suspensions in schools, and sustaining membership and leadership in women's equity groups and those teachers credited their participation in these Personal Causes as directly connected to their desire to implement activist practices in schools. Three other teachers described how their Motivations for Teaching had transformed their actions toward activism. Teacher-described motivations included "helping students find their passion," providing illumination on the possibility of other post-graduation paths- contrasting the single note of "college" sung by schools, promoting a "passion for the love of literacy," and the motivation of being recognized as standing for something and inspiring others to stand up for their causes. These Motivations for Teaching and the influence of Personal Causes comprise the Sources of Motivation that inspired teachers toward Activism. Finally, we examine the Absence of Activism, discussed by three teachers, noting that activism was not part of their school culture. One teacher shared that activism had not been promoted in her life or formal experiences, nor in her school, and that the absence of experience with activism causes may contribute to the resistance to activism in her teaching practice. She noted,

> I hate to say that, to me, it [educational practice] was always geared to more education, so in high school I worked as an A+ tutor. You know, I am helping other people understand and get an education. When I was in college, I tutored a lot of my friends in math and science, but it was more towards helping and gaining understanding and education, not really any sort of community outreach or something like that. So, I'm kind of embarrassed to say that (Angelica, p. 17).

Another teacher described activism as "the elephant in the room," hinting that it was both unwelcome and uncomfortable as a topic, a sentiment echoed by a third teacher who said activism was not part of their school culture and discussions and notions of activism were discouraged and excluded from conversation. When present, the practices of activism described by teachers are not top-down or initiated by institutions, rather, they are bottom-up, born from the recognition that activism serves the interests of CLD students with dis/Abilities, their teachers, and their peers, developed to promoting a more equitable educational experience.

Conclusion.

The influences of a myriad of life experiences contributed to the consolidation of teachers' statements about the nuances of racism and ableism, the complexities of multidimensional identities, the denial of student's rights, the gains made and ongoing struggles faced by those who are labeled, and the role of activism leading to the preparation of implementation of a culturally responsive educational experience for CLD students with dis/abilities. Those stories and statements were consolidated, coded, and analyzed for the purpose of answering the first sub question, *How do teachers describe the ways in which their life experiences prepared them to implement CREP to CLD students with dis/ablities?* The meanings and themes that emerged from this analysis describe how the life experiences of teachers have increased the awareness of the ways in which students are impacted by race and dis/ability labels and how teachers respond to the impact of those race and dis/ability labels. Increasing messages of acceptance, actively building relationships, advocating for equitable educational tools and opportunities, promoting systems that benefit all students, and exposing others to a

diverse presentation of skills and abilities are the active responses of teachers considering the impact of race and dis/ability labels on their students. The increased awareness and responsive actions describe how teachers attempt to implement a culturally responsive practice.

Formal Experiences Description

The life experiences of teachers have contributed in numerous ways to fuel the contextualization of desire to implement an equitable educational experience for all students. In addition to life experiences, formal experiences, including higher education classes, professional development, trainings, workshops, conferences, and book studies have also been part of the constellation of influences on the motivations to provide an equitable educational experience for every student. The second research sub question, *How do teachers describe the ways in which their formal educational experiences prepared them to implement CREP to CLD students with dis/abilities?* was designed to investigate how teachers' formal experiences supported the mandate to provide an equitable educational experience for all students.

The process of refining the codes describing the Formal Experiences of teachers resulted in a total of 17 codes spanning all seven tenets of DisCrit. Further analysis reduced those codes into 12 clusters of meaning. The clusters of meaning are represented in three themes, (a) An Increased Awareness of the Experience of Others Builds Connections, Facilitates Communication, and Improves Teaching Practice (b) Teacher Participants Expressed a Desire for More Training on Topics Related to Diverse Learners and (c) Participants Identified Barriers in the Education System. The results of the data examining how teachers describe the ways in which their formal experiences prepared

them to implement CREP are presented and expanded upon through the examination of each theme.

Formal experiences: Increased awareness.

"Training was eye opening"

The first theme, An Increased Awareness of the Experience of Others Builds Connections, Facilitates Communication, and Improves Teaching Practices emerged from the analysis of how (a) Communication Builds Relationships, (b) Awareness Builds Connections, and how (c) Training Promotes Self-Examination & Improves Teaching Practice. Communication Builds Relationships developed out of the examination of the ways that racism and ableism have been used jointly to marginalize certain peoples through the shaping of notions about the composition of normalcy and resulted in the recognition that formal training experiences Increase Awareness. District trainings offered teachers opportunities to share childhood experiences with coworkers and structured time to seek commonalities between people in different racial groups, resulting in an Increased Awareness for white teachers of institutionalized racism in dealings with the police and experiences of CLD students in school systems. Marlene shared her reaction to a shared story at PD,

> At the PD for cultural competency it was interesting, one young man was talking about 'Well, I went to my counselor and was like I really wanna do this job [teacher].' And she's like, 'Well, really? Maybe you're geared more towards being a trash picker up person, or something like that.' It's like, 'What!? You're their counselor and you're guiding…' This kid has big goals. I don't care if they're black, white, whatever they are, you don't put them down and say, 'You'll never be able to do that because of who you are.' You know? So, things like that I really... It shocked me that someone in education would even think that, but it makes me very careful. Yeah, that child may not be able to be a doctor, their reading level is so low, but you don't want to shoot their goals down. You don't know, so you encourage them to do the best they're able to do. So, it just shocked

Table 3.3

Formal Experiences: Increased Awareness

Research Sub-Question: How do teachers describe the ways in which their formal experiences prepared them to implement CREP to CLD students with dis/abilities?

Theme One: An Increased Awareness of the Experience of Others Builds Connections, Facilitates Communication, and Improves Teaching Practice

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DisCrit Tenets	Clusters of Meaning	Codes
Normalcy	Communication Builds Relationships	Increased Awareness Building Relationships
Multidimensional Identity		
Social Constructionism	Awareness Builds Connections	Building Connections
Privileging Marginalized Voices		
Denial of Rights		
Interest Convergence		
Activism	Training Promotes Self-Examination and Improves Teaching Practices	Improving Practice Focusing on Curriculum

---

> me. That was one example. When they brought that speaker in, I was like, 'Somebody actually said that to you?' It's just shocking to me. So, it just helped me to be more aware of what I'm saying to my students and just be more encouraging to them of their dreams and goals. Who am I to say you can't do something, you know? I'll help you any way I can. That shocked me like no other (p.5).

White teachers also reported an increased or new awareness of white privilege and a

resulting awareness of how racism is normalized and circulates in both invisible and

overt ways as a result of communicating with colleagues about their direct experiences

around the topic of race. Embedded in the descriptions of new awarenesses were the

acknowledgements that discussions around race are not always easy. Marlene also noted

that the training sessions could be quite uncomfortable,

> There were times when it seemed like there was a lot of anger, and it got very heated sometimes and it kind of made me feel uncomfortable like, 'Okay everybody is ganging up on white people?' It's like, 'Okay. we're not all… I'm here to get along with everybody.' I don't care, but there are times that it did make you feel uncomfortable. Like, 'Oh my god. Everybody in this room seems to hate me right now.' People like me, so that was a little uncomfortable, but there were times... Like I said, it was very interesting to hear their point and just to learn how they felt about how they're treated, and things are different. That I didn't know. So, it was different, but it was eye opening as well.

The second cluster of meaning, Awareness Builds Connections is comprised of a

single code, Building Connections, and resulted from the examination of the social

constructions of race and ability and a reflection of formal trainings. Teachers reported

that Building Connections with students and coworkers involves Acknowledging White

Privilege, Eliminating Generalizations, and Promoting Exposure and resulted in an

improved teaching practice. These descriptors emphasize the influence of race and

dis/ability labels as they relate to white privilege and how the very acknowledgement of

privilege builds connections, working to eliminate generalizations by focusing on the

unique facets of each individual builds connections, and promoting exposure to a variety

of culturally diverse topics including religion, dis/Ability, and languages provides

opportunities for students and staff to build connections with multidimensional students.

The conclusion that Training Promotes Self-Examination and Improved Teaching

Practice surfaced through and examination of Improving Practice and Focusing on

Curriculum. Participants shared how their formal training experiences improved their

teaching practices by providing strategies that emphasized collaboration, reward systems,

and data tracking. Tia, a teacher of students ages five through eight, shared that

"Trainings promote goal setting. I understand how the kids can analyze and track their

data and get rewards for their progress" (p. 10). Teachers discussed how both self-sought

and district-provided trainings focused on a variety of outcomes and self-directed and

collaborative approaches that offered teachers a tool-box from which gained strategies

could be applied in their practice.   The consideration of how formal experiences

prepared them to implement CREP prompted teachers to discuss trainings on curriculum

considered through the lens of activism. Participants reported familiarity with curricular

content and were provided multiple training opportunities around curricular content and

design, none featuring, addressing, or considering topics related to sociopolitical

consciousness, resistance, or social justice issues. One teacher noted that her philosophy

around the selection of different curriculum for different student populations had evolved,

"In my curriculum development class we were asked if urban and suburban schools

should use the same curriculum. In class I thought, 'Of course!' In practice, I'm not so

sure" (Abigail, p. 8). She went on to discuss how the socio-political context of provided

curriculum did not address the perspectives of her students and talked about one activity

she uses to consider the voice and power in their readings. Concluding that participant's

increased awareness builds connections, facilitates communication and improves

teaching practices results from the integration of the ideas that communication with

fellow staff and students builds relationships, particularly when that communication

addresses the often hidden functions of race and ability, that awareness, particularly the

awareness of experiences resulting from social constructions such as race and ability

builds connections, and that formal training on cultural responsivity promotes self-examination and improves our teaching practice.

The second code, *Focusing on Curriculum*, resulted from three teachers discussing curriculum through the lens of activism. The discussion around the second code wove around three distinct topics related to *Curriculum* including familiarity with curricular content, how formal training was focused on curriculum design rather than social justice issues, and how philosophies evolve around the selection of different curriculums for different student populations, like this teacher who noted, "In my curriculum development class we were asked if urban and suburban schools should use the same curriculum. In class I thought, 'Of course!' In practice, I'm not so sure" (Abigail, p. 8). The development of the theme *Increased awareness builds connections, facilitates communication, and improves practice* resulted from the integration of the ideas that (d) communication with fellow staff and students builds relationships, particularly when that communication addresses the often hidden functions of race and ability, (b) that awareness, particularly the awareness of experiences resulting from social constructions such as race and ability builds connections, and that (c) formal training on cultural responsivity promotes self-examination and improves our teaching practice.

Formal experiences: The desire for more training.

"I never hear anything about how to ready my Sped students"

In addition to recognizing that increased awareness builds connections, facilitates communication, and improves practice, Teacher Participants Expressed a Desire for More Training on Topics Related to Diverse Learners. This theme emerged from the analysis of six clusters of meaning all related to an absence of training on particular topics. The

Table 3.4

Formal Experiences: Desire for More Training

Research Sub-Question: How do teachers describe the ways in which their formal experiences prepared them to implement CREP to CLD students with dis/abilities?

Theme Two: Teacher Participants Expressed a Desire for More Training

DisCrit Tenets	Clusters of Meaning	Codes
Normalcy	Absent from Training	Dis/Ability Topics Race Gender LGBTQ Topics Culture Solutions
Multidimensional Identity	Further Training Needed	Dis/Ability Diversity Application Student-Centered Topics Experience is the best teacher
Social Constructionism		
Privileging Marginalized Voices	Further Training Needed	Diversity Dis/Ability Strategies to address gaps
Denial of Rights	Absent from Training	Dis/Ability Student barriers
Interest Convergence	Absent from Training	Dis/Ability Methodology Teacher support Non-Traditional students Student-Centered approach Equitable training for all teachers
Activism		

desire for more training is particularly salient because it comprises 42% of the total

clusters of meaning and is addressed through five of the seven tenets of DisCrit. As

implementers of policy, deliverers of curriculum, and the primary point of interaction for

more training across a variety of areas. Several desired training topics were repeated

amongst interviewees, most notably a resounding cry from 100% of teachers calling for

more training around dis/ability topics. Additional topics that were expressly desired in

formal trainings included gender issues, LGBTQ issues, barriers faced by CLD students

with dis/abilities, social justice, activism, culture, diversity, teacher support, non-

traditional students, race, pride, sociopolitical consciousness, and global community

leadership. Every teacher interviewed expressed a desire for training to cover a more

inclusive and holistic snapshot of student needs, such as this teacher who noted,

> I think whenever you talk about cultural diversity people automatically go to race and I think, yeah, if I was trained to work with… You know, if someone told me you're going to be working with foster kids and homeless kids, and strategies to use and strategies to avoid when working with them, I think I would have appreciated that a lot more and I think it would have benefited me more than just focusing on working with African Americans or, you know, going the race route (Tia, p.10).

Some teachers expressed that their formal trainings focused on creating an awareness of

problems and that the focus needed to shift to solutions, application, and methodology, as

well as becoming student-focused, rather than problem-focused. Several teachers noted

that most trainings were offered to either special education or general education teachers

but that all teachers would benefit from a more equitable training approach. Joanie noted

that "The Sped teachers participate in training for both districts and the Gen Ed teachers

do not have the same training (p.5)." Teachers employed by the selected district all

expressed specific desires for more training on dis/Ability topics, lamenting that their

college/University programs did not prepare them for the diverse learning needs encountered in their classrooms.   Finally, a few teachers noted an absence of buy-in from the entire staff around district training specific to cultural competency and elaborated on the importance of building a common vision in order to foster a building-wide cultural change.   The theme *Desire for More Training* conveyed that teachers are interested in improving and expanding their practice with CLD students with dis/abilities and have a ready list of topics that touch on the presenting needs of students.   In addition to disclosing their frustration with the narrow scope of current training topics and generating a list of preferred formal training topics, teachers recognized that, as practitioners, a shift toward formal training topics that increase awareness of student experiences and foster an approach that builds understanding and connection, will result in more authentic, empathetic, and meaningful communication between teachers, students, and families.

Formal experiences: Barriers in the education system.

"Talk about a systemic barrier!"

The examination of the ways in which formal experiences prepared teachers to implement CREP also produced the final theme: Participants Identified Barriers in the Education **System** as a Result of Formal Trainings. Illuminated in Table 3.5 and comprised of four clusters of meaning: (a) Barriers to Student Success, (b) Systemic Oppression, (c) Equitable Distribution of Beneficial Resources, and (d) Barriers to an Activist Agenda, this theme is examined through the lenses of Social Constructionism, Denial of Rights, Interest Convergence, and Activism.

Utilizing the lens of Social Constructionism and considering Formal Trainings and the implementation of CREP in their classrooms impelled teachers to examine the

Table 3.5

Formal Experiences: Barriers

Research Sub-Question: How do teachers describe the ways in which their formal experiences prepared them to implement CREP to CLD students with dis/abilities?

Theme Three: Teacher Participants Identified Barriers in the Education System.

DisCrit Tenets	Clusters of Meaning	Codes
Normalcy		
Multidimensional Identity		
Social Constructionism	Barriers to Student Success	Barriers to student success
Privileging Marginalized Voices		
Denial of Rights	Systemic Oppressions	Systemic Oppressions
Interest Convergence	Equitable Distribution of Beneficial Resources	Equitable resource distribution
Activism	Barriers to an Activist Agenda	Absent from training Unclear leadership Examining the influence of racism on perception

Barriers to Student Success, characterized by the Discouragement of Pursuing Lofty

Goals, Low Expectations, CLD Students with dis/Abilities Experiencing Inequitable

Access to the same Education Experience as white abled-bodied students, and the

Segregation of Students Based on dis/Ability. Three teachers discussed the implication

of labeling, rather by race or ability, and how the label creates barriers to success in

sometimes unintended ways. Generated from her own experience of marginalization, one

teacher was emphatic about the importance of encouraging perseverance in her students'

pursuits despite the discouragement or low expectations of others including one's own

family, she remarks,

> My grandma, my own grandma, told me that I would never… 'Don't even bother with going to college. You'll never make it in college. You just need to go to McDonald's and get a job.' And that made me want to strive. Oh, no, I'm going to show you. I got my Associate's degree and didn't stop there, went and got my Bachelors and my Masters. I am on my way to my 2nd Master's degree now. So, I encourage my students because a lot of the barriers I see for them are from their parents (Tia, p.7)

Teacher observations around the impact of low expectations also addressed teacher

behaviors, noting that teachers tend to cue students (unconsciously or non-verbally),

ultimately negating their independence. Shared Experiences also included stories about

unfair treatment and lack of accommodations provided to students, based on perceived

beliefs of low outcome expectations. One teacher described her realization that students

are segregated by dis/Ability, noting that teachers are learning *about* students with

dis/abilities in upper level courses (Bachelors and Masters programs), often for the first

time, instead of learning *with* students with dis/abilities throughout their school

experience.

Systemic Oppressions stemmed from a single code with the same name and was

identified in the examination of the Denial of Rights of CLD students with

dis/Abilities. The consideration of the legal, ideological, and historical denial of the

rights of some citizens based on dis/ability or race brought up for one teacher the

awareness that her students faced higher suspension rates than their non-labeled

peers. She went on to discuss how her formal training that addressed the inequitable

outcomes for CLD students with dis/Abilities,

I mean really regarding disability we were just starting to look at the research. And then we pulled a lot out of, oh I wish I could remember, what is that the pipeline book? Shoot! What is it called? It's about, the pipeline is in the title. I'm sorry. It was about, basically they targeted African-American boys in this research, African-American boys with disability; they are on this fast track to incarceration. So, we really pulled a lot of chapters out of that, and we looked at that, and then we kind of looked at a lot of our students like, that had gone on to the middle school and the high school. And looking at it, we are like, 'Yeah, you could pretty much identify they were on that track and they were headed down that path.' We realized that, so we had to step back. What can we do different because if we are seeing it at this age- we are seeing it at eight, ten and twelve years of age, that's the path they are headed on. We need to change that path for them. Let them know there is another option. Because for some of them that's all that they know. A lot of them, that's what they pick up on, through technology and media and things like that. We want to show them that there is another path for you and that's an OK path (Joanie, p.8).

She went on to consider the complicity of educators operating with an awareness of the school-to-prison pipeline in the oppression of CLD students with dis/abilities.

The Equitable Distribution of Beneficial Resources, examined through the lens of Interest Convergence, considers the dispersion of resources across the district, specifically, the absent or limited resources supplied to classrooms with high numbers of CLD students with dis/Abilities, and the unequal application of technology resources that benefit all students. One teacher working in a school with higher numbers of transient students as compared to other schools in the district wondered, "We want to get the most bang for our buck, we want to work with as many kids as possible, so where are the things that are good for everybody and especially great for kids with disabilities" (Marnie, p.20)? Another teacher visited a more affluent school in-district and noted the assistive technology devices that were regularly used in classrooms there were completely unavailable to her students, even when specially requested, "Talk about a systemic barrier!" (Tia, p.16).

The fourth cluster, Barriers to an Activist Agenda, emerged from three codes: (a) Absent from Training, characterized by 58% of teachers who noted absent training topics including pride, activism, sociopolitical consciousness, social justice, global community leadership, and buy-in for cultural competency trainings, (b) Unclear Leadership, generated from a discussion around the problems that resulted from differing mandates that went out across the district about how to handle student protests during a time of high involvement in local activist issues, resulting in a great deal of chaos, inconsistency, and ultimately, resentful feelings , and (c) Examining the Influence of Racism on Perception, which emerged from the self-reflection of one white teacher who spent a year examining his preconceptions and experiences working with black students. Though teachers were keen to identify external barriers, Examining the Influence of Racism on Perception incorporates identifying the influences of systemic oppressions into the less frequently explored practice of self-examination, described as "Critical. It takes time." (Johannas, p. 6). Without training, strong leadership, and reflective examinations, participation in an activist agenda is unlikely.

Formal experiences: Conclusion.

The formal experiences of teachers including university and college courses, professional developments, self-sought trainings, workshops, and other courses were discussed and analyzed for the purpose of answering the second research sub question, How do teachers describe the ways in which their formal experiences prepared them to implement CREP to CLD students with dis/abilities? The clusters of meaning and themes that emerged from this analysis through a DisCrit lens indicated that formal experiences increased teachers' awareness of inequities faced by their students and coworkers and

prompted a response of connection building and communication facilitation around those inequalities with both students and coworkers. The discussion around preparedness to implement a culturally responsive educational experience for students elicited the expression of a desire for more training on a wide variety of topics related to the implementation of the goals of CREP. Finally, teachers identified barriers in the educational system that disrupt the path of the implementation of culturally responsive programming for CLD students with dis/abilities. The desire for more training, the identification of barriers that disturb progress toward CREP, and the turn toward communication and connection as a response to awareness of inequity signal the impact of culturally responsive formal training on teachers working with CLD students with dis/abilities.

Meanings and Understandings

Teachers have described the ways in which their life and formal experiences prepare them to implement a culturally responsive practice with students. The exploration of the impact of these experiences leads into the exploration of how teachers think about and make meaning from their experiences. Ann Bertoff (1981) offers an explanation of how we can think about reasoning,

> Critical awareness is consciousness of consciousness (a name for the active mind). Minding the mind, being conscious of the consciousness, is not the same sort of thing as thinking about your elbows when you're about to pitch a baseball; nor is it self-consciousness. Consciousness in meaning-making activity always involves us in interpreting our interpretations; thinking is a matter of "arranging our techniques of arranging"; criticism is a matter of coming to "Know our knowledge" (p. 44).

The third research sub question, *How do teachers describe their meanings and understandings about dis/abilities, race, culture, and language as outlined by the tenets of DisCrit?* was developed as a channel to stream a discussion through the significance, impact, and interpretation of the life experiences and formal experiences impacting teachers working with CLD students with dis/abilities.

The initial coding of the third sub question produced 137 codes across the seven tenets of DisCrit. Those initial codes were distilled and refined into 40 codes across the seven tenets and were analyzed for clusters of meaning within the context of each tenet. A resulting 12 clusters of meaning emerged from the analysis of codes and were further analyzed until they produced three common themes: (a) Teachers Describe the Impact of Race & Dis/Ability Labels as Negative for Those Identified, (b) Open and Responsive Communication Builds an Optimal Learning Environment, and (c) Teacher Participants Identified Barriers to Successful Implementation of CREP Goals. The three themes represent a composite of the meanings and understandings expressed across all twelve interviews.

Meanings and Understandings: The impact of race & dis/ability labels. "Wounding and Perpetuating"

The first theme, Teachers Describe the Impact of Race & Dis/Ability Labels as Negative for Those Identified, is comprised of 3 clusters of meaning: (a) Increased Awareness Builds Sensitivity and Empowerment, (b) Race & Dis/Ability Labels Impact Those Identified, and (c) Manifestations of Racism & Ableism. Those clusters of meanings embody teacher understandings of how race and dis/ability labels impact students, colleagues, administrators, peers, and families.

Table 3.6

Meanings & Understandings: The Impact of Labels

Research Sub-Question: How do teachers describe their meanings and understandings about dis/Abilities, race, culture, and language as outlined by the tenets of DisCrit?

Theme One: The Impact of Race and Dis/Ability as Negative for Those Labeled

DisCrit Tenets	Clusters of Meaning	Codes
Normalcy	Increased Awareness Builds Sensitivity and Empowerment	Impact of racism on people Impact of systemic oppressions Impact on Expected Outcomes Awareness of privilege Building connections Perceptions of Dis/Ability
Multidimensional Identity		
Social Constructionism	Race and Dis/Ability Labels Impact Those Identified	Grouping by Ability Negative generalizations Trouble with labels Future investment Identifying with social constructs Recognizing privilege Reasons for teaching
Privileging Marginalized Voices		
Denial of Rights	Manifestations of Racism and Ableism	Student Groupings Low expectations Unmet Needs Systemic Oppressions Labels
Interest Convergence		
Activism		

The clusters of meaning that comprise this theme are examined through the lenses of the tenets Normalcy, Social Constructionism, and Denial of Rights. Examined through the tenet of Normalcy, the first cluster of meaning, Increased Awareness Builds Sensitivity and Empowerment is comprised of six codes: (a) Impact of racism on people, (b) Impact of systemic oppressions, (c) Impact on Expected Outcomes, (d) Awareness of privilege, (e) Building connections, and (f) Perceptions of Dis/Ability. When asked to describe their meanings and understandings about the normalcy of racism and ableism, five teachers talked about the impact of racism. Three white teachers discussed how training around cultural competency increased their awareness of the impact of racism on their coworkers; "Once you get to the breakaway sessions and you see that it's real, that it impacts your coworkers and your friends, it moves to the next level and you realize that, 'Oh my gosh, this is reality'" (Johannas, p.6). The resulting personalized understandings of the impact of labels increased empathy and sensitivity to those labeled described by Marlene who said,

> We need to be mindful of what students with dis/abilities need and not make them
> feel like they're different, making them stand out more. Make them feel
> comfortable in your classroom so that others don't even know what's going on
> with them, they're fitting in. 'I want you to fit in with other students and feel like
> part of the community.' (p.6).

Two black teachers discussed the enduring and damaging legacy of racism, one teacher describing it as "wounding and perpetuating" and another elaborating on her increased awareness of inner-racial prejudice as a result of her training. Demonstrating an awareness of the deep-rooted and far-reaching impact of racism on our thoughts, she shared,

> I realized that all black people aren't great, all white people aren't bad, I can accept people on how they treat me and how they make me feel. So that is the place I have come to in education, if you have any prejudices, and I say, 'Carleah,' I have to check myself, because sometimes I have inner-racial prejudices against these kids, and I say 'How can you be that ignorant?" and 'Why is it important that your hair is weave?' And I have to step back and say, 'You don't know their journey, and you don't know what is going on at home,' and so I have to dial back and realize 'Everybody wasn't raised like you, so you can't look in, and look down.' And so those experiences have helped me to be open-minded. (Carleah, p.10).

The second code, Impact of Systemic Oppressions, emerged from the expressed meanings and understandings of six teachers who shared how students are impacted by their labels not only in school but at home, how raced and dis/abled models of success are slow to evolve and are undervalued and underrepresented in the curriculum, that dis/ability matters are often unrecognized, and that racism prompts overidentification. Three teachers talked about the power of labels to have an Impact on Expected Outcomes, the third code, produced from the discussion of lowered expectations for educational attainment and anticipated success coupled with the disconnection between dreams and life trajectories shared by students. One teacher expressed her understandings of the impact of Normalcy on expected outcomes and the differences between her own experience and that of her students,

> So, to sit and think about that, and talk to my kids who, in this building are, you know, hoping they will graduate. Their parents didn't graduate. It's a completely different culture. It is not the norm that these kids are going to graduate from high school. It isn't expected, and talked about, the way it was in my family. That's how the staff in this building, the staff, talks about all these students going to college, the staff talks about all these students graduating from high school, but the students themselves don't really talk that way, you know? The parents that I interact with don't really... they talk about high school, they don't necessarily talk about after high school. To a lot of the families and students the finish line is getting to high school graduation. Where I grew up, the finish line is getting to college graduation. That in and of itself is just shocking, that, you know, in a 45-50-minute drive the expectation is lowered by 4 years of education (Angelica, p.13)

The fourth code, Awareness of Privilege, emerged from a discussion with four teachers around the meanings and understanding that emerged from their increased awareness of privilege. The four descriptors that encompass Awareness of Privilege include: concerns for student safet y, disconnection from long-term goal planning (living in the here and now), the realization that white privilege exists and is not defined by an absence of hardships, and the need to counter dominant deficit narratives with high expectations. Building Connections, the fifth code, resulted from three teachers talking about the importance of Building Connections, described as (a) Valuing Cultural Differences, (b) Finding Commonalities, (c) Honoring the Need for Recognition, and (d) Increased Positive Regard for families of CLD students with dis/abilities. The final code, born from the created meanings and understandings of seven teachers, is labeled, Perceptions of Dis/Ability. The Perceptions of Dis/Ability were defined by five descriptors: (a) Invisibility, (b) Variation within Diagnosis, (c) Desire for Recognition, (d) Desire for Independence, and (e) the Empowerment of Awareness of one's Dis/Ability. Viewed through the lens of Normalcy, which examines the ways in which racism and ableism circulate, the negative impacts of race and dis/ability labels are softened through the increased sensitivity and empowerment that result from discussing the impact of labels directly and honestly.

The second cluster of meaning, Race and Dis/Ability Labels Impact Those Identified, is examined through the lens of the tenet Social Constructionism and is comprised of seven codes: (a) Grouping by Ability, (b) Negative Generalizations, (c) Trouble with Labels, (d) Future Investment, (e) Identifying with Social Constructs, (f) Recognizing Privilege, and (g) Reasons for Teaching. When asked how teachers describe

their meanings and understandings of dis/ability, race, culture, and language as related to

the social construction of race and ability, two teachers discussed discriminatory

practices, specifically how (a) Grouping by Ability, creates behavioral challenges and is

as discriminatory as grouping by race. One black teacher noted,

> I had a mixture of classes and mixed groups ability-wise. Even my kids that had
> IEPs, they were still IEP students in a mixed-ability level class in mathematics.
> They were placed in that classroom because of the fact that that one hour is when
> Sped teacher would come in. They were in there with kids that were proficient,
> advanced, below basic and basic, and they were held to the same expectations as
> everyone else. But now that we are grouping them on ability there's very few
> students with math related IEPs that are not placed in below basic, not based on
> performance. And I'm not going to say racism, but at the same time it's
> discrimination, and that falls to me as the same boat as racism (Taniya, p. 2)

One white teacher who worked with ED students was frank and reflective in her personal

examination of racist feelings and discussed how (b) Negative Generalizations are made

as a result of racially charged negative interactions with black students. Five teachers

talked about (c) the Trouble with Labels, including the terminology "disability," the

internalization of negative focus (labeling a student by what they are not able to do), the

associated stigmatization of students based on their educational dis/abilities, the single-

dimension focus of labels, and requiring the process of labeling as the gateway to

accessing support. Marnie shared,

> I don't really like the term 'disability.' I like 'different ability' because when
> you're talking about a disability, you're talking about one particular thing. You're
> not concentrating on all the things that they can do well, only concentrating on the
> thing they can't do very well (p.14).

 The code Future Investment emerged from two teachers dialoguing about students' lack

of active investment in their futures and their concern for students who are "living in the

now" and expressing differing values on employment and education than those projected

by the school. Four teachers discussed the fifth code, Identifying with Social Constructs,

in terms of four descriptors including (a) whether or not individuals aligned with and self-identified with race and dis/Ability labels, (b)the improvement of communication that accompanies open dialogue around social constructions of race and ability, (c) the normalization of poverty as part of of the construction of race, and (d) how the assignment of race and identity by others evidenced the nature of labels as a social construction. Abigail, a biracial teacher noted, "If you are biracial why can you not identify as white, only black? Because it's a social construct. With rules" (p.35). The sixth code, Recognizing Privilege, results from the discussed meanings and understandings of three teachers who described white privilege as a "societal problem," described *racism* and *disability* as words used not only to label but as a "tool to mask unfair practices," (Taniya, p. 6) and discussed the impact of environment and its ability to exacerbate the presence of a dis/ability. The final code, (g) Reasons for Teaching grew out of the passionate position of one teacher who described her reasons for becoming a teacher as centered around the desire to advocate for students labeled with a dis/ability and to broadcast their strengths to their families and communities, their teachers and peers, and to the students themselves.

Described through the lens Denial of Rights, the third cluster of meaning attributed to the theme Impact of Race and Dis/Ability Labels is the *Manifestations of Racism and Ableism* and is comprised of five codes: (a) Student Groupings, (b) Low Expectations, (c) Unmet Needs, (d) Systemic Oppressions, and (e) Labels. The first code, Student Groupings, includes the descriptors of dis/ability, test score, and race. Unified opinions on dis/ability grouping were not offered; one teacher described how the separateness of special education services being provided by the support district (rather

than the selected district) embodied "othering," in contrast to another teacher who

supported grouping by ability, stating, "Though everyone supports inclusion, grouping

students in a modified setting can create a safe space where kids can work on skills at

their own level" (Carleah, p.18). The second code, Low Expectations, was described by

25% of teachers and constituted three descriptors: low expectations are often

communicated by administration, low expectations are a type of racism, and low

expectations are systematic. The third code, Unmet Needs, was depicted as a narrowing

of options as students age, described in terms of unmet mental health needs, and included

the unsupported needs of severely dis/abled. One teacher also described Unmet Needs in

terms of general education teachers being untrained to properly provide accommodations

and modifications for student with dis/abilities. The code, Systemic Oppressions, was

described by 33% of teachers as personal and systemic oppressions manifesting as a lack

of empathy, disproportionality, harsher consequences, and inequitable resources for CLD

students with dis/abilities. One teacher, when asked what meanings and understandings

she gained from her direct observations of inequitable resources offered to her students

said, "People don't care about black kids. Black kids will always get less of the things

offered. Not to say that anyone is saying that aloud, but seems to be, it's pretty cut and

dry" (Abigail, p. 12). The fifth and final code, Labels, emerged from three teachers

describing their meanings and understandings of the denial of rights of CLD students in

terms of Labels, reported as the creation of barriers that (a) misrepresent the student, (b)

create limitations in society, and (c) result in a denial of access. The significance of the

cluster of meaning Manifestation of Racism & Ableism is highlighted by the frequency

of its occurrence as a topic of discussion. Of the total 12 clusters of meaning that

comprise the third sub question, the single cluster, Manifestations of Racism and

Ableism, was discussed by 58% of the teachers interviewed.

Meanings & understandings: Building an optimal learning environment.

"You really learn a lot about the hats your kids wear...when you take the time"

The investigation into teachers' meanings and understandings about dis/abilities,

race, culture, and language produced a second theme, *Open and Responsive*

Communication Builds an Optimal Learning Environment, comprised of four clusters of

meaning: (a) Valuing Student Identity, (b) Creating a Safe Learning Environment, (c)

Responding to Needs, and (d) Creating a Safe Learning Environment Empowers

Students. Fourteen codes comprise the four clusters of meaning across four tenets

including Multidimensional Identities, Privileging Marginalized Voices, Denial of

Rights, and Activism. Examined through the lens of Multidimensional Identity, the first

cluster of meaning, Valuing Student Identity, is comprised of four codes including (a)

Tools for success, (b) Validating Students, (c) Recognizing Cultural Capital, and (d)

Addressing Multidimensionality.

When asked to describe their meanings and understandings about

dis/abilities, race, culture, and language as related to the multidimensional identity of

CLD students with dis/Abilities, five teachers outlined the descriptors of the needed

Tools for Success as (a) dialogue, (b) extra-curricular activities, (c) code switching, (d)

mentoring, (e) acceptance, and (f) respect for family structures. Marnie talked about the

benefit of dialoguing with her students in a less formal setting,

> I would say that my best time, and that's another relationship building piece, my
> best time with my kids, will sometimes be when I have after-school help sessions.
> The kids come, and it's not all of them at one time, so it's more one on one. It's
> not a time where I have to deliver a lesson with them so, there's more talking

Table 3.7

Meanings & Understandings: Building an Optimal Learning Environment

Research Sub-Question: How do teachers describe their meanings and understandings about dis/Abilities, race, culture, and language as outlined by the tenets of DisCrit?		
Theme Two: Open and Responsive Communication Builds an Optimal Learning Environment.		
DisCrit Tenets	**Clusters of Meaning**	**Codes**
Normalcy		
Multidimensional Identity	Valuing student identity	Tools for success Validating students Recognizing cultural capital Addressing Multidimensionality
Social Constructionism		
Privileging Marginalized Voices	Creating a safe learning environment	Cultural responsiveness Increases Engagement Building Trust
Denial of Rights	Responding to Needs	Understanding misbehavior Advocacy
Interest Convergence		
Activism	Creating a Safe Learning Environment Empowers Students	Building relationships Thoughtful Lesson Planning Strength based perspective Progress oriented teaching Encouraging student voice Acknowledging Privilege

time, there's more sit-around- and-get-to-know-you time. And you get to know things, like about how they feel (p.10).

Three teachers discussed the significance of Validating Students indicated by (a) utilizing

teachable moments, (b) expecting students to overcome difficulty, and by (c)

acknowledging student work as noted by Tia, "Kids want to be validated with choice and voice and recognition for their work. They want someone to know they exist" (p.22). The third code, Recognizing Cultural Capital, emerged from the understandings expressed by three teachers as recognizing students' hidden strengths, protracting untapped knowledge, discovering unmeasured strengths, and the significance of recognizing students' work as a validation of voice and identity. Angelica noted,

> I feel like their culture is a strength because it's so different and that's something. They could have the chance to flip the education system and educate me and educate their teachers. There are so many things that differ in our cultures (p.12).

The final code, Addressing Multidimensionality, was developed out of the words of one third of participants who discussed the importance of Addressing Multidimensionality, with four descriptors including (a) recognizing the difficulty of students' struggle to find their place in the world, (b) recognizing that dis/ability doesn't encapsulate identity, (c) acknowledging the impossibility of addressing the totality of all students' identities while teaching, and (d) eliminating singular notions of identity, Abigail noted that we must expand how we think about people and cultures because, "One perspective is not the way the world is. It's not just one perspective. If you stay in the one perspective mindset, that's most of the problem" (p. 6).

Examined through the lens of Multidimensional Identity and deconstructed here, the code, Valuing Student Identity, identifies tools for success, and supports validating students and recognizing their cultural capital while addressing multidimensionality. These meanings and understandings contribute to the expression of how Open and Responsive Communication Builds an Optimal Learning Environment.

The second cluster of meaning, Creating a Safe Learning Environment, emerged from two codes: Cultural Responsiveness Increases Engagement and Building Trust. When asked how teachers describe their meanings and understandings of dis/ability, race, culture, and language as related to the tenet Privileging of Marginalized Voices, two teachers discussed the importance of cultural responsiveness and its connection to increased engagement in the classroom. Taniya shares,

> Yes, I think being culturally responsive is the true essence of engaging your students because even as an adult, let's be honest, if I honestly feel that you don't care for me, I already shut you out, I already tune you out. I personally think anything that you have to say is irrelevant if I feel that you are biased. And it is no different for a child (p.9).

Two teachers discussed Building Trust through the provision of opportunities to share meanings and understandings of trauma, and the necessity of trust and compassion. Those opportunities are not exclusively verbal. Marnie shared how she was extremely touched by her student's writing,

> We listened to some 'This I believe' essays through NPR and I had them write their own. One of my kids wrote that yesterday was the 10-year anniversary of his dad's death. When the child was five, he was in the car, his dad was a bad dude on the south side of Chicago, and some men came up and shot his father while he was in the car with his father, and killed him, and so, he saw his dad die. And so, he was just talking about his process of grief, and how he was angry at his father because his father did things that got him in trouble, and eventually ended up in that the whole point of his essay was, bad decisions lead to bad results. And that he's never going to do that, he's going to take care of his family, but he is going to keep his dad's name, he's a junior, and his son is going to be the third. So, you really learn a lot about the hats your kids wear, and the things they can do, and the things they've been through, when you take the time to really read their writing, and you let them express it, and you take an extra minute (p.11).

The cluster of meaning Creating a Safe Learning Environment is the result of the shared understandings of how culturally responsive instruction increases student engagement,

builds trust, and contributes to a safe learning environment for CLD students with dis/abilities.

The third cluster of meaning, Responding to Needs, stems from two codes: Understanding Misbehavior and Advocacy. When asked how teachers describe their meanings and understandings of the Denial of Rights in the consideration of dis/ability, race, culture, and language as related to CLD students with dis/abilities, three teachers responded by talking about their Understanding of Misbehavior as a mask for skill deficits or frustration, stemming from a lack of academic confidence, and noting that the acceptance of authority is necessary for success in school. One teacher talked about the role of Advocacy and her identity as an advocate for both parents and students. In the consideration of the Denial of Rights of CLD students with dis/Abilities, teachers view themselves as critically necessary advocates for both students and families. Teachers Respond to Needs by serving as conduits to clarifying for others that the motivations of behavior are not always expressly clear but are significant and worth deciphering. Additionally, teachers view theirs as a role of advocate, not just for their students, but for the entire families grappling with the navigation of systemic oppressions.

The final cluster of meaning, Creating a Safe Learning Environment Empowers Students, is comprised of 6 codes: (a) Building Relationships, (b) Thoughtful Lesson Planning, (c) Strength-Based Perspective, (d) Progress Oriented Teaching, (e) Encouraging Student Voice, and (f) Acknowledging Privilege and was examined through the DisCrit lens of Activism. When asked about her meanings and understandings of dis/ability, race, culture, and language as it pertains to activism, one teacher talked about

the significance of building relationships with not only students but creating an environment that encourages students to build relationships with others. Marnie noted,

> We talk about building relationships and being open to meeting new people and learning about other cultures. It's so important because racism is based in fear and fear is based on the unknown. So, we do have these conversations in class (p.23).

Four teachers initiated a conversation about the role of thoughtful lesson planning in response to their understandings of activism. The descriptors of thoughtful lesson planning include expectations for meaningful reflections and researched opinions, selecting relevant materials, planning with outcomes in mind, and being sensitive to impressionable-ness of students. When asked about the school's role in shaping sociopolitical consciousness in students one teacher noted,

> I did that when Mike Brown stuff went down. I had kids on TV that were protesting, in the 6th grade, and I saw my students throw Molotov cocktails and I saw my students on the news throwing rocks, and they were 6th grade. So, I learned then that I had to really watch exactly how I said and what I said because I knew they were, I knew they were just at an age where they were easily influenced. They could easily take on a viewpoint and make it their own, their little brains are soaking up whatever, and a lot of it was attention. A lot of it was their little brains soaking up all of the hype and they didn't really understand why some people were legitimately angry. Their family was angry, so they were angry, and because of that I had to be really careful (Abigail, p.38).

Strengths-Based Perspective is the third code related to the empowerment of students through the creation of a safe learning environment. It represents the responses of three teachers and includes descriptors that address (a) the power of recognizing cultural capital, (b) fostering a belief in making a difference regardless of circumstances, and (c) viewing the classroom as a learning partnership. The fourth code, Progress-Oriented Teaching is also comprised of three descriptors including (a) focusing on progress (instead of grades) as sound universal practice, (b) training new teachers to be progress-

oriented (in order to help them empower students to be progress-oriented), and (c)

expecting excellence as a way to promote progress. Marnie talked about her passion for

using a specific Assessment Literacy program that embodies Progress-Oriented Teaching,

> I think that's just good teaching. So, yes, but that doesn't particularly focus on students that are differently-abled, or of a different culture, it's just about students in particular. And, it's one of the reasons why I focus on just that progress, because that's what assessment literacy is all about. Focus on your progress, focus on your learning, don't worry so much about whether there's an A there, a B there, a C there. I would love to see assessment literacy practices taught to pre-service teachers (p.22).

The discussion about meanings and understanding of dis/ability, race, culture, and

language as pertaining to activism prompted 25% of teachers to discuss the fifth code,

Encouraging Student Voice. Denoted by four descriptors, teachers noted that

Encouraging Student Voice played a strong role in (a) making a difference, (b) increasing

pride in activism, (c) expecting active participation, and (d) helping to make meaning of

protests and social issues. The final code, Acknowledging Privilege, was developed from

conversations about the meanings and understandings of two teachers about activism.

One teacher thought deeply and expressed sorrow about the existing disparity between

the lives of her biological children and the lives of her students. Another teacher talked

about a moment of awareness that came from her student pointing out the lack of

identifiable political representation that looked like him in our representational

government while the class watched the State of the Union address. She noted,

> I didn't... I mean you notice it, but you really don't think about it. It's like, 'Yeah, I feel like everybody's equally represented. We voted them in, didn't we? So, this is all good.' But no, we have a very restricted... you know, not widely represented by everyone. So, yeah, it... I didn't really think about it before until then (Marlene, p.30).

This examination of teachers' described meanings and understanding of dis/abilities,

race, culture, and language addresses valuing the rich multidimensional identities of

students, creating a safe learning environment through the privileging of marginalized voices, recognizing the denial of rights faced by students and responding to their needs, and demonstrating activism in the classroom by creating a safe learning environment for the purpose of empowering students. These meanings describe how building an optimal learning environment occurs through open and responsive communication.

The second theme describing teachers' meanings and understandings of dis/abilities, race, culture, and language, titled, Open and Responsive Communication Builds an Optimal Learning Environment, addresses valuing the multidimensional identities of students, creating a safe learning environment through the privileging of marginalized voices, recognizing the denial of rights of students and responding to their needs, and demonstrating activism in the classroom by creating a safe learning environment for the purpose of empowering students.

Meanings & understandings: Barriers to implementing CREP.

"It gets so big we don't really know what to do about it."

The investigation of the meanings and understandings created by teachers around dis/ability, race, culture, and language produced a third theme, *Barriers to Successful Implementation of CREP Goals*, comprised of five clusters of meaning: (a) Missing Tools for Success, (b) Challenges to Understanding, (c) Barriers to Participation (d) Impact on Marginalized Groups, and (e) Misaligned Objectives Hinder Support for Activism. Eight codes comprise the five clusters of meaning across five tenets including Normalcy, Multidimensional Identities, Privileging Marginalized Voices, Interest Convergence, and Activism.

Table 3.8

Meanings & Understandings: Barriers to Implementing CREP

Research Sub-Question: How do teachers describe their meanings and understandings about dis/Abilities, race, culture, and language as outlined by the tenets of DisCrit?

Theme Three: Identified Barriers to the Successful Implementation of CREP Goals

DisCrit Tenets	Clusters of Meaning	Codes
Normalcy	Missing Tools for Success	Missing Tools for Success
Multidimensional Identity	Challenges to Understanding	Impact of Circumstances (difficulty) Understanding Culture (inadequate) Measurement Tools
Social Constructionism		
Privileging Marginalized Voices	Barriers to Participation	Barriers to Participation
Denial of Rights		
Interest Convergence	Impact on Marginalized Groups	Misaligned leadership and student populations Cultural Competence trainings are needed
Activism	Misaligned Objectives Hinder Support for Activism	Misaligned Objects

The first cluster of meaning contains a single code by the same name and emerged

from a discussion of Normalcy in which teachers described the Missing Tools for

Success indicated by (a) an examination of existing barriers and supports, (b) the need for

character education, and (c) the misalignment of expectations and materials. The code,

Examination of Existing Barriers and Supports addresses the need to examine deficits from a new lens, a lens that moves away from asking, "What is wrong with these students?" and moves toward asking, "What barriers is these kids facing that are inhibiting success?" Abigail asks,

> When people look at test scores and ask why are these test scores so low? Well, let's look at some of the other things our students face compared to students that are truly successful. Let's look at what those kids don't face. It goes back to some of those deeper-rooted things. And it's way bigger than this. It gets so big that we don't really know what to do about it (p.45).

Similarly, teachers encounter barriers to implementing a culturally responsive practice when grappling with the Misalignment of Tools and Materials, described as "pressure to be culturally responsive and held to using a curriculum that isn't culturally responsive (Abigail, p.9).

The second cluster of meaning, Challenges to Understanding, is comprised of three codes: (a) Impact of Circumstances, (b) Understanding Culture, and (c) Measurement Tools and is examined through the lens of the tenet Multidimensional Identities. The first code, Impact of Circumstances, is comprised of six descriptors including (a) Unsupported Medical Interventions, described by one teacher as intensifying the impact of a dis/ability due to "Parents who don't administer meds because they are selling them, can't afford them, or don't believe in them" (Sherina, p.9), (b) Unidentified Needs, described as parents who don't understand their child's IEP and don't know how to advocate for the services their kids need (c) Economic Barriers, described by Marnie who noticed that "Usually kids that end up in the Tier III class are not the kids that are living in the houses that cost $200, 000 and we should be thinking about why that is" (p.8), (d) Disrupted Residential Placements, addressed by Marnie who

asks why the Tier III (lower level reading classes) are "full of Section 8 kids, a lot of kids on the lower end of the socio economic scale, and foster kids (p.9), (e) Undiagnosed Medical Conditions, addressed by Tia who wonders about the impact of undiagnosed medical conditions on the labeling process and the subsequent stigma associated with having an IEP (p.23) and (f) Labeling Quotas, noted by a teacher that worried that in the attempt to correct disproportionate overidentification of ED, ID, and LD labels, some students were not being identified and ultimately not receiving needed services, due to changes in the acceptance of referrals . The second code, Understanding Culture, was born from a discussion about multidimensional identity and some encountered difficulties with cultural differences, including a white teacher who grappled with understanding some cultural norms and terminology expressed by her black students, a black teacher who discussed how racial alignment doesn't ensure understanding of culture, and a biracial teacher's assertion that individuals are multidimensional and complex in their multiculturalism and that no aspect of culture encompasses one's entire identity. The third code, Measurement Tools, represents a composite of three teachers' assertions that the tools of measurement used for multidimensional students with dis/Abilities are inadequate. Three teachers talked at length about the emotional cost of high stakes testing, specifically, that it is destructive to the spirit of progress, that the playing field is uneven, and that testing stymies creativity by rewarding scores as opposed to growth. One teacher commented that "Disinterest in testing is a form of self-preservation on the part of students" (Joanie, p.18). Examined together through the lens of Multidimensional Identity, the Impact of Circumstances, Difficulties Understanding Culture, and Inadequate Measurement Tools were distilled to form the cluster of meaning Challenges

to Understanding and comprise a significant aspect of the theme Barriers to the Successful Implementation of CREP Goals.

The third cluster of meaning, Barriers to Participation, is comprised solely of a code by the same name and is examined through the tenet Privileging Marginalized Voices. This code emerged from a discussion about how, in addition to or in response to external barriers, students can become their own barrier to participation by misunderstanding social cues or over-utilizing modifications.

The fourth cluster of meaning, Impact on Marginalized Groups, is comprised of two codes: Misaligned Leadership and Student Populations and Needed Cultural Competence Trainings. When asked how teachers describe their meanings and understandings of whiteness and ability as property, teachers described the negative Impact on Marginalized Groups as indicated by inequitable educational outcomes due to leadership that is not reflective or invested in marginalized student populations and a need for cultural competence training aimed at increasing awareness of student needs among teachers.

Misaligned Objectives Hinder Support for Activism, the final cluster of meaning, includes a single code, Misaligned Objectives, and is examined through the tenet of Activism. When asked to reflect on their meanings and understanding of dis/ability, race, culture, and language as pertaining to Activism, two teachers talked about how supported activism was absent from their school culture. One middle school teacher discussed how the culture of her school was focused on data and that students' rights and student empowerment were not encouraged nor prioritized. Another high school teacher spoke about the clash between administrations' views and policies and teachers' views of

students' rights in her building while numerous demonstrations were taking place in the

community,

> It was crazy, and you could see the evolutionary process go through the school, because the whole process started with all of the student rights, you know, if they want to walk out and protest, they can walk out and protest. They were not held accountable for assignments they missed. If they walked out on a test because they wanted to voice their opinion, that was their right. And it was our job to find when we were supposed to give the test. It caused a lot of split within just the school community amongst the adults, among the students, the staff, and administration. That was a tough, tough, tough year (Joanie, p.26).

 Both teachers talked about the necessity of team planning around how to handle student

protests and other activist activities in order to find a common understanding. The cluster

of meaning, Misaligned Objectives Hinder Support for Activism highlights the

importance of aligning staff, student, administrative objectives around activism.

Meanings and Understandings: Conclusion

The personal and individual meanings and understandings of race, dis/ability,

culture, and language described by teachers were analyzed for the purpose of answering

the third research sub question, *How do teachers describe their meanings and*

understandings about dis/abilities, race, culture, and language as outlined by the tenets

of DisCrit? The codes, clusters of meaning, and themes that surfaced from teachers'

created meanings and understandings about dis/ability, race, culture, and language were

examined in consideration of the circulating forces of racism and ableism, the

multidimensional identity of students, the privileging of marginalized voices, the

convergence of interests between marginalized and privileged peoples, and activism. The

analysis of data revealed that teachers recognize the negative impact of race and

dis/ability labels and that teachers' increased awareness of systemic oppressions around

race and dis/ability labels builds sensitivity around their impact and increases actions

toward supporting empowerment. The analysis further revealed that teachers recognize and identify the existence of multiple barriers that inhibit the successful implementation of a culturally responsive practice and its impact on marginalized groups. Finally, teachers agree that open and responsive communications are crucial to building an optimal learning environment.

Actions Description

The Life Experiences and Formal Educational and Training Experiences shared by teacher participants revealed a heightened awareness of the negative impact of race and dis/ability labels as well as a desire for participation in further training to improve their ability to implement CREP. The interpreted Meanings and Understandings internalized from those experiences have helped teachers make sense of those Life and Formal experiences, shape their responses, and assist in the identification of barriers that interfere with the goal of implementing CREP. The actions taken by teachers are the responses to the meanings and understandings created by the life experiences and formal experiences that have shaped teachers' motivations for creating an equitable educational experience for all students. The fourth research sub question, *How do teachers describe their actions toward implementing the goals of CREP*? was designed to provide some insight into the ways that teachers respond to the influences of their life and formal experiences and expand on the chosen methods used to implement their meanings and understandings of implementing the goals of CREP.

The refined coding around the Actions Taken by Teachers produced a total of 31 codes across all 7 DisCrit tenets. Further analysis distilled those codes into 14 clusters of meaning. The clusters of meaning were further analyzed and described by three themes:

(a) Building Relationships Through Communication, (b) Instruction Towards Empowerment, and (c) Engaging in Self-Reflection. The three themes, corresponding clusters of meaning, and codes are presented in the following table (Table 3.9). The results for the fourth sub question are presented and expanded upon through the examination of each theme.

Actions: Building relationships through open communication.

"I try to be real with my students."

The first theme, Building Relationships Through Communication, emerged from a discussion investigating how teachers describe their actions toward implementing the goals of CREP. Four cluster of meaning describe Building Relationships Through Communication including: (a) Facilitating Communication (occurring three times), (b) Building Strong Relationships, (c) Promoting Inclusion of All Voices, and (d) Building Competency Toward Empowerment. Those clusters of meanings occur across six tenets and embody the actions taken around strengthening relationships between teachers and students.

The clusters of meaning that inhabit the theme Building Relationships Through Communication are examined through the tenets of Normalcy, Multidimensional Identities, Social Constructionism, Privileging Marginalized Voices, Interest Convergence, and Activism. Examined through the tenet of Normalcy, the first cluster of meaning, Facilitating Communication, is comprised of three codes: (a) Building Relationships, (b) High Expectations, and (c) Increased Dialogue. When asked how teachers describe their actions toward implementing the goals of CREP while considering the interdependently circulating forces of ableism and racism, three teachers talked about

Table 3.9

Actions: Building Relationships Through Communication

Research Sub-Question: How do teachers describe their actions toward implementing CREP?

Theme One: Facilitating Communication around Race and Dis/Ability Topics Builds Relationships

DisCrit Tenets	Clusters of Meaning	Codes
Normalcy	Facilitating Communication	Building Relationships High Expectations Increased Dialogue
Multidimensional Identity	Facilitating Positive Communication	Constructive communication Advocacy
Social Constructionism	Building Strong Relationships	Building strong relationships
Privileging Marginalized Voices	Facilitating Communication	Responding to diverse communication styles Empathetic approach
Denial of Rights		
Interest Convergence	Promoting Inclusion of All Voices	Providing Opportunities for voice and healing Demonstrating Advocacy
Activism	Building Competency Toward Empowerment	Promoting student voice Building relationships Expressing Motivations Demonstrating Advocacy Sharing relevant Resources

the importance of Building Relationships, with descriptors including (a) establishing an inclusive environment, (b) fostering strong relationships, and (c) creating an environment of acceptance. Carleah shared how she tries to establish an inclusive environment,

This has been the only school I've worked in as a teacher. So, it's always been 100% black or maybe one student that's been Caucasian in our classroom. It was always my push to make that student feel inclusive into the classroom, so one thing I always do is I call the kids 'Brother' or 'Sister so and so,' and so I called him 'Brother' and the kids were like, "You can't call him that, he's not black.' He's my brother, why can't I call him "Brother so and so?' So, I feel like, just because we have different skin tone doesn't mean I can't call him my brother. He is my brother. Then the kids started saying 'Brother so and so' and he's saying, 'Sister so and so.' And that was my way of saying we shouldn't treat him any different, and he shouldn't have to feel a certain kind of way in here with us. I thought about how I would feel. And I've been in situations where I've been the only of my race, and so there was always one or two people that made me feel comfortable. And I wanted to make sure this young man, if you have to be in that situation, doesn't feel uncomfortable (p.5).

In response to the same question, three different teachers discussed the significance of

setting High Expectations, with descriptors including (a) not allowing excuses, (b)

setting high standards, and (c) working on setting and meeting goals. One teacher

pointed out that "A low expectation will be met every time. Set high standards" (Abigail,

p.16). The responses of three other teachers generated the third code, Increasing

Dialogue, including six descriptors: (a) honest conversations about ability, (b)

conversations around definitions of "normal," (c) conversations about racism, (d) about

life, and (e) conversations about community happenings.

When asked how she responds to the normalization of racism and ableism, Sharina spoke

about the power of approaching interactions authentically,

I relate to the students, first we talk about their disability and how it's not a disability, it's an ability, and I tell them that I can relate to them. I'm hearing impaired. I have hearing aids, and I bring it and I show it to them I don't' wear them every day, I hate them, not because I can't hear, but because they're annoying. So, I show them that I have hearing aids, and I show them that I have ADHD and we play around with it. I tell them, make it about, it's not a big deal, you can laugh it. My student who is visually impaired always jokes around about something like, one day she told me I 'Had junk in my trunk,' and I'm like, 'How can you see it?' Or she'll tell me she's going to beat me up, or she's going to fight me or whatever, and I'm like, 'You can't see me coming.' And she'll be like, 'But you won't hear me coming.' We just play around with it, and I think it

makes them feel more comfortable. If you are comfortable with who you are, and I tell them, I want you to tell me one person in this world who is normal, because I don't even know what normal looks like anymore (p.11).

Facilitating Communication emerged as a cluster of meaning not only for the tenet of Normalcy, but also for the tenets of Multidimensional Identities, and Privileging Marginalized Voices. Examined through the tenet of Multidimensional Identities, two codes occur: Constructive Communication and Advocacy. When asked to discuss actions taken toward implementation of the goals of CREP for students with multidimensional identities, four teachers discussed the necessity of Constructive Communication with descriptors including: (a) wisdom gathering from experienced and successful teachers, (b) receiving student feedback for the purpose of improving instructional practice, (c) honest conversation that allows for the discussion of race and dis/ability, and (d) examining bias. Responding to the same question about actions taken toward the goal of implementing CREP, two teachers responded by discussing their role in Advocacy, including the descriptors: (a) recognizing student achievement, (b) promoting students' strengths, (c) deflecting judgements, and (d) breaking down preconceived notions. The third and final occurrence of the cluster of meaning Facilitating Communication occurs in the examination of the tenet Privileging Marginalized Voices and is comprised of three codes: (a) Responding to Diverse Communication Styles, (b) Empathetic Approach, and (c) Providing Opportunity for Voice. When teachers were asked to describe their actions taken toward Privileging Marginalized Voices, four teachers talked about (a) Responding to Diverse Communication Styles by creating a responsive adaptive educational practice including being sensitive to the ways in which students communicate; utilizing technology to increase opportunities for student communication; providing wait time,

specifically to aid students that may require more processing time; and requesting

feedback from students about teaching styles for the purpose of improving delivery.

An example of a responsive practice that allows for student voice by providing wait-time

is shared by Sharina,

> We have one kid who really struggles with talking or getting his thoughts
> together, so we prompt him, and then we have a long lag time, so he can process
> his thoughts. Because a lot of people, after a couple seconds of silence, just want
> to fill it. But we don't, we just have silence, after two or three minutes the
> students know to give him help themselves, without us. So, they will give him
> another prompt and then we'll have another two or three minutes. That's how we
> work with him because he struggles. But we've kind of got it down. So, he can...
> He has a very long lag time and then the students help him, and they know to give
> him a long lag time, and how to help him (p.11).

 Two teachers talked about using an (b) Empathetic Approach, with descriptors including

recognizing the emotional needs of students and using restorative practices in the

classroom. Six teachers talked about (c) Providing an Opportunity for Voice, with

descriptors including offering equitable platforms for all students to be heard, including

students (e.g. in IEP meetings and planning, and in the selection of tasks, motivators, &

rewards), and by offering motivating activities that include self-expression.

Building Strong Relationships, the second cluster of meaning occurring within the

theme Building Relationships Through Communication, is examined through the tenet

Social Constructionism and is comprised of a single code by the same name. When

asked about their actions taken toward the goals of implementing CREP while

considering race and ability as social constructions, two teachers explained the

importance of Building Strong Relationships because strong relationships decrease

behavioral challenges, foster a safe learning environment, and allow for integrated

groupings of students thus nurturing a sense of belonging. Marnie spoke about her

experience of building relationships with the same students over multiple years,

> I looped for three years with all those kids, and so they are family. They are in 9th grade now and I miss them every single day. And so, there's another math teacher and she would teach those same group of students, lower, every single day, and she came with me 6th, 7th, and 8th, so we were one big crowd, and we're both ready to have our principal to have us do it again. You know, we really enjoyed them. We got rid of any behavior issues and all those challenges that you need to do, back in 6th grade, back in October, you know, so going into 7th grade, we don't have to get to know you, we know you, so let's go, we're learning stuff. You know, you cut down on discipline, so much. And, we took kids from below basic to proficient. So, who's got the disability now? (p.15).

Promoting Inclusion of All Voices emerged as a cluster of meaning under the

tenet Interest Convergence and includes the codes (a) Providing Opportunities for Voice

and Healing and (b) Demonstrating Advocacy. When teachers were asked to describe

their actions toward implementing the goals of CREP in the consideration of Interest

Convergence, one teacher talked about how she Provides Opportunities for Voice and

Healing in her classrooms through the utilization of restorative practices,

> We have been emphasizing restorative practices this school year, and we have been having these restorative talks with the students. So, we are taking away class time to do this, which is ok because it's allowing the students to have a voice, every student to have a voice, and it is for the greater good. There seems to be a little more learning going on and students and teachers are able to relay how they feel. I feel that perhaps, it's not something that's emphasized in education very much because it takes away from class time. It's allowing us to know our students a little bit better. I really didn't think the students were going to buy into it. I really didn't think the students were going to share, and they really surprised me how willing they were to participate and to share because, like I said, sometimes they aren't given the voice or opportunity to share (Angelica, p. 15).

 Demonstrating Advocacy, the second code, and its descriptor, Ensuring needed services,

was generated from the assertion of one teacher that the role of teachers is that of a fierce

advocate, and that regardless of parent participation at IEPs, it is the responsibility of

teachers to fight for their students, and to provide the best circumstances possible, and to represent their voice, even if their voice is not in the room.

The final cluster of meaning, Building Competency Toward Empowerment, is comprised of five codes: (a) Promoting Student Voice, (b) Building Relationships, (c) Expressing Motivations, (d) Demonstrating Advocacy, and (e) Sharing Relevant Resources and is examined through the tenet of Activism. Sharing Relevant Resources included sharing resources with families, selecting relatable materials, considering outcomes, shaping socio political consciousness through the use of literature to tie past ethical issues to current events. She talked about an essay her class wrote on the Muslim ban,

> I like to shape activism and support socio political consciousness within the literature when it comes up. And I also have a writing project that talks about the proposition of banning Muslims or banning certain people from certain countries from coming to the United States. It's usually right after we do the Holocaust unit and we talk about how Anne Frank's family applied for political asylum was denied because she was German-born, and the idea was that she might be a spy because she was German. And we think about do you think that was right or wrong, do you think that we should have allowed the Jews to come in at that time? Now in hindsight, it's easy to see that. Now let's talk about the ban on people coming from Muslim or majority Muslim countries. Do you support that? I've had, it was an argumentative paper, and I've had kids choose both sides of that. I've had some students choose 1 side, I didn't assign a side, I let them choose, but the one side they wanted to choose was to enforce the ban because of these things and they had to do the research and they had to have reasons. It was particularly poignant in my, I had a student that wore a burka last year, in that class, students were like, 'Oh no! We can't do that!' They were completely against a Muslim ban because they knew someone who was a Muslim (Marnie, p.22).

When asked about actions taken toward implementing CREP and the role of Activism in the classroom, five teachers talked about (a) Promoting Student Voice including the descriptors: offering venues for protest, teaching students to bolster opinion with fact, teaching reasoning skills, teaching protest safety, highlighting LGBTQ issues, increasing

student investment in their classrooms, and promoting diverse political representation.

One teacher highlighted the importance of promoting research skills in the classroom in

order to support student voice because,

> I want them to be literate adults, and the social justice movement is powered by
> our youth. And they [middle school students] are just before they have the power
> of that youth group. So, I want them to realize this is coming up, that your voice
> matters, I want you to have an opinion, and realized that your opinion is important
> (Marnie, p.23).

She went on to speak about the implication of having a well-researched opinion so that

when students are called upon to speak out, "they have some facts, and have to support it

with something that they know, and something that's real" (Marnie, p.23).   The second

code, Building Relationships, emerged from five teachers discussing the significance of

building relationships including the descriptors (a) Referencing Positive Leaders, (b)

using Unorthodox Methodology, (c) Connecting Families and Students, (d) Supporting

Students' Rights, (e) Demonstrating Acceptance of all Students, and (f) Including

Families. One teacher shared how she built a relationship with a student motivated by her

wish to support her student's rights,

> I remember there was a student, I was teaching a modified ELA class and there
> was a student that just came back from 120-day suspension for a weapons
> violation, and all the kids were walking out, it was right when we came back to
> school after the [Stockley] verdict was released. It was like that first day we were
> back in school after all that. He so wanted to walk out, like he was literally
> pacing. We weren't allowed to tell kids yes or no. 'Do what you think is right,'
> was the only thing we were told to say. This poor boy was pacing back and forth
> because he in was in such conflict, like he knew what he wanted to do, but he also
> knew where he just came from, and didn't want to go back there. It literally ended
> up coming down to me and him in the classroom, everybody else had walked out,
> and he was distraught. So finally I said, 'Would it be helpful if you walked out
> and you stayed by my side and our arms have to be linked, and if I see you going
> down a path you shouldn't I will tug your arm and from that point it's your choice
> what you decide you should do.' He's like, 'You would do that?' I said, 'I will do
> that if that's what you think you need.' Cause he so didn't want to miss out, but
> he didn't want to get himself in trouble. And we did. And we did it, and it was...

Wow. Like, it was...Certain moments I will never forget in my life, and that was just one of those things. Oh my gosh, we still email back and forth (Joanie, p.28).

The third code, Expressing Motivations, includes the descriptors: Making a Difference, Being the Change You Want to See, Providing Optimal Environments for Learning, and Operating in the Here & Now. One teacher talked about how she expressed motivation for activism to her students,

I'm also talking to my kids about how things have to get messy before they get cleaned up. When you have something so important sometimes you have to go ahead and go through the trouble of making the change happen, so what we're seeing right now is a form of a civil rights movement, right now, in your community. And 50 years from now, people are going to say, are going to look back in their textbooks, and this is something that's going to be in the textbooks, so pay attention, because people are going to want to know, 'What it was like when... (Marnie, p.23)?'

Demonstrating Advocacy, the fourth code, emerged from two descriptors: Teaching Self Advocacy and Advocating to Colleagues. Advocating to Colleagues was a critical component of Demonstrating Advocacy an important part of a teaching practice for one teacher who responded to a colleague's assertion that her CLD student with dis/abilities could not learn and was not fit for the building,

I said, 'I don't think that's what you mean, because the student is learning. And as long as the student is learning and making progress then the student is a good fit for our building. We just have to figure out other ways to get through to the student' (Tia, p.18).

The final code, Sharing Relevant Resources, is the composite result of analyzing two teachers' conversations around the importance of finding resources to share with families, the role of selecting relatable materials in building a relationship with students, engaging in actions that shape sociopolitical consciousness, teaching kids about life trajectories, and helping to launch forward progress down desired pathways by connecting students with needed resources.

The first theme of the fourth research sub question, *How do teachers describe their actions toward implementing the goals of CREP?* is Building Relationships Through Communication. Teachers reported facilitating positive communication and relationship building by providing opportunities to hear all voices, demonstrating empathy, providing opportunities for expression and healing, holding high expectations for CLD students with dis/abilities, advocating for students and families, and building strong relationships through inclusive practices.

Actions: Instruction towards empowerment.

"You don't need to compare yourself to anybody else"

The second theme that emerged from an analysis of the fourth research sub question, *Instruction Toward Empowerment*, is comprised of six clusters of meaning: (a) Coordinating Responsive Instruction, (b) Providing Responsive Classroom Instruction, (c) Empowering Students, (d) Addressing Skill Gaps, (e) Providing Adaptive and Responsive Instruction, and (f) Exploring Barriers to Activism, and is comprised of ten total codes across five DisCrit tenets.

The first cluster of meaning, Coordinating Responsive Instruction, is examined through the lens of Multidimensional Identities and encompasses 3 codes: (a) Lesson preparation, (b) Organized Learning Environments, and (c) Providing Exposure. The first code deals with thoughtful lesson preparation, specifically the consideration of access (e.g. what materials provide access and religious restrictions that might restrict the use of certain materials), the use of multiple modalities, and direct planning for addressing educational needs (not labels). When asked to discuss their actions toward implementing the goals of CREP for students with multidimensional identities, four teachers talked

Table 3.10

Actions: Instruction Toward Empowerment

Research Sub-Question: How do teachers describe their actions toward implementing CREP?

Theme Two: Teachers provide responsive instruction toward empowerment.

DisCrit Tenets	Clusters of Meaning	Codes
Normalcy		
Multidimensional Identity	Coordinating Responsive Instruction	Lesson Preparation Organized Learning Environments Providing Exposure
Social Constructionism	Providing Responsive Classroom Instruction	Representational Tools Audience Centered Planning Progress Oriented Measurement Equitable Access to Materials Teaching Cultural Adaptability
Privileging Marginalized Voices	Empowering Students	Responsive Instruction Advocacy
Denial of Rights	Addressing Skill Gaps	Universalized Strategy Instruction
Interest Convergence	Providing Adaptive & Responsive Instruction	Providing Responsive Instruction Teaching Skills and Strategies
Activism		

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about the significance of the second code, Organizing the Learning Environments,

including descriptors: providing structure in order to address needs; creating routine;

preparing for independence; and providing a template for success by offering choices,

multiple opportunities for correction, and clear examples of successful work and

behavior. The final code, Providing Exposure, was born from the feedback of three

teachers who discussed the significance of providing mirror models, diverse literature, and student identified interests.

The second cluster of meaning for the theme *Instruction Toward Empowerment* is, Providing Responsive Classroom Instruction, and was examined through the lens of Social Constructionism and contains one code by the same name. In a discussion around race and dis/Ability as social constructions, four teachers discussed the necessity of Providing Responsive Classroom Instruction, including the descriptors: (a) using representational tools, (b) audience centered planning, (c) progress-oriented measurement, described by Marnie,

> So, they definitely feel that if they have a disability, it's outside of the norm, and it's worse. Right? And I don't concentrate on that at all. I spend my time talking to them about progress. 'You were here, and now you're here, you made this great progress.' And keeping your mind on how much you're learning, and keeping your mind on how much you're progressing, is one way to forget about that, you don't need to compare yourself to anybody else. So, spending less time comparing kind of takes away some of that negative self-esteem that they will get by considering themselves 'disabled' (p. 14).

(d) equitable access to materials and (e) the practice of teaching cultural adaptability.

Examined through Privileging Marginalized Voices, the third cluster, Empowering Students, emerged from two codes: Responsive Instruction and Advocacy. Responsive Instruction was described by five teachers as (a) pre-teaching, (b) thoughtful planning, (c) providing mirror models, (d) building relationships, (e) honoring linguistic differences, (f) incorporating learning strategies, (g) delegating responsibility to the students, and (h) designing motivating activities. One teacher talked about the finding motivators to engage her early elementary students in the lesson,

> Getting a paycheck made me realize like, 'Oh, we all work for something. What are the kids working for?' Um, you can even relate that to behavior. You know? The kid is acting out for a reason, what is that reason? What are they gaining from

activating out? So, I work for a paycheck, these kids might work for a cookie. They might work for a... So, establishing a reward system. I am very motivated by my paycheck. I am very motivated for my paycheck and I wouldn't be here if it weren't for a paycheck. Um, these kids are not motivated by learning but you have to find out what motivates them to learn (Tia, p.34).

Advocacy, the second code, resulted from one teacher's description of the significance of teaching students to self-advocate and the importance of providing opportunities to increase self-sufficiency.

The fourth cluster of meaning for the theme Instruction Towards Empowerment is Addressing Skill Gaps and is comprised of one code, Universalized Strategy Instruction. This code emerged from the remarks of one teacher about the Denial of Rights of CLD students with dis/abilities and how teachers describe their implementation of the goals of CREP. She talked about her high school's school-wide effort to increase reading fluency and test scores implemented as reading and testing strategy instruction in every class. This universalized strategy instruction was aimed at increasing testing results and addressing the reading deficiencies for all students in the high school and does not single out any students with labels, as was the practice prior to implementing this instructional policy.

Providing Adaptive & Responsive Instruction is the fifth cluster of meaning for the theme Instruction Towards Empowerment and is comprised of two codes: (a) Providing Responsive Instruction and (b) Teaching Skills and Strategies. The first code, Providing Responsive Instruction results from the analysis of two teachers talking about descriptors (a) Utilizing Differentiated Materials in order to provide access to the same content for all students and (b) Providing Responsive Instruction with integrated

classes. One teacher talked about the benefit of her modified math class integrating with the Algebra I class,

> We've had opportunities for the Algebra 1 class to join with our class. And so, the students are working out problems together, they're asking questions, so it's more of a math talk and discussion. The students, instead of asking the teacher, they are asking their Algebra 1 peer any questions that they may have. The amount of work the students were able to complete was much higher. The amount of questions that the teachers were asked was much lower. The engagement in the math was much higher, and the amount of, there were fewer misbehaviors in the classroom and there was less side conversations in the classroom (Angela, p. 14).

In addition to providing responsive instruction, the code Teaching Skills and Strategies was built from the input of two teachers discussing teaching skills and strategies including descriptors (a) differentiated instruction, (b) universalized differentiation, and (c) universalized enrichment. Those descriptors address how Sped teachers are adapting lessons for all students, not just those with an IEP, how reteaching lessons and reviewing material with students with and without labels is beneficial, and how lessons designed for gifted students would be beneficial for all students.

The final cluster of meaning for the theme Instruction Toward Empowerment is Exploring Barriers to Activism and is examined through the lens of the tenet Activism. This cluster includes a single code by the same name that resulted from the input of four teachers, who discussed the barriers faced by CLD students with dis/abilities and described those barriers as indicated by (a) a lack of cohesive vision and narrow focus on the part of the school regarding student needs, (b) an unsupportive climate toward the goals of activism, and (c) a lack of cohesive vision among staff regarding student activism.

The theme, Instruction Towards Empowerment, is generated from teachers who discussed their actions toward providing responsive and adaptive classroom instruction,

empowering students, exploring barriers faced by their students, addressing skill gaps, and advocating for students.

Actions: Engaging in self-reflection.

"I'm more cognizant of what I say and what I do and what my expectations are"

The final theme for the question *How do teachers describe their actions toward implementing the goals of CREP* is Engaging in Self-Reflection. This theme is comprised of two clusters of meaning, (a) Engaging in a Reflective Teaching Practice and (b) Eschewing the Deficit Model. Engaging in a Reflective Teaching Practice, the first cluster of meaning, contains 2 codes: Responsive Instruction and Awareness of Bias, both examined through the tenet of Normalcy. The first code, Responsive Instruction, resulted from the suppositions of three teachers who discussed the importance of being responsive as evidenced by descriptors including (a) lesson planning, (b) selecting materials, (c) highlighting mirror examples of success, and (d) in hiring practices. The second code, Awareness of Bias, was a very important part of Engaging in Self-Reflection for one Providing responsive instruction and demonstrating an awareness of personal bias are two actions taken by teachers that support engagement in a reflective teaching practice and describe actions toward the implementation of the goals of CREP.

teacher who thought a great deal about personal bias, particularly when filling out rating scales on a student. She talks about the variability of results that come from the diagnostic process and the influence that teachers have on the results, particularly if the student is demonstrating difficult behaviors,

Table 3.11

Actions: Engaging in Self-Reflection

Research Sub-Question: How do teachers describe their actions toward implementing CREP?		
Theme Three: Teacher Participants Engage in Self Reflection		
DisCrit Tenets	**Clusters of Meaning**	**Codes**
Normalcy	Engaging in a Reflective Teaching Practice	Responsive Instruction Awareness of Bias
Multidimensional Identity		
Social Constructionism		
Privileging Marginalized Voices		
Denial of Rights	Eschewing the Deficit Model	Provide responsive & Evolving Practices Changing Approaches Toward Systemic Oppressions Strengths Based Approach
Interest Convergence		
Activism		

Teachers have bias when they fill out a rating scale. I could very easily fill out a rating scale on a kiddo and... if other people have the same bias towards that kiddo, they're gonna go ED real quick. A bad day with a kid can totally skew your point of view. So, when I fill those out, if it's been a rough day, I either won't fill it out on that day or I have some else who very much knows the student to check myself against when I'm filling it out. But I only ask that person if I know they're not… they're not just hardcore in the opposite direction for that kiddo. So… They have to see that kid on a good day. Otherwise I won't ask for their support in filling it out (Abigail, p.4).

The second cluster of meaning, Eschewing the Deficit Model, also supports

engagement in a reflective teaching practice and is comprised of three codes: (a)

Providing Responsive & Evolving Practices, (b) Changing Approaches Toward Systemic

oppressions, and (c) Utilizing a Strengths Based Approach. This cluster of meaning is

examined through the tenet Denial of Rights. The first code, Providing Responsive &

Evolving Practices, resulted from the analysis of responses of two teachers who, when

asked to describe their actions toward implementing the goals of CREP in consideration

of the Denial of Rights of CLD students with dis/Abilities, discussed Providing

Responsive Evolving Practices including (a) utilizing restorative practices in classrooms,

(b) a policy of no suspensions at the school, and (c) universalized accommodations for

the purpose of eliminating stigma within testing situations by allowing all children to

utilize accommodations such as extended time. The second code, Changing Approaches

Toward Systemic Oppressions, evolved from the composited remarks of four teachers

who discussed (a) increasing awareness of racial issues, (b) interrupting the school to

prison pipeline, (c) employing brave advocacy, and (d) building a culture of inclusive

practice as descriptors of changing approaches toward systemic oppressions within the

school system. Angelica described the influence of her training on her awareness and her

actions,

> It's still a very racially charged area. Race is a big issue in this city and so I think
> that it's not in the back of my mind anymore, it's in the forefront of my
> mind. I'm more cognizant of what I say and what I do and what my expectations
> are, because of the cultural factors.

Strengths Based Approach, the third and final code included in the cluster of meaning

Eschewing the Deficit Model, results from the descriptions of responsive actions taken to

negate the denial of rights of students through (a) building student learning partnerships, (b) encouraging writing, and (c) challenging low self-expectations.

The third theme examines how teachers engage in self-reflection in their attempts to provide a culturally responsive instruction to CLD students with dis/Abilities. Teachers offered descriptions of how providing responsive instruction, such as considering audience representation in the selection of materials and mirror models of success and being aware of personal bias and its lasting reach on students, impacting for example, rating scales used in the process of dis/Ability qualification determinations, demonstrate engagement in a reflective teaching practice. Teachers also described how providing responsive instruction, operating from a strengths-based approach, and changing approaches toward systemic oppressions eschew the deficit model and help to dismantle deeply ingrained systems of operation that do not provide an equitable approach to educating all our young citizens. In doing so, teachers are helping to shape a path to which students can connect and take pride in their education, thus implementing one of the goals of CREP.

Actions conclusion.

Teachers described their actions taken toward implementing the goals of CREP as the outgrowth of their experiences, suggesting that their created meanings and understandings around the impact of race and dis/Ability labels generated the active responses of (a) building relationships through open communication, evidenced by providing platforms to increase student voice and ownership in their educations; (b) planning lessons and classroom systems designed to empower students by increasing their representation, filling in knowledge gaps, and shifting the ways of responding to

systemic barriers; and through (c) engagement in self-reflection about reflective and responsive teaching practices, the impact of personal biases on students, and responses to systemic oppressions aim toward dismantling negative models of thinking and demonstrate actions towards the implementation of the goals of CREP.

Primary Research Question Description

The primary research question, *How do teachers of culturally linguistically diverse (CLD) students with dis/Abilities perceive their ability to implement culturally responsive educational practices (CREP)*? is answered through the examination of the themes that emerged from the analysis of the four sub questions. In this section we will briefly review the themes that resulted from the analysis of each sub question and synthesize to answer the primary research question.

The first sub question examined the impact of life experiences on the implementation of a CREP for CLD students with dis/Abilities and found that teachers did indeed notice the largely negative impact of race and dis/ability labels on students and colleagues. Additionally, teachers identified a range of barriers that impact the implementation of culturally responsive practices. Teachers reported responding to those identified barriers by engaging in self-reflection, providing instruction toward empowerment, expressing a desire for more training, establishing open lines of communication, and actively building relationships with students.

The exploration of how teachers' formal experiences impacted their ability to implement CREP with their multidimensional students revealed that the impact of formal trainings on topics related to cultural responsivity included a heightened awareness of inequities faced by those labeled. The increased awareness of inequity that resulted was

paired with a response of increased communication and an infusion of responsivity into teaching practices, motivated by building connections with students. The awareness of inequities also inspired a desire for more training around a lengthy list of topics, all related to understanding and addressing the multidimensionality of students. Additionally, questioning around formal trainings prompted teacher participants to identify the barriers that disrupt the implementation of CREP, including the presence of self-generated and systemic barriers; the inequitable division of resources; a lack of necessary training for dealing with barriers, gaps, diversity and dis/Ability related topics; an unclear vision conveyed by leadership coupled with a lack of buy-in from staff, and the influence of racism on an activist agenda.

The themes developed from responses to the third sub question describe teachers' meanings and understandings of dis/ability, race, culture, and language as outlined by the tenets of DisCrit. These meanings and understandings shared by teachers revealed a recognized significance of the negative impacts of race and dis/ability labels as well as an awareness of systemic oppressions linked to race and dis/Ability labels. Teachers also shared their understandings that systemic oppressions impact access to an equitable education for their students. Conscious awareness of systemic oppressions linked to race and dis/Ability labels builds sensitivity toward labeled persons. Teachers recognized the impact of systemic barriers on the successful implementation of CREP and expressed that open and responsive communications, based on valuing student identity, advocacy, building trust, thoughtful lesson planning, encouraging voice, and focusing on strengths and growth, are the building blocks of an optimal learning environment.

The fourth sub question examined the actions taken by teachers toward implementing the goals of CREP. Teachers describe their actions in terms of facilitating increased communication around topics of race and dis/Ability, providing responsive instruction and engaging in self-reflection. Increased communication includes actions such as advocacy, providing opportunities for voice and healing, employing an empathetic approach, valuing diverse communication styles, holding high expectations, and sharing resources. Actions taken toward empowerment included planning responsive lessons, providing exposure to mirror models of success, teaching skills and strategies toward empowerment, and exploring the barriers to activism within their practice. Engagement in self-reflective practices included reflecting on biases, considering how to provide responsive instruction, changing approaches to responding to systemic barriers, and providing a strengths-based approach to instruction, all actions taken toward the goal of increasing CREP in their classrooms.

Examined together, the analysis of codes, clusters of meaning, and themes reveals that teachers of CLD students with dis/Abilities did describe their perceptions of their ability to implement CREP as largely positive and impactful. Those abilities were described as understandings of the negative impact of race and dis/ability labels and a response of communication, relationship building, and actions toward equitable practices. The identification of barriers toward implementation were also addressed and responses were expressed as desires for more training and a change in responses to systemic oppressions. Teacher participants also responded to barriers in implementing CREP by engaging in self-reflection, establishing open lines of communication, building relationships, providing instruction toward empowerment, and expressing a desire for

more training. Influenced by life experiences and formal trainings, the created meanings and understandings of the impact of race and dis/Ability labels, generated in teachers a response of engagement in self-reflection, the establishment of open communication and actions toward relationship building, providing instruction toward empowerment, and a generated desire to continue seeking trainings on topics related to the multidimensionality of students and the implementation of culturally responsive practices. Teachers recognized the significance of implementing a culturally responsive educational practice and responded by taking actions toward building an optimal learning environment, supported by open communication, strong relationships, and instruction toward empowerment.

 Summary of Results Chapter

The results chapter discussed the themes that emerged from an analysis of the described impact of life experiences and formal experiences on teachers' ability to implement a culturally responsive practice as well as the meanings and understandings teachers have around dis/ability, race, culture, and language and the actions taken by teachers toward the implementation of CREP for CLD students with dis/abilities.   The results chapter answered each research sub question in terms of emergent codes, clusters of meaning, and themes as viewed through the lens of DisCrit theory. The primary research question was then answered through an examination of the culmination of data from each of the four sub questions.

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

The literature has demonstrated that CLD students with dis/abilities are often marginalized from their peers and denied access to the general curriculum as a result of systemic oppressions due to a variety of exclusionary policies and practices. It is the charge of teachers to respond to these oppressions by implementing an educational experience that addresses the unique learning needs of individual students, as evidenced by the formal learning provided to teachers toward this end. The purpose of this research was to describe how teachers of multidimensional students perceive their ability to be culturally responsive in the classroom. The focus of this research is to describe the life experiences and formal experiences that inform teachers' perceptions of their ability to implement CREP as well as illuminating the ways in which teachers describe their own understandings of dis/ability, race, culture, and language as viewed through the lens of DisCrit Theory. Finally, the focus of this study is to detail the actions taken by teachers to implement CREP in the classroom.

Summary of Study

The ambition of phenomenology is to "understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold meaning of peoples' experiences" (Kvale, 1996). Qualitative research traditions recognize researcher-bias and its ability to influence study outcomes. Qualitative research challenges the researcher to understand, describe, and isolate personal perceptions and experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Those described challenges are countered with measures of validity, woven into the methodology for the purpose of achieving a candid look at personal bias and its potential influence on the outcomes of this study. The measures of integrity achieved throughout this research include (a)

bracketing my experiences prior to conducting interviews, (b) reliability coding during the process of Phenomenological Reduction in which myself and a research assistant under the supervision of the committee chair separately coded 33% of the interviews and looked for agreement about meaning, (c) conducting member checks in which the essential invariant structure was composited and emailed to participants in a survey asking for their feedback and (d) an openness to disconfirming previously held notions (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994).

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to uncover how teachers of culturally linguistically diverse students with dis/abilities perceive their ability to implement culturally responsive educational practices. This study demonstrates that teachers are deeply aware of the impact of assigning *race* and *dis/ability* labels. This awareness was conveyed most poignantly through the collective life experiences shared by teachers, and by the meanings and understandings that were shaped by those experiences. The experiences shared by teachers echoes the literature's expressed delineation of the systemic oppressions that occur as a result of those *race* and *ability* labels, that have the often-unintended consequence of *othering* and excluding those meant to be helped in the education system. Those lived experiences have exemplified systemic oppressions and generated not only reflections on inequity but prompted action toward rectification. Practitioners by nature, teachers respond to those inequities by communicating for the purpose of building relationships with students, colleagues, and families, and to create an optimal learning environment by honoring the identities of their students and offering a platform to hear voices that may have been marginalized.

The practical nature of juggling curriculum implementation and preserving time for relationship building is a delicate balance and teachers expressed a desire for more training in how to better reach their students. Teachers collectively expressed frustration at not being provided training in subject matter that they were being held accountable for implementing. Such topics that were desired for further training included dis/ability, barriers faced by students, and student-centered approaches. Regarding the need for more training, teachers were reflective and largely wanted to consider their own bias, evolve their classroom practices toward an equitable experience for all students, and feel prepared to respond to systemic oppressions witnessed in the educational system.

Teachers were keen to identify barriers toward implementing CREP, barriers that were made clear in their formal experiences and crystallized in their meanings and understandings of their experiences. Though teachers were quick and relieved to point out oppressions that were beyond their control, they were also expeditious in their responses to those inequities, implementing actions that included instruction toward empowerment, evidenced by classroom systems designed to promote independence of students through advocacy, strength-based approaches that countered the deficit models entrenched in traditional models of thinking, offering opportunities for voice in and outside of classrooms, and building relationships that allow for exploration.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are the weaknesses related to decisions made in a study and are difficult to control (Simon, 2011). The limitations of this study include the samples of the targeted participants, because those who chose to participate may represent a population with distinct characteristics that differ from the entire population of general

education or special education teachers across districts. Additionally, the sample of teacher participants was drawn from a single midwestern state; therefore, the research may not address differences in educational settings in other states.

Addressing my own positionality in the research is relevant to the limitations of the study. The theoretical lens of Transcendental Phenomenology asks researchers to engage in bracketing in order to make their experiences overt for the purpose of recognizing bias and how it may cloud the research. My positionality in the research includes my relationship with some of the participants as co-workers. While my bracketing analysis concluded the connections with the known participants may have added to the comfort and trust level actualized during interviews, my relationship with some participants may have been a factor in the willingness of some teachers to respond as willing participants in the study. My employment in with the support district and work in the selected district may have contributed to the willingness of teachers to participate in the study, even for those teachers who I did not know.

Additional consideration of the limitations of this project includes the minimal response of participants to the request for member checks. The timing of requests for feedback from participants may have been ill-timed: emails asking teachers to read the essential invariant structure and respond with criticism, questions, concerns, or thoughts arrived in participants' inboxes at the end of the school-year, a notoriously busy time for teachers. With limited ability to confirm or deny my analysis through respondent feedback, I cannot be sure participants found my analysis reflective of their experiences. Lastly, limitations may have occurred based on the availability of participants sampled for this study.

Reification of the Study

The reification of the study addresses substantializing the themes that resulted from asking teachers of CLD students with dis/abilities how they perceive their ability to implement CREP and what it will imply in terms of practice.

The examination of the life experiences of participants produced an understanding that teachers recognize the impact of race and dis/ability labels. The implication is that the impact of such labels is negative. There is a wealth of evidence in the literature that CLD students with dis/abilities are often separated from peers, receive harsher consequences, and experience inequitable legal, educational, and financial outcomes. Teachers in this study anecdotally confirmed those findings in the sharing of their lived experiences. The negative impacts for those *othered* by the exclusion produced by labeling was communicated by non-white participants and noted by white respondents. Speaking about students and about their personal experiences, teachers shared that for those voices that are excluded, there is an awareness of separateness and a desire to be recognized and included. In the consideration of dis/ability, the use of a labeling system as a gateway for needed services and supports continues to enforce existing structures of oppression that ultimately serve to segregate students from peers, creating an inherently inequitable system of education. The 1954 Brown v. BOE ruling stripped constitutional sanctions for segregation by race in public schools. Separating students with dis/abilities into *other* classes, to be educated by *other* teachers, using *other* curriculums might lead to the reexamination of the ruling of Brown v. BOE and a consideration of its recognition that separate is inherently unequal when examining our current system of educating students with dis/abilities. The teachers of students with dis/ability labels also felt the

impact of exclusions resulting from working for a separate employer, including being excluded from selected district planning meetings and experiencing limited access to materials provided by the selected district. One conclusion that may be drawn from the consideration of such experiences is the need to examine the practices that limit access to materials, content, and social structures for all individuals operating within school buildings. Another consideration that may be drawn is the examination of the limitations of the system that separates students by dis/ability.

Teachers were not content to merely notice inequity; the actions and responses that accompanied such awarenesses may provide a venue through which we can examine potential methods for dismantling longstanding systems of *othering*. Understanding the inherent value of diversity, communicating acceptance of differences, and building relationships are key components in the shift in mindset that must occur in order to be responsive practitioners in today's classrooms. Several bright spots emerged from the discussed practices being implemented toward cultural responsivity. Restorative Practices, a practice that attempts to remove punitive approaches to discipline and invests class time into building relationships by privileging marginalized voices, was touted by teachers as a positive addition to their routines. Inclusive classrooms that utilized peer instruction and exposure to multiple levels of skills and abilities were also described as successful in terms of student engagement, peer interactions, and use of teacher time. The implementation of these two shifts from exclusive to inclusive policies exemplify how removing practices that separate and *other* demonstrates that the dismantling of barriers increases positive outcomes for students.

For white teachers, the impact of formal trainings included, for some participants, an increased or new awareness about the impact of race labels and how their students and colleagues are deeply affected by the often-covert effects of race labels. For a few participants the discussion of such a difficult topic caused uncomfortable feelings, and ultimately a reluctance to engage openly on the topic of race. The personalization of perceived fault in the discussion of the impacts of systemic oppressions made a few white participants uncomfortable with engaging deeply in discussions of culture and race. Though not a primary theme in this research, this notable finding is worth examining in terms of what can be implied in terms of practice. When considering a how to shift mindset around deeply rooted systems of exclusion, preparing teachers by first creating an awareness that such conversations are difficult and worthwhile may increase the acceptance that culturally responsive practices require a deliberate break with the current systems of thought and operation. Training programs may want to consider the presence of resistance in the planning of culturally responsive trainings for teachers.

While topics related to race and culture were at the center of formal trainings offered to teachers in this study, dis/ability topics were almost completely absent from consideration. This was true of trainings provided by the selected district as well as teachers' formal experiences in university and college programs. One hundred percent of participants expressed a desire for more training around dis/ability topics. The implication is that even for teachers working for the support district and specializing in educating students with dis/ability labels, the provided trainings do not offer the depth of information sought by practitioners. Teachers expressed a desire to know more about how to address systemic barriers faced by CLD students with dis/Abilities as well as a

desire to be educated about the impact of other aspects of the multidimensional identities of students. Conclusions may be drawn about expanding the range of topics around dis/Ability offered to teachers in professional development but also in teacher preparation programs.

We can glean from the results of this study that teachers are indeed interested in equity for their students, evidenced by the desire to dismantle barriers faced by students. In order to dismantle barriers, they must be identified. Information about existing barriers may be most effectively generated by those experiencing the barriers: those voices that are excluded and marginalized. Consideration of a dramatic shift in the collection of voices that source training topics may be warranted. One teacher spoke about this very topic,

> Kids have nothing to do with trainings. No one has asked kids what they want and how they feel when they're at school. We like to bring in little snippets from little videos, but no one asks kids from our particular building, 'When you are at school, how do you feel?' No one is willing to ask elementary kids about race topics. No one wants to ask kids, "How do you feel about most of your teachers being white?' No one wants to ask, 'Do you feel like, do you feel like you see yourself represented?' Now in my building, like I said, I feel like they do a lot better job than many other places, you know, other places that I've taught. I feel like they really try to hire teachers that mirror their students and we have students- we have adults who are both white and black in higher-up positions. Our principals are both African-American and they're female. So that's, that's great. Those are, you know, power positions. They see people, black and white, working together. But no one is willing to ask them, 'How do you feel about cultural things, or race things, or religious things?' Nobody one wants to ask. Cause they're afraid of what they'll hear and what they'll have to do in response to it. Um, maybe when we start asking kids there might be a difference (Abigail, p.9).

Although her perspective offers skepticism that the voice of students will be considered and used to inform training, she acknowledges the tendency of educators to be responsive to a conscious awareness of systemic issues. Pre-service education programs and

administrative staff development planning committees would benefit from the inclusion of a diverse collection of voices and perspectives.

Even without the input of students, teachers were able to identify a number of systemic barriers that impact their students. The identification of those barriers could serve as a starting point for planning committees to address how to dismantle barriers that negatively impact their students. Some of the identified barriers faced by students were directly connected to a deficit approach from individuals, such as low expectations, while other barriers were more systemic, including inequitable access to curriculum, or disproportionate suspension rates. Garcia & Guerra (2004) report that deficit thinking is characterized by the belief that dominant norms are inherently correct, and that children and families are to blame for low achievement and failure, absolving educators of the need to modify practices. The shift from a deficit perspective to a strengths-based perspective can be supported through formal training venues including pre-service training and ongoing professional development. The results of this study demonstrated a willingness of teachers to respond to awareness of inequity with actions toward building connection, this is a hopeful starting point for shifting mindset and dismantling conventional barriers faced by CLD students with dis/Abilities.

Fasching-Varner & Seriki (2015) purport that implementing CREP must be centered on high expectations, built out of teachers' engagement with the real-life experiences of their students, and constructed from a critical examination of how their own experiences shape their understandings of students. One notable finding that resulted from this study was the willingness of teachers to self-examine and consider the role of personal bias in the implementation of CREP. The investigation into both the

impact of formal experiences and the actions taken by teachers toward the implementation of CREP resulted in a discovered willingness on the part of teachers to engage self-reflection. We can glean from this that teachers understood the need to examine the influence of their thoughts on their actions in the building of a culturally responsive practice. In terms of application, building administrators may want to consider blocking time for reflective practice as part of professional development in buildings.

Several teachers discussed the practice of grouping students with IEPs together for the expressed purpose of meeting service needs with the presence of a special education teacher. Inevitably, these groupings also included placing Tier III readers (readers performing at three or more years below grade level) without IEPs in classes together with students with IEPs. Students with IEPs who were reading on, above, or below grade level were grouped together with Tier III students. Similar class structuring occurred in math classes, resulting in the placement of students with IEPs in Tier III classes- regardless of their level of achievement or need for services in that particular subject. This practice results from factors including scheduling and availability of special education teachers. The result, discussed by teacher participants, is that students with IEPs are placed in classes defined by low expectations, regardless of their level of performance, ability, or need. Some considerations for practice may include the examination of barriers created for students related to scheduling and grouping practices.

The most noteworthy finding from this study is the messaging around creating connections with students. While only one sub question specifically explores the actions taken by teachers to implement CREP, the analysis of data revealed that the exploration

of each sub question generated a theme related to the action of creating a connection through communication. The life experiences of teachers prompted the communication of messages of acceptance and support in order to build relationships with their CLD students. The increased awareness of the impact of labels facilitated by formal trainings prompted teachers to be reflective and build connections with their multidimensional students. The reflected meanings and understandings around implementing a culturally responsive practice conveyed by teachers included recognizing that a safe learning environment is comprised in part, of relationship building and encouraging student voice. The actions taken by teachers to implement a responsive practice include dialoguing, providing opportunities for and promoting student voice, allowing for a variety of communication styles, and building strong relationships. The significance of this demonstrated shift in mindset implies that teachers in this study are moving away from the idea that a successful classroom is predicated on the transmission of knowledge and content from teacher to students. These themes imply a shift toward understanding education as responsive and reflexive endeavor as well as recognizing that diverse students bring incredible value and knowledge to educational settings and are valuable members of society. These themes imply a recognition that teachers cannot expect diverse students to simply adapt to a majority culture and that building trust and fostering relationships are the means to fostering student success.

Implications for Future Research

Exploratory qualitative research methods are often used when little is known about a topic (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Based on the findings from this investigation, an exact replication is likely not warranted; however, researchers may want to consider

doing further investigation using qualitative methods to explore the experiences of students in a classroom that strives to be culturally responsive. Following an investigation into student perceptions of the implementation of a culturally responsive practice, an investigation into the experiences of families of CLD students with dis/abilities is warranted in order to explore the perceptions of involvement and inclusion in the school culture.

The most immediate potential outgrowth of this study, exploring student experiences of a culturally responsive classroom, could be filtered through the lens of the DisCrit model using a qualitative methodology. Increased attention could be paid to the meanings and understandings of dis/ability, race, culture, and language created by those most greatly impacted by race and ability labels, the students. The tenets of Normalcy, Multidimensional Identity, Social Construction, Privileging Marginalized Voices, Denial of Rights, Interest Convergence, and Activism provide a natural structure for the exploration of student voice in an examination of the impact of culturally responsive educational practice. A secondary study exploring the perception of families of CLD students with dis/abilities regarding their experiences of inclusion in the school culture could also be explored through the lens of DisCrit, focusing on the actions taken by the teachers and administration as well as the policies implemented by the district and discussed by the school board with regard to a culturally responsive educational practice. Additionally, an exploration of the perspective of administration regarding the implementation of culturally responsive educational practices in classrooms and their impact on school culture as examined through the lens of DisCrit could expand the impact of this study.

Much of this study centered around the exploration of race and dis/Ability labels. In the process of talking to teachers about the challenges faced by their multidimensional students, I began to reflect more on the complex nature of our multidimensional lives, acknowledging that the socially constructed labels of race and dis/Ability do not envelop the rich and multifaceted integration of identity. The complex identity of a life cannot be encapsulated in a single term, particularly a socially constructed term that carries with it social, economic, legal, and educational implications. Future researchers may want to explore the impact of other labels placed on our students (e.g. gender, sexual identity, etc.), and the impact of layered and intersecting oppressions on our students. Teacher respondents also recognized the need to expand understandings of the impact of labels on multidimensional identities and discussed the need for trainings designed to expand the support of safe expression related to LGBTQ issues, culture and diversity, dis/Ability awareness, and other student-centered topics.

Expected Impact and Significance

The impact of this study is limited in size and scope to the direct participants involved in this research. Given that limitation, it is my hope that the study may reach beyond its present setting to impact the ways in which teachers and administrators regard the importance of implementing a culturally responsive practice. Considering the expressed challenges and experiences of teachers who attempt to implement a teaching practice that responds to the unique challenges of each constellation of learners may bring some solutions for redressing decades of systemic oppressions. Actualizing the recommendations of esteemed researchers regarding the implementation of a CREP is an

ongoing challenge in a system mired in perpetuating deficits. Administrators and specialists supporting the efforts of teachers may consider the findings of this study and build support for teachers in the form of providing opportunities for self-reflection; offering training and support for opening dialogue about complex and difficult topics such as race and dis/ability; providing opportunities to identify barriers to the implementation of CREP within buildings; responding to the call for more trainings on the identified topics of diversity, dis/ability, barriers faced by students, strategies to address knowledge gaps, student-centered topics; and gathering suggestions for strategies that support CREP in classrooms. Further support may be offered in terms of coaching teachers and staff in the creation of communication systems that engage and empower families to voice their abilities to contribute to the culture of the schools.

In addition to the consideration of providing training on specific topics generated by teachers, administrators may consider the equity in which trainings are provided. Special Education teachers working for the support district were included in trainings provided by the selected district, including the culturally responsive trainings. The general education teachers working for the selected district did not receive access to the numerous trainings provided by the support district, creating a division in knowledge between the two groups of teachers. One consideration for administrators in both the selected and support districts is expanding the access to trainings for general education teachers in the selected district. The division of access to trainings creates a knowledge gap for general education teachers around topics directly related to dis/Ability, a desired training topic specified by 100% of teacher participants in this study.

Expanding the exploration of how to increase and improve methods of communication with not only students and their families, but in partnership with the larger community in which the school is nestled may be another outgrowth of this study. School administrations may consider the partnership with community members to be a foundation of expanding the approaches to diverse applications of ideas in classrooms. Teachers expressed a desire to establish open communication, build relationships, increase their training around a variety of student-centered topics, and to share resources for growth. Perhaps school-community partnerships can harness teachers' enthusiasm for communication and learning and develop more integrated styles of study that expand beyond the school walls and harness the desire to empower students by anchoring their future investment into the communities in which they live. Further research may explore the methods through which these student-teacher-community partnerships could develop.

Teachers may find the results of this study useful in terms of validating their own efforts toward providing a culturally responsive practice in the face of challenges created by an educational system that, since its inception, has executed the exclusion of those students that do not fit the portrait of white middle-class able-bodied norms. Teachers can recognize that their collective understandings of the impact of race and dis/ability labels are noticed and that their efforts to create communication systems that directly address inequities and work toward empowerment of students are recognized. Though not generalizable, this research may provide impetus for teachers who want to share their communication efforts with colleagues and develop beneficial strategies for approaching head-on the challenges created by the social constructions of ability and

race. Researchers can further investigate methods of supporting teachers in their efforts to open communication with students and extend that communication to families and communities.

Teachers' responses of understanding the need to expand communication around difficult topics such as race and dis/ability and to identify barriers around implementing CREP within schools signals an obligation to demolish longstanding deficit models and embrace a strengths-based approach to educating the shifting populations of students. This research has demonstrated that being culturally responsive does not require an understanding of individual cultures, nor does it support the infusion of a specific set of interventions, rather, it suggests that the ingredients for cultural responsivity include a mindset that is open to communication and change, a willingness to investigate personal and systemic bias, a desire to foster dynamic and reciprocal relationships with students, and a positive regard for the intrinsic value added by culturally linguistically diverse students with multidimensional abilities served by our educational system. These elements have been elucidated upon by teachers currently working in the field and offer a recipe for metamorphosizing our educational practice into an embracive approach, valuing and welcoming diverse ideas, voices, and abilities.

Appendix A: Request for Participants

College of Education

Educator Preparation, Innovation and Preparation
One University Boulevard
369 Marillac Hall
St. Louis, Missouri 63121-4400

Dear _____,

My name is Melanie E. Ziebatree and I am a doctoral candidate from the Department of Educator Preparation, Innovation and Research at the University of Missouri-Saint Louis. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about the experience of teachers working with culturally and/or linguistically diverse students (CLD) with an educational diagnosis of Learning Disabled, Emotionally Disturbed, or Intellectually Disabled. You are eligible to be in this study because you are a teacher working with CLD students with disabilities. I obtained your contact information from [describe source].

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an in-person audio-recorded interview. The initial interview will take no more than 2 hours. Following the initial interview, I will email the results of my analysis for your review. You are not required to respond to the email but understand that I value your insight into the results of the analysis, and your feedback is welcomed. There is no compensation for your participation in this study. However, your participation will help in informing practice for educators working with culturally and/or linguistically diverse students with disabilities.

Remember, this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you'd like to participate, we can go ahead and schedule a time for me to meet with you to give you more information and to conduct the initial study interview. You may reach me by phone (314) 308-9226 or email meky92@mail.umsl.edu to schedule our interview or obtain additional information.

Thanks for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you,
Melanie Ziebatree

I am giving permission for Melanie Ziebatree to contact me. I understand that agreeing to be contacted does not mean that I will participate in the study. I understand my participation in the study will be completely voluntary and my decision to give my contact information will not obligate me to participate in the study.
Name_____
Address_____
_____
_____
Telephone Number_____
Email Address_____
How would you like to be contacted (please indicate one):
Letter: Telephone: Email:
If you would like to be contacted by telephone, please indicate the best times to reach you.

Appendix B: Consent to Participate

College of Education

Educator Preparation, Innovation and Preparation

One University Boulevard
369 Marillac Hall
St. Louis, Missouri 63121-4400

Informed Consent for: _____

Melanie P K Ziebatree,
Doctoral Candidate at the University of Missouri- St. Louis

STUDENT INVESTIGATOR:
Melanie P K Ziebatree
(314) 308-9226 meky92@mail.umsl.edu
Doctoral Candidate at University of Missouri-St. Louis
College of Education

RESEARCH ADVISOR:
April Regester, Ph.D.
(314) 516-5917 regestera@umsl.edu
359A Marillac Hall
Associate Professor, Special Education
Department of Educators, Preparation, Innovation, & Research

INTRODUCTION: I, Melanie Ziebatree, am a doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri- St. Louis researching the perceptions of in-service teachers of culturally and/or linguistically diverse students with a dis/ability(s). I am going to give you information about this study and invite you to be part of the research. You do not need to decide today whether or not to participate in the research. Before you decide, you can talk to anyone you like about this research.

PURPOSE: You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to detail the experience of in-service teachers regarding their perceptions of their ability to implement a culturally responsive educational practice for their students that identify as having a dis/ability and identify as a culturally and/or linguistically diverse (CLD) person.

PROCEDURES: If you decide to participate, we will conduct an interview that will last no longer that two hours for each participant. Interviews will be conducted individually in a conveniently located setting that allows for audio taping. At the end of the initial interview, you will be asked to complete a brief demographic survey about your experience and certifications that will take no more than five minutes to complete. The demographic survey contains an additional question that asks if you know of any other teachers that may be interested in participating in this research. A follow up interview will take place if clarification is needed and will last no longer than ½ hour. The transcriptions and audio recordings of your interview will be stored in a locked location, accessible only to the primary researcher. Approximately 12-20 participants will be interviewed and the duration of the study will be four months. After the analysis is completed you will be contacted via email for a member check. The email will

contain the results of my analysis and a request for your feedback on this analysis. The purpose of the member check is to find out if my analysis rings true. I request your feedback because I value your input on the accuracy and results of the analysis.

RISKS: There are no anticipated risks for this research project.

BENEFITS: This research project will give subjects the opportunity to talk about an experience that is directly connected to their professional work. This study will provide information that can help public school educators develop interventions that can promote culturally responsive educational practices and benefit all students.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The results of this study may be used in future publications and/ or presentations. In order to protect the privacy of all participants, no names will be used or personal information provided in any sharing of the results of this study. No names will be written on transcripts or shared with regard to audio segments, all participants will be assigned a pseudonym instead. All consent forms, audio recordings, and archival documents will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked room where only the primary researcher has access to them. All the participants will be given the opportunity to listen to or withdraw their audio recordings at any time.

RIGHT TO REFUSE OR WITHDRAW: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time. Participants may change their mind about being in the study at any time and quit after the study has started. The lead researcher may also withdraw participants from the study at her discretion.

QUESTIONS: If you have any questions about this research project or if you think you may have been injured as a result of your participation, please contact Melanie E. Ziebatree who will answer them at (314) 308-9226 or meky92@mail.umsl.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact April Regester at (314) 516-5917 or regestera@umsl.edu.

<div align="center">

CONSENT

</div>

Participation is voluntary. Your signature below will indicate that you have decided to participate as a research subject in the study described above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep.

Signature of Participant

_____

Date_____ Time_____

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

College of Education
Educator Preparation, Innovation and Preparation
One University Boulevard
369 Marillac Hall
St. Louis, Missouri 63121-4400

Step I: **Review Informed Consent** Researcher will review and have participant sign informed consent.
Step II: **Interview Researcher will provide the following introduction:**

As you know, I am conducting a study on the experience of teachers of culturally and/or linguistically diverse students with dis/abilities and their perceptions of ability to implement a culturally responsive education practice in their classroom. I am interested in understanding more about the perceptions and experiences of those who are tasked with implementing a culturally responsive practice in their classrooms. I would like to know more about your life experiences that prepared you work with culturally linguistically diverse students with dis/abilities. I would also like to talk about your more formal training that impacted your ability to implement a culturally responsive educational practice and what actions you take toward being culturally responsive. I'm also interested in your thoughts and understandings about dis/ability, race, culture, and language.

We will have about 2 hours. During that time, I would like to ask you about 16 questions. You do not have to answer any question that you do not wish to. Also, you can ask me to stop the interview at any time. To make sure that I accurately account for all the information you provide me during this interview, I would like to audiotape this. This audio recording will be kept in confidence, and all interview manuscripts will be free of identifying information.

Do I have your permission to audio-record this interview?

Interview Protocol

1. What is your name?
2. Tell me briefly about your job this year.
   - What classes do you teach?
   - What kinds of supports do you have?
   - What is the climate of your school like?

3. Tell me about your **students**.
   - What is the Cultural linguistic **background** of your students?
   - Does the culture of your students **differ** from yours? In what ways? [location? Degrees? Similar economic status? Linguistics?]

We are talking about implementing a culturally responsive educational practice for culturally linguistically diverse students with dis/abilities. I'd like to talk about some things that have influenced your ability to be culturally responsive to your students.

4. What **life experiences** have you had that have prepared you to implement a culturally responsive practice with CLD students with disabilities?
- How has that experience supported your **ability** to be culturally **responsive** in the classroom?

5. What about **training** like **PD**? Can you talk a bit about the PD you have had around culturally responsive training for CLD students with dis/abilities?
- **Was dis/ability included** in the training?
- (2) Can you talk about any of the **activities or discussions** you have participated in your PDs or workshops related to student diversity, cultural relevancy, cultural responsiveness, or dis/ability?
- Did the **PD** influence your thoughts or **understandings** of culture, race, and dis/ability?
- (4) What impact has PD had on your **desire to implement (CREP)** culturally responsive practices in your classroom?
- (2) Talk about some **take-aways** or impressions from your PDs.
- Was there anything **missing from the PD** that would have been helpful to you or that you would have liked to focus on regarding implementing culturally responsive practices?

6. What about other **formal experiences**, like a **class** or a training? Can you talk about the **impact** of that class on your **ability to implement** CREP?
- Was there anything **missing from your formal experience** that would have benefited your **ability** to implement CREP?

7. Let's talk a bit about the **impact** of those **experiences** that you've had.
- How have your experiences influenced your understanding or **meanings** of dis/ability, culture, language, and race?
- In what ways have these experiences **influenced** the ways in which you **prepare** lessons or activities?
- What about **other actions**, outside of those lessons or activities- how have those experiences influenced your **understandings** of dis/ability, culture, language and race?

8. Let's talk a bit about happenings in your classroom. Can you tell me about something that went well in the **classroom** related to CREP? (An **activity** perhaps)
- What about **outside** the classroom? In the community?
- Do you feel like being culturally responsive is **necessary**?
- What **motivations** do have (or not) for implementing CREP?

9. Talk a little about how you provide **opportunities** for your CLD **students** with dis/abilities to have **voice** in their education/ in the classroom/ in the community?

10. Part of this research is concerned with notions of **normalcy**, which examines how racism and ableism circulate in invisible or hidden ways. Normalcy deals with the idea

that whiteness and ability are normative traits, traits that are wanted by all people. The concept of Normalcy also suggests that variation from those traits is undesirable.

- Have you had any life **experiences**, **PD, trainings, classes** or other experiences that have highlighted for you how racism and ableism are normalized?
- How did that experience impact your **understanding** of race, culture, or dis/ability?

11. Can you talk about some challenges that you face in addressing the **multidimensionality** of your students? [we are talking specifically about students that have a dis/ability label of ED/BD, LD, or ID AND a culturally linguistically diverse (meaning non-white and/or speaking a language or dialect other than standardized English at home)

- Have you found ways of integrating or highlighting the **strengths** brought by this population into your work?
- Have you had any **experiences** (life experiences, PD, classes, other trainings) that have impacted your **understandings or meanings of the multidimensional identity** of your students?

12. In this research there is an examination of the idea that *race* and *ability* are **social constructions**. That means that race is not rooted in biological fact but is instead socially structured or assembled and used to create an *otherness* that especially impacts those who fall outside the norm. Dis/Ability is also a social construction with a criterion line drawn at a point on a continuum of ability. This ability spectrum also creates an *otherness* for those who fall outside of norms.

- What promotions of the ideas of race and ability or dis/ability do you notice in schools?
- How has your **understanding of race** impacted your **ability to implement CREP** to CLD students with dis/abilities?
- How have your **understandings of ability or dis/ability** impacted your **ability to implemen**t CREP to CLD students with dis/abilities?
- What are your thoughts on dis/ability as a social construct?
- What are your thoughts on race as a social construct?
- What are your thoughts around culture is a social construct?
- Can you draw on any **life experiences** that may influence your **understandings of race and dis/ability?**

13. Can we talk a bit about the **barriers to learning and participation** faced by CLD students with dis/abilities (LD ID ED)?

- Have you had any **experiences** that have **impacted** your thinking around CLD students with dis/abilities and the **barriers** to learning they face?
- Have you had any opportunities to implement an **activity** or lesson that **breaks** down **barriers** to learning? Or not? Why? Why not?

13. Non-white students and students with dis/abilities have been historically marginalized, legally and within the educational system (**Denial of Rights**).

- Have you had any **experiences** in your life around CLD students with a diagnosis of LD ED or ID being **marginalized**? What about in your classes or PD?
- In thinking about how that marginalization of CLD students with dis/abilities might look in schools, I'm wondering about **accommodations or access** to educational tools or gen ed curriculum - have you had any experiences that impacted your motivations or **actions** toward implementing a culturally responsive practice?
- What **understandings** did you **gain** from that experience?

14. (**Interest Convergence)** Groups that have been or that are marginalized make gains in rights when their interests converge with the interests of the normative group. That means that the interests of the group seeking equality in access and/or protection from discriminations are advanced when the removal of the barriers is viewed as beneficial for the greater good. An example is wide cut, sloped sidewalks for wheelchairs also benefit baby strollers and wheeled suitcases.

- Have you had any **experiences** in your **formal** training that have made you more aware or impacted your understandings of this phenomenon (interest convergence)?
- What about your **life experiences-** have you had any experiences (of interest convergence) that have informed your **understanding** or prepared you to implement a culturally responsive practice for your students?
- Have your experiences (if any) impacted your **actions** in the classroom? How so?
- Is the recognition of interest convergence important?

15. (Activism) The last topic I'd like to talk about is activism.

- Has anything in your **PD** or aspects of your PD prepared you to implement a critical consciousness, to help students include themselves as part of a global community, or to promote social justice issues?
- Did anything in your PD prepare you to empower students to take pride and ownership in their own education?
- Has your PD in any way influenced you to promote diverse forms of resistance, support **activism**, or shape critical sociopolitical consciousness in your students?
- What about your other **formal training**? Have any of your classes prepared you to examine curriculum critically or promote social justice issues in the classroom or community?
- Have any of your **life experiences** influenced you toward **activism** as part of your educational practice?
- (if any) What meanings or understandings (of dis/ability / race / culture or language) have you gained from these experiences?

16. Are there any other thoughts, opinions, reflections, or stories you would like to share regarding the topics we talked about?

Probes:
* Why or why not?
* Can you tell me more?

* Can you think of an example of when this has happened?
* You mention_____. Could you be more specific?
Closing the Interview: Thank you for allowing me to interview you. This information will be helpful in better understanding the process of implementing a culturally responsive educational practice for culturally and/or linguistically diverse students with disabilities.
Next Steps: I will transcribe this interview and then analyze it. I would like to email you the results of my analysis for the purpose of finding out if I have fully captured your answers to these questions, would this be okay with you?
Researcher will email results of analysis to the participants no later than 3 months after the initial interview.

Appendix D: Transcription Guide

1. Use audio recording device for Interviews

2. During transcription, document information verbatim

3. Include continuous line numbers

4. Leave space on the right for coding

Symbols	Meaning
. . .	Documents a break in speaking
(paused)	Pause by participant
!	Emphasis points
Word	Capitalization, indicates the word was spoken louder than surrounding talk
(word)	Utterance or part of it in parentheses: uncertainty on the transcriber's part, but a likely possibility
( )	Empty parentheses: something is being said, but no hearing can be achieved
(0.0)	Timed pause: Silence measure in seconds and tenths of seconds

Appendix E: Demographic Survey

College of Education
Educator Preparation,
Innovation and Preparation

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St. Louis, Missouri 63121-4400

Participant Demographic Information

Name: _____

Gender: _____ **Age:** _____

How long have you been teaching? _____

Current Position/ School: _____

_____

Have you worked in other buildings in this district? If yes where/ how long? _____

_____

_____

Have you worked in other districts? How long? _____

_____

Degree(s): _____

_____

Certifications (please circle all applicable):

Early Childhood (Birth through 3)   Elementary Education (1ˢᵗ-6ᵗʰ)
Middle School Education (5ᵗʰ-9ᵗʰ)

Career Education
Secondary Career Education   Postsecondary Career Education   Adult Education and Literacy

Secondary Education (9ᵗʰ-12ᵗʰ)
Agriculture   Art   Business Education   Business Education Cooperation Education
Cooperative Education   Dance   Driver Education English
Family and Consumer Science   Foreign Language   Health   Journalism
Library Media Specialist Marketing Education   Mathematics   Music
Physical Education (K-12; 9-12)   Science Social Science   Speech and Theatre
Technology and Engineering (5-9; 9-12)   Unified Science

Special Education
Blind and Partially Sighted Special Education (B-12) Deaf and Hearing Impaired Special Education (B-12)

Early Childhood Special Education (B-3)   Family Resource Certification
Mild/Moderate Disability (K-12)   Severely Developmentally Disabled (K-12)

Other
English for Speakers of Other Languages (K-12)   Gifted Education (K-12)   Mathematics
Specialist (1-6)
Special Reading (K-12)   Personal Finance (9-12)

Administrators
Elementary Principal (K-8)   Middle School Principal (5-9)   Postsecondary Career Director
Career Education Director   Secondary Principal (7-12)   Special Education Director
Superintendent (K-12)

Student Services
Adult Education Supervisor (Secondary and Adult)   Elementary Counselor (K-8)
Career Education Counselor   School Psychological Examiner's Certificate   School
Psychologist
Secondary Counselor (7-12)   Speech and Language Pathologist (B-12)
Career Education Placement Coordinator (Secondary/ Postsecondary and Adult)

Other:
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Do you know of any other teachers that might like to participate in this research?
Name(s)/ Contact Information (school/ email/ phone number):
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Is there any additional information that you would like me to be aware of?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

ASK: Which certifications were earned by a teacher prep program and which were earned by taking an exam? Which certifications did you receive as part of an undergrad program or graduate programs? (Teach for America, post-Back)

_____
_____
_____

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