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CULTURALLY DIVERSE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF UNDERGRADUATE FACULTY:  
A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

By

CHRISTINA R. LUTHER

A doctoral dissertation submitted to the  
College of Education  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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in Organizational Leadership

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February, 2021

POST-SECONDARY FACULTY MEMBERS' CULTURAL SENSITIVITY:  
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

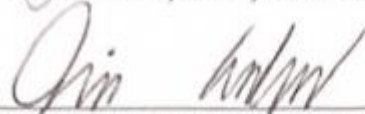
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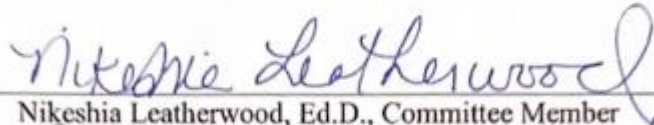
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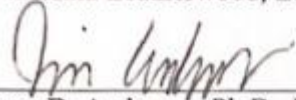
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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my husband, Jeremy, who had to deal with my emotional ups and downs in the process; he has been my encourager throughout it all. To my mom, Bonnie, who always encouraged me to pursue all that God has for me. To my doctoral mentor, and friend, Dr. Amy Bratten, who has given me substantial time and energy to help spur me on and find the right words to convey the message. To Dr. Janet Deck, my dissertation chair and professor, who has encouraged me in my walk with God and my studies. I have had numerous other mentors in my life who have set the example of a Christian leader, and I thank them all for their examples and wisdom: Kent and Kay Valentine, Dr. David and Julie Cole, Rev. Randall and Barbara Bach, Dr. Nick and Leona Venditti, and Rev. Jeff and Ramona Farmer. I would also like to dedicate this to all of my international students for whom I had the privilege of teaching, because they impacted my life and teaching in a way that I will never forget.

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative single-site case study explored how undergraduate faculty members engaged culturally diverse students and determined the professional development needs of those faculty members to engage culturally diverse student populations. Exploring culturally sensitive practices will enable faculty members of institutions of higher education (IHEs) to engage diverse student populations. Determining the professional development needs of IHEs faculty members will assist IHEs' professional developers to implement training that will enhance the engagement of culturally diverse student populations. Qualitative data were collected through interviews from five undergraduate education faculty members at an institution of higher education (IHE) in the southeastern region of the United States. A cross-case analysis of the five interviews was conducted, and the interviews were coded and categorized. The findings from the study revealed that utilizing various materials and methods engaged culturally diverse students. Furthermore, the findings described the undergraduate faculty need for formal and informal professional development focused on cultural sensitivity, understanding diverse perspectives, and creating global and lifelong learner mindsets to engage culturally diverse students.

Key Words: IHEs, faculty members, culturally diverse students, professional development, cultural sensitivity, student engagement, mindsets

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication .....	iii
Acknowledgments.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Table of Contents .....	vi
List of Tables .....	ix
Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of Study .....	2
Conceptual Framework.....	5
Theoretical Framework.....	7
Purpose Statement.....	8
Significance of Research.....	8
Overview of Methodology.....	9
Research Questions.....	9
Research Design.....	9
Data Collection and Procedures.....	10
Overview of Analysis .....	10
Limitations .....	11
Conceptual Definitions .....	12
Summary .....	12
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	14
Introduction.....	14
Key Concepts .....	14
Context Information.....	18
Problem/Purpose Statement.....	18
Significance of Study.....	19
Organization of Literature Review .....	19
Culture Impacts Pedagogy .....	20
Culturally Responsive Teaching.....	20
Examples of Culturally Responsive Teaching.....	21
Cultural Competence in Higher Education.....	27
Cultural Competence Study 1 – Barden et al. (2015).....	29
Cultural Competence Study 2 – Enyeart Smith et al. (2017).....	31
Cultural Competence Study 3 – Popovich et al. (2028) .....	33

Implications from the Studies .....	35
Presentation of the Problem .....	35
Intercultural Intelligence Theory .....	36
Transformational Leadership Theory .....	40
Flexibility and Open-mindedness .....	41
Justification and Implications .....	43
Faculty Professional Development .....	45
Professional Development at TCUs – Al-Asfour and Young (2018).....	45
Professional Development & Teaching Strategies – Layne and Lake (2015).....	47
Collaborative Online Professional Development - Teräs (2016).....	49
Conclusion .....	51
 III. METHODOLOGY .....	 53
Description of Research Design.....	53
Participants.....	53
Role of Researcher .....	54
Measures of Ethical Protection .....	54
Research Questions .....	55
Data Collections.....	55
Instrument, Validity, Reliability and Procedures.....	55
Data Analysis .....	57
Research Question 1 .....	57
Research Question 2 .....	57
Summary .....	58
 IV. RESULTS .....	 59
Methods of Data Collection .....	59
Analysis by Research Question .....	60
Research Question 1 .....	61
Research Question 2 .....	63
Cross-Case Analysis & Themes.....	65
Theme 1: Utilizing Various Materials .....	66
Theme 2: Utilizing Various Methods .....	68
Theme 3: Professional Development .....	72
<i>Formal</i> .....	72
<i>Informal</i> .....	73
Evidence of Quality .....	77
Summary of Results.....	78
 V. DISCUSSION .....	 79
Methods of Data Collection .....	79
Summary of Results.....	80
Discussion by Research Question.....	81



Research Question 1 .....	81
Research Question 2 .....	84
Discussion by Theme.....	87
Theme 1: Utilizing Various Materials .....	88
Theme 2: Utilizing Various Methods .....	88
Theme 3: Professional Development (PD) .....	90
<i>Formal PD</i> .....	91
<i>Informal PD</i> .....	92
Study Limitations.....	95
Implications for Future Practice.....	96
Recommendations for Future Research .....	98
Conclusion .....	99
 REFERENCES .....	 100
 APPENDICES .....	 107

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1.....	65
2.....	66

## I. INTRODUCTION

Cultural sensitivity is necessary in higher education today (Popovich et al., 2018; Starr-Glass, 2014). College students represent a diverse array of cultural dimensions, such as disabilities, generations, genders, races, religions, and socioeconomic statuses; some students have less success in academics, because some educators do not have an understanding of the various cultures or how to assist diverse students in achieving success (Kruse, Rahka, & Calderone, 2017). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics (UNESCO) (2016), some universities experienced a substantial enrollment increase of international students from the years 2011-2016. Furthermore, the ages, ethnic groups, genders, and races in college, for whom educators in higher education must continuously adjust and evaluate teaching methods, are more varied than ten years ago (Kruse et al., 2017). The diverse dimensions of culture can be overwhelming; however, if an educator can understand the different dimensions and be sensitive to students' cultural needs, abilities, and barriers, a positive student learning environment is obtainable (Northouse, 2016). If faculty are culturally sensitive towards students, the rate of student engagement will increase; educators will then be able to create a positive learning environment (Starr-Glass, 2014). Institutions of higher education (IHEs) must utilize cultural sensitivity training to enhance the faculty's professional development (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017).

Professional development is an important aspect for faculty of IHEs. No matter what the subject matter, professional development will not work unless an educator's mindset is changed. An educator must learn to apply self-evaluation before implementing new teaching strategies and methods. An aspect of professional development that cannot be forgotten is the teachability of the educator, including an openness to learning about student culture (Teräs, 2016). Professional development for faculty of IHEs must implement cultural sensitivity training, because every state, city, and institution serves various student demographics that often mirror the demographics of that region; therefore, educators must be equipped with culturally sensitive teaching practices to create a productive learning environment (Kruse et al., 2017). The diversity of undergraduate students constitutes a need for research regarding the culturally sensitive pedagogy of higher education faculty.

### **Background of the Study**

Culture, cultural sensitivity, and pedagogy are concepts vital to this study. Northouse (2016) described culture as “the learned beliefs, values, rules, norms, symbols, and traditions that are common to a group of people. Culture is shared qualities which are dynamic and transmitted to others” (p. 428). Cultural sensitivity is awareness of cultural differences and similarities, and cultural sensitivity means applying respect to each culture (Barden, Shannonhouse, & Mobley, 2015). Murphy (2008) defined pedagogy as the strategies and learning tasks teachers implement for students in the learning environment. Barden, Shannonhouse, and Mobley (2015) researched cultural sensitivity as an aspect of life that is a mindset change. Furthermore, Barden et al. (2015) discovered the best way to experience a mindset shift is to immerse oneself in diverse backgrounds with interactive training, which cannot be taught by a textbook or lecture. Barden et al. (2015) explained that cultural sensitivity must be a part of an educator. If an educator is not

aware of other socioeconomics, races, and genders, then the educator is limited in establishing a foundation for student success.

The U.S. Census Bureau (2018) indicated that demographic shifts will continue in the U.S., projecting that minority populations, which include Hispanics, African Americans, Asians, and mixed races, will increase to 48% of the total population by 2060. Taking into consideration the demographic shifts, educators must be culturally responsive, meaning, educators must focus on the importance of academic achievement, while also creating an environment allowing students to leverage diverse cultural identities and backgrounds (Han et al., 2014; Kruse et al., 2017; Popovich et al., 2018). Faculty awareness of student cultures could assist in student success; however, if faculty are unaware of cultural awareness and sensitivity, academic life could be overwhelming and confusing to the students (Starr-Glass, 2014).

Teaching and learning strategies are vital pieces of cultural sensitivity and pedagogy of higher education educators. According to Layne and Lake (2015), higher education moves slower than its counterparts, such as K12 schools, for change to happen; thus, many institutions keep a traditional classroom setting rather than embrace other teaching avenues. As Layne and Lake (2015) stated, student engagement strategies must align with the institution's mission and goals. Elon University is an example of an institution that has embraced innovation and transformation of the whole campus—faculty, staff, students, curriculum, and facilities (Layne & Lake, 2015). Enhancing the campus, Elon University utilized the physical spaces on campus to create environments conducive to and functional for learning (Layne & Lake, 2015). Having shared values, a commitment to high-quality education, culturally sensitive creative environments, and thinking “outside the box” engages students (Ashwin, 2014; Bendermacher, Oude Egbrink, Wolfhagen, & Dolmans, 2017; Layne & Lake, 2015).

Starr-Glass (2014) conducted a phenomenological study of undergraduate students which utilized reflective journals from students. The data collected from the study revealed ten themes about the participants' cultural experiences and concerns. Some of the main barriers the undergraduate students reported were language and coping with the cultural differences and contexts (Starr-Glass, 2014). The students had concerns about language, because many had a knowledgeable understanding of the language of instruction, but some students had difficulty understanding the professors because of the professors' use of figurative structures and idioms when communicating with students (Starr-Glass, 2014). Furthermore, the students had concerns coping with the cultural differences and contexts in American college settings, such as holidays, classroom environments, and limited knowledge of U.S. secondary school academic content, including historical facts and grammar instruction (Starr-Glass, 2014). Starr-Glass (2014) discovered the reflective journaling to be beneficial to the students and the educators, because each became more aware of the cultural backgrounds and differences, and the educators were able to adjust teaching strategies that enhanced student success. Therefore, higher education faculty must be aware of student cultural changes in order to adjust pedagogy accordingly.

Educational research conducted by Al-Asfour and Young (2017) provided evidence of a need for cultural sensitivity training and professional development for higher education faculty members. Al-Asfour and Young (2017) surveyed 126 full-time faculty members of 35 Native American universities and concluded that the most beneficial training was the Native American student cultural training, because the majority of the non-Native American faculty members stated they could not relate to the Native American students without the cultural instruction; the cultural instruction allowed faculty members to learn about Native American rituals, customs, and beliefs. The student cultural training enhanced the faculty's pedagogy with teaching methods

and learning strategies aligned to Native American students' learning needs leading to an increase in student understanding of academic content information (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017).

Tam (2014) conducted a study that focused on the need for restructuring traditional teaching strategies. According to Tam (2014), the restructured strategies utilized cultural pedagogy to foster positive student learning outcomes and success. According to Tam's (2014) research, teaching and learning activities must be aligned with desired course outcomes and student-centeredness. Student-centered teaching focuses on the cultural backgrounds and learning needs of the students, while factoring in elements of the physical classroom space (Tam, 2014). The learning outcomes approach was more effective than the teacher-centered approach because the learning outcomes approach enhanced the learning experience and produced greater student success, due to the focus on students instead of teachers (Tam, 2014).

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of this dissertation study is aligned to three concepts: cultural sensitivity, teaching strategies for engaging diverse students, and professional development. Some educators experience difficulty relating to and interacting with some students in the classroom because of cultural differences and some implicit discrimination (Edwards, 2009; Popovich et al., 2018). Implicit discrimination can be expressed without the individual even knowing the prejudice exists; therefore, every educator should be aware of implicit discrimination and how it affects mannerisms or teaching methods. Colleges and universities have become more diversified, and some educators are unable to successfully teach and mentor some students because of cultural differences (NEA, 2017; Popovich et al., 2018). Culture is relative, learned, collective, and changeable; culture includes complex responsive processes, such as interacting with and relating to others (Han et al., 2014). Therefore, if a faculty member

desires to be culturally sensitive, the educator must be flexible and open-minded (House et al., 2004; Ortberg, 2012). Faculty members who express more versatility, flexibility, and open-mindedness have an inclination toward cultural sensitivity greater than faculty members who are closed-minded, stern, and unchanging. Implementing culturally sensitive practices leads to cultural intelligence, enabling a faculty member to understand and relate to diverse populations (Layne & Lake, 2015; Ott & Michailova, 2018; Thomas et al., 2015).

Utilizing various teaching strategies boosts the engagement of culturally diverse students (Kozleski & Handy, 2017). Kozleski and Handy (2017) emphasized the need for educators to be aware of “the sediments of cultural-historical contexts” (p. 197), meaning to teach for social justice and equity in all strategies. Higher education faculty members must incorporate culture in all learning aspects of teaching; as a result, the educator is similar to a cultural anthropologist (Kozleski & Handy, 2017). One strategy that enhances culturally diverse student engagement is building a connection with the student (Kozleski & Handy, 2017; Layne & Lake, 2015).

Another engaging strategy is utilizing technology, because most culturally diverse students have a great understanding of current technology (Seward, Harvey, & Carranza, 2009). Students with disabilities are considered culturally diverse; therefore, educators should utilize strategies that engage students with disabilities (Banks & Banks, 2020). Focusing on the students’ cultures and histories will enable more higher education faculty to engage culturally diverse students in the classroom (Banks & Banks, 2020). Implementing various teaching strategies is vital for student engagement, and professional development is another concept that will assist the educator in engaging culturally diverse students.

Professional development is an aspect of higher education necessary to enrich faculty performance and effectiveness in the classroom. All higher education institutions require



professional development for faculty (Teräs, 2016). Many institutions offer professional development opportunities through various platforms, such as e-learning modules, conferences, special speakers, and professional classes or certifications. The most effective professional development training is reflective, collaborative, and integrated (Teräs, 2016). According to Laverick (2016), collaborative and integrated training should include mentoring and sharing information, because interacting with individuals from diverse cultures exposes an educator to aspects of a culture that might be missing in a textbook-driven instructional setting. Cultural sensitivity, teaching strategies, and professional development prepare faculty members to be a part of a student's success in higher education (Kruse et al., 2017; Popovich et al., 2018).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this dissertation study is the cultural intelligence (CQ) theory. The cultural intelligence (CQ) theory best supports the demonstration of culturally sensitive higher education faculty, because it focuses on the ability to interact with others effectively (Livermore, 2015; Ott & Michailova, 2018; Thomas et al., 2015). According to Livermore (2015), extroverted leaders possess a higher degree of cultural intelligence in CQ Drive, CQ Knowledge, and CQ Action (Livermore, 2015). Leaders who are agreeable and demonstrate emotional stability have a higher level of CQ Action, while conscientious leaders have a higher level of CQ Strategy (Livermore, 2015). The most prominent leaders who have the highest degree of CQ are those who exhibit an openness to experiences and perspectives (Livermore, 2015). The most effective CQ leaders have high results in technical proficiency, trust-building, sales, service, creativity, and innovation (Livermore, 2015).

Ott and Michailova (2018) outlined that people with high CQ know that misunderstandings will happen, and leaders will still feel uncomfortable in situations; however,

the CQ leader will process multicultural situations better than other leaders. According to Thomas et al. (2015), CQ helps explain the individual differences in cross-cultural effectiveness; therefore, many CQ leaders have been successful with culturally sensitive interactions. Also, Earley and Mosakowski (2004) reported that CQ would enhance every leader's effectiveness if utilized correctly; therefore, in order to have culturally sensitive faculty, institutions must utilize the theory of cultural intelligence. The CQ theory is culturally multidimensional, because it encompasses cultural skills, knowledge, and metacognition; the CQ theory best supports this dissertation study because the CQ theory focuses on creating more effective culturally diverse interactions between faculty and students (Thomas et al., 2015).

### **Purpose Statement**

The purposes of this qualitative case study were to explore how undergraduate education faculty engage culturally diverse students and to discover the professional development needs of those faculty members to engage culturally diverse students.

### **Significance of the Study**

The lack of cultural sensitivity among post-secondary faculty has become an increasing problem as a result of the culturally diverse student bodies in higher education (DeBettencourt, Hoover, Rude, & Taylor, 2016; Kruse et al., 2017; Popovich et al., 2018). This case study explored teaching strategies to engage culturally diverse students. Furthermore, this study discovered the professional development needs of faculty members to engage culturally diverse students. The results of this dissertation study will help undergraduate faculty members explore the different teaching strategies and professional development that engage culturally diverse students. This dissertation study may help enhance the engagement of culturally diverse students

in college classrooms, because academic leaders within IHEs, similar to the one represented in this study, will be able to utilize and implement the results of this research.

## **Overview of Methodology**

### **Research Questions**

The research focused on answering the following questions:

1. How do undergraduate education faculty engage culturally diverse students?
2. What are the professional development needs of undergraduate IHEs' faculty members to engage culturally diverse students?

### **Research Design**

The approach to this qualitative research was a single instrument case study to explore the practices of IHEs' education faculty as they engage diverse students. A case study is a qualitative approach involving "a real-life contemporary context or setting" (Creswell, 2013, p.97). This case study is both exploratory and descriptive, because the researcher explored the practices utilized and described the professional development needs of undergraduate education faculty members to engage culturally diverse student populations. A qualitative instrument, an interview guide (see Appendix A), was utilized in this case study to gather data related to the two research questions.

The interview guide contained seven questions, and an expert, the methodologist, approved the interview guide. Interview participants were chosen using purposeful critical and convenient sampling, because engaging culturally diverse students is critical, and the undergraduate educators were easy to access for this case study (Creswell, 2013). This university had a medium racial diversity; meaning 38% of the student population were minorities or people of black color (CollegeSimply, n.d.). The undergraduate education faculty members

were sent an email invitation consent form (see Appendix B). The undergraduate faculty members who chose to participate emailed the researcher the days and times they were available, and the interviews were scheduled.

### **Data Collection and Procedures**

The interview participants were selected because the faculty members were in the field of education and involved in working with various student populations. An email invitation was sent to all undergraduate education faculty members at the university (see Appendix B). A total of five undergraduate education faculty members chose to participate. The interview sessions lasted from 20-30 minute intervals that were conducted over one week. The interviews were recorded and transcribed using a website, Otter ai. The researcher used the Otter ai recording and transcribing system; however, some information was not transcribed accurately; therefore, the researcher edited the information before returning it to the participant for verification. The participants validated the interview transcriptions and returned the transcripts to the researcher for analysis. For confidentiality purposes, the names of the interviewees were coded numbers, such as Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), Participant 3 (P3), Participant 4 (P4), and Participant 5 (P5). The five scheduled interviews were recorded, transcribed, and verified. Then, the researcher grouped the responses into categories, and themes were compiled.

### **Overview of Analysis**

According to Gay and Mills (2016), steps in analyzing qualitative research data include reading and memoing, describing, and classifying; therefore, this researcher followed a similar analysis path. First, to create the big picture, all the data was analyzed from the literature review and the interviews, identifying emerging themes or patterns (Gay & Mills, 2016). Second, utilizing the coding of words, phrases, and sentences from the interviews, the data were

categorized into labels (Gay & Mills, 2016). In this step, all the data was gathered, grouped, and regrouped according to similarities and focusing on the research questions. Third, creating a concept map allowed the qualitative researcher to create a visual display of the categories (Gay & Mills, 2016).

This qualitative research study's focus included two research questions that were answered through the process of identifying themes and labels from the interviews and the literature review. Regarding research question one, the teaching strategies in the literature review and the interview transcripts were explored for emerging themes and patterns for engaging culturally diverse students in the classroom. The researcher highlighted similarities in the data and compiled them into emerging themes. Regarding question two, the professional development needs of IHEs' faculty members were identified by coding words, phrases, and sentences from the literature review and the interview transcripts into simplified general patterns. By rereading and highlighting similar words or phrases in the literature review and interview transcripts, the researcher formed categories, revealing the professional development needs of IHEs' faculty members. Finally, concept mapping created a visual displaying the categories focused on teaching methods and professional development needs of faculty to engage culturally diverse students.

### **Limitations**

This study included a few limitations. First, this study was limited to exploring the cultural sensitivity of higher education faculty from a university in the southeastern region of the United States, which was limiting, because the data from one geographic region may not be applicable to all institutions of higher education. Second, only one institution of higher education participated in this study; the study's sample represented less than 1% of the 4,000

IHEs in the United States (Duffin, 2019). Another limitation was the number of participants, because only a small portion of the IHE faculty members were projected to be involved; studies similar to this dissertation have had small participation numbers (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017).

### **Conceptual Definitions**

**Cultural sensitivity** refers to offering respect to another culture (Barden et al., 2015). Cultural sensitivity is being aware of other cultural backgrounds without devaluing culture. Bennett (2017) stated that a culturally sensitive person is culturally integrated because of the value and respect given to other cultures without prejudice or discrimination.

**Professional development** refers to the growth or progress in an occupation. For higher education faculty, professional development refers to training that enhances the educator's field of study, technology, culture, or environment (Teräs, 2016).

**Cultural intelligence (CQ)** refers to effective management of people and projects in various cultural contexts (Livermore, 2015). The four capabilities of culturally intelligent leaders are motivation, knowledge, strategy, and action (Livermore, 2015); furthermore, each capability includes more specific skills, such as communication, conscientiousness, and innovation, that can be measured and enhanced. To develop CQ, a leader must practice and improve each capability on a daily basis (Livermore, 2015).

### **Summary**

Higher education enrollment trends indicate that institutions will have increased culturally diverse populations of students. Livermore (2015) and Bennett (2017) stated that cultural sensitivity is a desired trait for any leader, and higher education faculty are not excluded, because faculty are the instructional leaders in the classroom of culturally diverse students. If institutions of higher education faculty actively participate in cultural sensitivity professional

learning, the result of the professional development will enhance student engagement (Ashwin, 2014; Bendermacher et al., 2017; Han et al., 2014; Layne & Lake, 2015; Tam, 2014; Teräs, 2016).

Cultural training should incorporate relevant cultural sensitivity training that includes diverse socioeconomic status, disabilities, ethnicity, gender, geographic, and age topics (Tam, 2014; Teräs, 2016). Faculty and leaders of institutions of higher education should implement teaching strategies and professional training that will enhance the cultural sensitivity of faculty members. If cultural sensitivity training is implemented, educators will observe an increase in student engagement and student success in the classroom; furthermore, the classroom environment will be more student inclusive than exclusive (Han et al., 2014; Layne & Lake, 2015; Popovich et al., 2018).

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### **Introduction**

Students in higher education come from diverse cultures, and the students' cultures impact the learning environment. Therefore, faculty members at institutions of higher education (IHEs) must understand the concepts of culture and cultural sensitivity (Jacobi, 2016). This chapter presents contemporary research related to culture impacting pedagogy, cultural competence in IHEs, the problem driving this dissertation, and recommendations for faculty professional development. This chapter will provide definitions and explain key terms, as well as present the problem and purpose of this study, the context information, the significance of this study, and the organizational outline of this literature review.

### **Key Concepts**

The key concepts in this research study include culture and cultural sensitivity. Many scientists, including anthropologists and sociologists, have debated the meaning of culture, because different people often define culture in unique ways; however, a way to define culture is a group of shared qualities of a group of people (Northouse, 2016). Culture is personal and is found in family, community, institutions, government, and society; therefore, "culture is in us and all around us" (Erickson, 2010, p. 35). According to Kozleski and Handy (2017), people define their culture as it relates to everyday activities. Culture shapes every person in the most profound sense and informs behavioral responses, as well as individual mindsets (Stonestreet & Kunkle, 2017). Furthermore, people are creatures of cultural habit (Stonestreet & Kunkle, 2017).



When referring to people from other countries, the word *multicultural* implies more than one culture; however, *multicultural* can also refer to subcultures defined by race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or age (Northouse, 2016). The United States, like many other nations, has a shared core value system that is multicultural, because society has more than one nationality and has numerous subcultures (Banks & Banks, 2020). According to Banks and Banks (2020), the culture of the United States is challenging to identify and describe because of the number of diverse cultural systems. When trying to identify the culture, Banks and Banks (2020) suggested analyzing the political institutions of America, which reflected the nation's core values and were heavily influenced by British and Native American political practices and institutions.

The United States has a diverse culture; therefore, institutions of higher education (IHEs) have a diverse cultural student population (Banks & Banks, 2020). Diversity refers to the existence of different cultures or ethnic groups within a particular area (Northouse, 2016). In 2005, Alemán, Freire, McKinney, and Delgado Bernal (2017) formed the Adelante partnership. Adelante, a Spanish term meaning *move forward*, was chosen to be the name for the partnership because of the collaborators' goal of improving education for students of diverse cultures (Alemán, Freire, McKinney, & Delgado Bernal, 2017). The Adelante partnership began with the goal of improving education for students of diverse cultures: socioeconomics, race, and color. A critical objective of the Adelante partnership was to improve the educational opportunities of a Title I school, and the first objective was to make higher education a possibility for all students (Alemán et al., 2017). Alemán et al. (2017) focused on K16 (kindergarten through post-secondary) students in the Salt Lake City, Utah area, determined on enhancing the expectations for success in life and academics for students of color and Latino/a students, enhancing those expectations in parents, K12 teachers, and IHEs' faculty members.

After ten years, the partnership conducted a study among ten K12 teachers investigating the overall impact of the Adelante partnership. One element of the investigation included K12 teachers and K12 students visiting local universities and having the students participate in and observe college classes. After the K12 teachers observed the positive effects of the university visits, four out of ten K12 teachers realized their pedagogy needed improvement and started using more hands-on activities in the classroom. Another element of the partnership was having university students of diverse cultural backgrounds assist in the K12 classrooms and form mentor relationships with the K12 students. During the investigation, most of the K12 teachers genuinely felt the diverse mentors were more effective at impacting the culturally diverse K12 students than when the K12 students visited the universities (Alemán et al., 2017). According to Alemán et al. (2017), many of the K12 teachers in this study misconstrued the objectives of the partnership. Instead of focusing on the social injustice of K12 students of color not being encouraged to move forward to IHEs, the K12 teachers in the study focused on the benefits they received from the universities. The researchers of the Adelante partnership also observed increased cultural awareness in the K12 teachers; however, some K12 teachers had doubts about the multicultural students ever attending college (Alemán et al., 2017). Alemán et al. (2017) determined the work of the partnership demonstrated success, but the professional development of K12 teachers and their mindsets regarding the success of culturally diverse student populations must be improved.

When IHEs' faculty members understand the meaning of culture, the next concept to be embraced is cultural sensitivity. Cultural sensitivity is the opposite of ethnocentrism: a tendency for a person to place his or her own ethnic, racial, or cultural group at the center of observations of others and the world (Northouse, 2016). According to Northouse (2016), every person is

ethnocentric to some degree; however, a skilled leader must recognize ethnocentric tendencies and be more sensitive. Bennett (2017) defined cultural sensitivity as “behavior that coordinates meaning across cultural contexts with more or less ease than one coordinates with one’s own culture” (p. 2). Empathy is a widespread behavioral response when cultural sensitivity is utilized (Bennett, 2017).

According to Stepler and Lopez (2016), the Latino population has increased in the US; therefore, a concern for many social work councils has been the higher education of social workers in bilingual and Hispanic culture (Sevilla, Sierra, & Setterlund, 2018). The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) has challenged IHEs’ social work programs to adapt curriculum that implements cultural sensitivity toward Hispanic cultures. The faculty of Azusa State University’s Masters in Social Work (MSW) program developed a course entitled “Spanish Language Clinical Practice” to meet the CSWE’s challenge. The faculty focused the course on four elements to assist in the development of cultural competency and sensitivity: having an awareness of personal culture, understanding of the diverse worldviews in the Latino cultures, developing intervention strategies under an individual’s worldview, and understanding the external social forces that influence cultural sensitivity (Sevilla et al., 2018). In Sevilla et al.’s (2018) study, developing strategies under an individual’s worldview referred to discovering how a person responds to certain cultural situations. The assessments for the course included role-plays, clinical simulations, and self-reflection activities; furthermore, the assessments required students to honestly evaluate bias, cultural awareness, and prejudices. As a result of this course, the students were more prepared to engage in an ethical and culturally sensitive practice (Sevilla et al., 2018). Developing specific coursework supports the concept and value of cultural sensitivity in higher education.

## **Context Information**

The context for this research study consisted of a university in the southeastern region of the United States. The United States has over 4,000 IHEs, and to sample all IHEs would be too extensive of a sample size for the scope of this mixed-methods study (Gay & Mills, 2016). The post-secondary institution involved in the study apprised a uniquely diverse population of students. The post-secondary institution was a medium-sized, non-profit, private university that offered 4-year undergraduate programs, graduate programs, as well as doctoral programs (College Simply, n.d.). The university had a religious affiliation with the Pentecostal faith (College Simply, n.d.); therefore, the majority of the university student population had a Christian background. The admissions committee had an open admissions policy (College Simply, n.d.). An open admissions policy at a post-secondary institution allows any high school graduate, regardless of GPA, or a person with a GED, to be admitted and attend a college (Pratt, 2017).

## **Problem/Purpose Statement**

As population trends in the United States become more multicultural, the social aspect of teaching and learning must be adapted to accommodate the varied learning styles of the diverse student populations (Banks & Banks, 2020). Banks and Banks (2020) described today's learning as shifting practices within dynamic and changing contexts; therefore, teaching must be culturally responsive. This dissertation study focused on the problem of some post-secondary educators' lack of preparation to effectively engage with culturally diverse students due to a lack of cultural sensitivity. The purposes of this qualitative case study were to explore how undergraduate education faculty engage culturally diverse students, and to discover the professional development needs of those faculty members to engage culturally diverse students.

Many universities already have professional development protocols established. However, incorporating specific professional development content related to cultural sensitivity might enhance student engagement. That student engagement could offer success (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017; Banks & Banks, 2020; Teräs, 2016).

### **Significance of the Study**

The lack of cultural sensitivity among IHEs faculty has become a problem in recent years as student populations have grown increasingly diverse (Banks & Banks, 2020; Kruse et al., 2017; Popovich et al., 2018). In the last ten years, the changes in IHEs' student population demographics have been increasing and have been predicted to increase significantly in cultural diversity over the next ten years (Catalano, 2018; Payne, Hodges & Hernandez, 2017). This dissertation study provided IHEs with teaching strategies and professional development that faculty members have utilized to engage culturally diverse students. IHEs' faculty members must be trained in the cultural aspects of diverse students; therefore, the results of this study may influence professional developers at IHEs (DeBettencourt, Hoover, Rude, & Taylor, 2016; Payne et al., 2017). The results of this study could assist in improving cultural sensitivity teaching strategies and professional development; therefore, assisting faculty members in engaging culturally diverse students at IHEs similar to the university represented by this dissertation (Banks & Banks, 2020; Kruse et al., 2017; Teräs, 2016; Thomas et al., 2015).

### **Organization of Literature Review**

This literature review was organized following semantic patterns and contemporary research design. The next section focuses on how diverse student cultures impact the pedagogy of IHEs' faculty. The third section focuses on the cultural competence of IHEs' faculty members. The fourth section focuses on the problem of the mindset of IHEs' faculty. The fifth

section answers the problem of this dissertation study, with the sixth section being a recommendation to the problem: cultural sensitivity professional development.

## **Culture Impacts Pedagogy**

### **Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Pedagogy is a shaping process that combines the act of teaching with culture, structure, and mechanisms of social control (Murphy, 2008). Culturally responsive teaching is “the behavioral expressions of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning” (Gay, 2010, p. 31). In essence, Gay (2010) suggested that culturally responsive teaching focuses on viewing cultural differences as assets, and this approach to teaching incorporates cultural knowledge to develop the curriculum in a way that challenges stereotypes, prejudices, and social injustices. Also, culturally responsive teaching requires replacing pathological and deficient perceptions of students and communities of color with more positive perceptions. Gay (2013) understood that a shift in perceptions of poor, underachieving, ethnically diverse students could revolutionize educational interventions designed for them, as well as culturally responsive teaching.

Culturally responsive teaching creates challenges that educators do not always want to encounter, including confronting resistance without simultaneously diverting attention and effort away from promoting cultural diversity (Gay, 2013). Gay (2013) suggested a few ways to combat the challenges: to remember that culturally responsive teaching is an evolving process that involves learning over time, and there is nothing inherently discriminatory about acknowledging the existence of cultural difference in its various forms. Furthermore, diversity in teaching techniques and resources is necessary to achieve educational excellence and equity (Gay, 2013). Banks and Banks (2020) suggested that multicultural education empowers school

culture and social structure that encompasses equity pedagogy and prejudice reduction. Equity pedagogy exists when teachers modify their teaching to facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, gender, and social class groups. Prejudice reduction focuses on the characteristics of students' racial attitudes and how they can be modified through different teaching methods and materials (Banks & Banks, 2020).

According to Gay (2013), instructional practices are shaped by the sociocultural characteristics of the settings in which they occur and the student populations for whom they are designed. Culturally responsive teaching is a technique for improving the performance of underachieving ethnically and racially diverse students. In the United States, diverse students are primarily of Asian, African, Native, and Latino American ancestry, have low socioeconomic statuses, and attend schools in urban and rural areas. The culturally responsive approach to teaching helps all students acquire more knowledge about cultural diversity and uses the cultural heritages, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as instructional resources to improve learning opportunities and outcomes. Since students and teachers are often not from the same ethnic, cultural, or social backgrounds, cultural differences can create serious barriers to effective teaching and learning; therefore, a critical way for teachers to arbitrate differences is to build bridges across cultural differences through culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2013).

### **Examples of Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Morong and DesBiens (2016) conducted a study concerning culturally responsive teaching online in Canadian universities, because Canadian universities were implementing intercultural learning for all higher education subjects. During the study, Morong and DesBiens (2016) focused on three course design rubrics, evaluating gaps in criteria and knowledge of intercultural learning. The first area Morong and DesBiens (2016) focused on was learning

design. Morong and DesBiens (2016) concluded that collaborative learning practices were the learning design needed for students to embrace learning. Collaborative learning practices included group work and a deeper level of self-reflection in a group setting (Morong & DesBiens, 2016). Since the study only involved online learning, Morong and DesBiens (2016) focused on time and effectively engaging students to meet the objectives of the course.

More research related to online courses for diverse populations is still needed; however, existing research dictated that flexibility, context, and learner agency were critical aspects to the design of the course. Flexible learning environments and scheduling allow learners to organize and develop the best ways for their individual growth and accomplish the objectives of the course. Context and technology use were vital components of course design, because, if the context and technology were not easily accessible, many students suffered and did not demonstrate mastery in the course. The flexible learning environment embraced culturally diverse populations, because the students can learn in a way that they understand. Overall, the outcomes of the study revealed a need for set guidelines for the continual evaluation of course standards, allowing educators to fulfill the cultural teaching standards of the universities (Morong & DesBiens, 2016).

Han et al. (2014) conducted a collaborative self-study of how seven culturally responsive educators defined, enacted, and navigated across various programs within an institution of higher education. The first finding was that each educator had to define his or her own culture before the educator could better understand his or her students' cultures (Han et al., 2014). According to Han et al. (2014), the ultimate goal was to prepare each educator to empower diverse students. Understanding the role of culture in teaching was a significant accomplishment in the study for the educators and researchers; however, Han et al. (2014) could not articulate the overall



framework of culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) in higher education. The difficulty related to articulating the overall framework for CRP in higher education was related to the continual evolution of understanding culture and teaching. Also, each of the educators' disciplines added to the variety in defining the framework, because each educator had variables that contributed to questions about the focus of CRP in their particular field of study: social injustice, cultural leadership, science learning, and other variables. Three major themes developed concerning the enactment of CRP in higher education: teaching praxis, building relationships through teaching and advising, and enhancing program development (Han et al., 2014).

Teaching praxis focused on the educators' teaching philosophy, which emphasized the role of the educator as a facilitator of learning or "problem poser" (Han et al., 2014, p. 300). The teaching philosophy positioned the educator as a learner who values the voice of the student. One of the major practices emphasized in the teaching philosophy was challenging assumptions and promoting openness to multiple perspectives; this practice required intentional planning of experiences and readings that challenged students' critical thinking skills. The next theme was building relationships, and most educators stated that creating a safe learning environment was the first step toward building relationships. Sharing personal stories and experiences assisted educators in building relationships with their students. The last theme was program development, in which each educator discussed the importance of engaging in the CRP program across different fields of study (Han et al., 2014).

Han et al. (2014) also discovered three challenges related to CRP in higher education: students, institutional structure, and colleagues. Students created challenges, because some students resisted the culturally responsive teaching, while others were compliant. Additionally, some students were silent and did not feel comfortable discussing the topics, while some students

thought topics were too messy and unacceptable to discuss or study. Other challenges were that the higher education institutional structures, such as class sizes, were too big, which limited courses with CRP. The last area of tension was the lack of CRP colleagues in the different departments (Han et al., 2014). Despite the tensions, Han et al. (2014) were able to discover three ways to help CRP educators evolve: support groups, professional organizations, and research engagement.

Han et al. (2014) described factors that contributed to not being able to articulate a framework for CRP in higher education. The first factor was the lack of CRP literature for higher education instructors; however, a plethora of CRP literature exists for K12 educators. As a result of the CRP literature that is available, higher education professors should consider their particular contexts and adopt, adapt, reconfigure, and modify their teaching practices accordingly and then reflect on culturally relevant practices. Second, the student and teacher population in higher education is more diverse than its K12 counterpart. In K12, the student population is all children, while in higher education the student population is all adults; therefore, the students' needs are different. The framework for CRP in higher education needed to be flipped and modified for each particular context, which is why the framework was difficult to construct (Han et al., 2014).

The most significant outcome from Han et al. (2014) was the importance of the relationship between higher education instructors and students, because each educator emphasized building relationships as a powerful tool in overcoming tensions. Han et al. (2014) described the collaborative self-study to be beneficial, because it caused CRP educators in higher education to realize the CRP frameworks can lead to the ultimate success of students. The study contributed to how CRP frameworks in higher education can look; however, much research is

still needed, because IHEs are becoming more diverse and need a multidimensional style of teaching (Han et al., 2014). More CRP research is needed; however, Han et al. (2014) emphasized the building of relationships between teachers-teachers and students-teachers, because, if genuine trust and care are evident, teachers and students learn and grow.

Three years later, Gist (2017) conducted a study of culturally responsive pedagogy to learn about the experiences of teacher candidates of color. The study indicated that culturally responsive teacher educators take at least three collective actions: choose to commit, challenge sociocultural barriers to learning, and develop bridges to teacher learning. Gist (2017) researched CRP, not through the standard theoretical format, but through the practice of CRP. The qualitative study participants included three teacher candidates of color in one instructor's education course at a Hispanic-serving institution and were part of a more extensive comparative case study of two teacher preparation programs for the extent of one semester. The data sources for the study included pre-semester and post-semester interviews with the candidates, classroom observations, student logs, and focus groups (Gist, 2017).

One result of the study revealed that the teacher education classroom functioned as a space for transformation and empowerment. Even though the three candidates had a common ethnic/racial identity, the different familial, class, and prior educational backgrounds situated them at various entry points of learning in the teacher education classroom. Despite the differences, the findings indicated a link between the teaching and learning experiences the candidates described, the CRP, and the culturally responsive teacher educator as a pedagogical construct. The results of the study indicated that the culturally responsive educator made the curriculum relatable and enhanced the learning experiences of the candidates; therefore, the CRP

framework must encompass both the content and the educator who models the culturally responsive practices (Gist, 2017).

Gist's (2017) results described the conceptual models of CRP in educators. The first conceptual model was critically blind, which meant the teacher educator exhibited affirming attitudes towards diversity by acknowledging cultural and linguistic differences. The second conceptual model was critically emerging, which meant teacher educator exhibited partial mastery of the knowledge and dispositions of other raced, classed, gendered, and cultural/linguistic stratifications in society and education. The final conceptual model that Gist's (2017) results described was the critically conscious teacher educator who wove together the sociopolitical and other contexts about cultural knowledge with a critical lens. Extensive research is needed to explore how CRP can be applied to the professional development of educators (Gist, 2017).

Through the research presented, culturally responsive teaching supports the cultural sensitivity of IHEs' faculty members, and CRP enables positive student engagement (Gay, 2013; Gist, 2017; Han et al., 2014; Morong & DesBiens, 2016). Gay (2013) illustrated that the concept of culturally responsive teaching was contingent upon the mindset of the educator and the openness of the student. If the bond between student and teacher was open and honest, then student engagement was positive (Gay, 2013; Gist, 2017; Morong & DesBiens, 2016). IHEs' faculty members who are culturally sensitive and utilize culturally responsive teaching engage more students, because the educator is student-centered and sensitive to the needs and perspectives of the students (Gay, 2013; Gist, 2017; Han et al., 2014). Student resistance is a possibility despite culturally responsive teaching; however, if the educator is aware of this

possibility, then the educator can openly acknowledge and understand the causes, manifestations, and consequences of the resistance (Gay, 2013; Gist, 2017; Han et al., 2014).

Another concept characterizing CRP is that IHEs and their student populations are continually evolving; therefore, CRP needs to be evaluated, adjusted, and modified continuously (Gay, 2013; Gist, 2017; Han et al., 2014; Morong & DesBiens, 2016). As a higher education faculty member adjusts his or her CRP, the faculty member must assess student engagement regularly; otherwise, the CRP becomes stagnant and may not apply to or engage students (Gay, 2013; Gist, 2017).

Culturally responsive teaching has been used in K12 schools for over ten years (Gay, 2013; Gist, 2017). Now, IHEs' faculty members must reconstruct CRP to work in higher education classrooms, much like CRP that worked in K12 classrooms, because student engagement is necessary for academic growth (Gay, 2013; Gist, 2017; Han et al., 2014; Morong & DesBiens, 2016). More research is needed in the area of culturally responsive teaching in higher education settings.

### **Cultural Competence in Higher Education**

The National Education Association (NEA, 2017) reported that public schools were required to offer educators professional development associated with cultural competency; however, no policy for higher education professionals to have cultural competency training exists (Riley, Bustamante, & Edmonson, 2017). Colleges offer diversity training; however, most of the training is through e-learning, and not many faculty members are provided opportunities to participate in hands-on training (ACE, 2019; Riley et al., 2017). Cultural awareness involves understanding the differences between one's own background and that of someone else's background or country, especially differences in values and attitudes (Edwards, 2009; Lindsey,

Nuri-Robins, Terrell, & Lindsey, 2019; Livermore, 2015). Knowing about culture helps an educator to be more effective as a leader, because that knowledge enables him or her to cross barriers (Kruse et al., 2017; Livermore, 2015; Northouse, 2016). Cultural awareness prepares a faculty member to be a vital aspect of a student's success story in higher education (Stephens, Brannon, Markus, & Nelson, 2015).

Not only should a faculty member understand the definition of cultural awareness, but a faculty member also must understand the meaning of cultural competence in education.

“Cultural competence is having an awareness of one's own cultural identity and views about difference, and the ability to learn and build on the diverse cultural and community norms of students and their families” (NEA, 2017, para. 3). The ability to understand the differences that make each student unique, while celebrating the variations that make the United States diverse, is one way to demonstrate cultural competence (Edwards, 2009; NEA, 2017). Culturally competent understanding informs and expands teaching practices in an educator's classroom. (Edwards, 2009; NEA, 2017).

If IHEs' faculty members do not have cultural awareness or competence, IHEs could face dire consequences. One consequence could be cultural destructiveness, which is “any policy, practice, or behavior that effectively eliminates another people's culture” (Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 133). Extreme examples of cultural destructiveness include enslaving of Africans and American Indians, holocausts in Europe and Africa, and wars in the former Yugoslav Republic. Faculty members can demonstrate cultural destructiveness through negative attitudes, practices, and policies against a culture or an individual. Examples in higher education include those who have not been successful in developing English proficiency, dress code policies that single out specific ethnic groups, and programs that track ethnic groups according to remedial courses. Limiting

student opportunities demonstrates cultural destructiveness, which is opposite of cultural awareness and competence. Another consequence is cultural incapacity, which occurs when a person exhibiting superiority of culture and behavior disempowers another's culture. Cultural blindness is the fourth consequence. Culturally blind educators view students' cultural differences as indications of disobedience, noncompliance, or other deficiencies. Culturally blind educators are unaware of how their behavior affects their students (Lindsey et al., 2019). The final consequence is cultural pre-competence, which means an educator engages proactively with cultures, but the educator falls victim to his or her own "cultural faux pas" (Lindsey et al., 2019, p.137). Cultural faux pas refers to the educator engaging in forms of microaggression experienced by the recipients of the behaviors. The only way to overcome these consequences is through educating and orienting educational leaders toward cultural awareness and proficiency (Lindsey et al., 2019).

Knowing the definitions of cultural awareness and competence in higher education faculty is vital. Valuing diversity and emphasizing awareness and competence help faculty embrace cultural sensitivity (Lindsey et al., 2019). Research is still needed in higher education regarding cultural awareness, because competence is a necessity (ACE, 2019; Edwards, 2009; Enyeart Smith, Wessel, & Polacek, 2017; Riley et al., 2017; Stephens et al., 2015).

### **Cultural Competence Study 1 – Barden et al. (2015)**

Barden et al.'s (2015) cultural competence study aligned with the purpose of this dissertation study. A lack of demonstrating cultural competence has been a problem among counselors, and researchers have observed the importance of cultural immersion for undergraduate counseling students wishing to obtain more cultural competence and sensitivity to minority populations (Barden et al., 2015). Barden et al. (2015) conducted a quasi-experimental

study consisting of four groups of counselors in training. Two groups participated in a 3-week, six-credit international cultural immersion course in Costa Rica during the summers of 2011 and 2012, while the other two groups were enrolled in traditional 3-week courses during the same summers. The immersion group was considered the experimental group, consisting of 19 students; the comparison group consisted of 18 students. During the cultural immersion, the students participated in several activities, such as homestays, immersion tours, educational presentations, service work, and group and individual reflective processing (Barden et al., 2015).

Barden et al. (2015) utilized the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), which was grounded in Bennett's (2017) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) work. The IDI is a 50-item instrument that includes five subscales: denial, polarization, minimization, acceptance, and adaptation (Barden et al., 2015). The five scales developed along a continuum of intercultural sensitivity. Barden et al. (2015) conducted pre-testing to establish a baseline of intercultural sensitivity; then, after the courses, the researchers conducted post-testing to measure the increase of intercultural sensitivity. In the preliminary analysis, the majority of the students scored in the first stage, known as the ethnocentric stage, meaning that the participants made sense of cultural differences and commonalities with their own culture as the central reality. Some students scored in the acceptance stage, or the ethnorelative developmental orientation, meaning these participants supported more complex experiences of cultural differences and commonalities. Some students' testing had incomplete post-testing data; therefore, those tests were not able to be used in the analysis. During the post-testing, the students shifted into a different orientation level, indicating the developmental progression of cultural sensitivity (Barden et al., 2015).



Barden et al. (2015) expected to find more differences between the experimental and comparison groups, as well as finding more differences between different administrations of the IDI. Retaining positive gains in the means for subscales that were categorized by ethnocentrism (minimization and acceptance) suggested that students increased cultural sensitivity (Barden et al., 2015). Bennett (2017) and Barden et al. (2015) stated that people develop cultural sensitivity on each of the subscale stages simultaneously, and people do not resolve the issues in one stage before moving onto the next stage. Barden et al. (2015) concluded that any training strategy that develops culturally competent people should be utilized for faculty professional learning. The results from Barden et al.'s (2015) quasi-experimental study highlighted the need for further research into the developmental levels of cultural sensitivity.

### **Cultural Competence Study 2 – Enyeart Smith et al. (2017)**

A study conducted by Enyeart Smith et al. (2017) aligned with the purpose of this dissertation study. The inclusion of diversity in IHEs is a vital component to teaching students the analytic skills needed to thrive and lead in health work environment. Skills related to cultural competency include the abilities to work effectively with people from diverse backgrounds and to view issues from multiple perspectives, responding with sensitivity to the needs and cultural differences of highly diverse people (Enyeart Smith et al., 2017). Enyeart Smith et al. (2017) found cultural competence to be a significant element to the success of IHEs' health faculty members; therefore, Enyeart Smith et al. (2017) conducted a longitudinal study, over three years, of college senior and graduate students matriculating through an academic health department to assess views of cultural diversity and acceptance.

According to Enyeart Smith et al. (2017), culturally competent care was described as providing respectful and responsive services to the health beliefs, practices, including cultural

and linguistic needs of diverse patients. The purpose of the research was to analyze the perceptions of self-reflection and attitudes among students, faculty, and staff, identifying strategies to increase opportunities for improved cultural competence in the environment of IHEs. The sample of the study included graduating seniors and graduate health sciences students in a southeastern 4-year liberal arts university. The survey assessed students' attitudes about how diversity was addressed within the curriculum, faculty skills and practices related to diversity, perceptions about personal knowledge of diversity issues, and openness and ability to be culturally competent health professionals (Enyeart Smith et al., 2017).

The quantitative results over the three years concluded that faculty were inclusive; furthermore, the faculty avoided stereotyping students and affirmed each students' unique background. Also, the results described the faculty as using accessible learning formats and addressing multicultural topics and cultural competency within the curriculum. Students perceived peers as being open and supportive of all students; furthermore, the students developed the skills to be culturally competent health professionals, with an increased knowledge of and openness toward people with diverse backgrounds. Overall, the results of the quantitative data included an increase of perception that faculty and staff were accepting of diverse individuals; moreover, students were more confident dealing with cultural diversity and gained an increased knowledge of diversity (Enyeart Smith et al., 2017).

Enyeart Smith et al. (2017) analyzed the qualitative data, and six themes emerged: cultural competency, global health, diversity is not just race/ethnicity, diversity among students and faculty, everything is fine, and quit talking about diversity. Among the themes, participants made suggestions to increase cultural competency in the health sciences with discussions, to use volunteer and service-learning opportunities, and to require working with international students

and diverse local populations to increase understanding of cultural backgrounds, customs, and practices. The continued inclusion of diverse students and faculty within departmental and extracurricular activities was also suggested. Not all participants were satisfied with the diversity discussions, because some students felt the discussions created more problems (Enyeart Smith et al., 2017).

According to Enyeart Smith et al. (2017), to increase cultural competency among faculty and students, extra effort must be made, such as providing additional practical experiences and opportunities for diverse community outreach, poverty simulations, panel discussions, and training on specific issues. Even though the quantitative data were significantly positive, some participants' comments indicated a degree of dissatisfaction, criticism, and frustration with how cultural competency was addressed within the health sciences department (Enyeart Smith et al., 2017). Enyeart Smith et al. (2017) concluded that further investigation would be beneficial, with expanding the survey to include the entire institution, allowing further evaluation of planned interventions and activities related to diversity and cultural competence. Furthermore, Enyeart Smith et al. (2017) stated that a continued effort to explore opportunities for increasing faculty and students' awareness and interactions with various populations would develop culturally competent health professionals.

### **Cultural Competency Study 3 – Popovich et al. (2018)**

Popovich et al.'s (2018) study is another example of research aligning with the purpose of this dissertation study. According to Popovich et al. (2018), improving the cultural competence of pharmacists and pharmacy students is necessary to overcome health care disparities. Among racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic segments of the US population, reports of health disparities have hastened the development of educational strategies to address cultural

competence. The faculty and student relationship is a vital aspect of learning, because faculty members serve as role models for students in that the students are able to observe, analyze, and implement cultural behaviors. The purpose of the qualitative study was to determine pharmacy students' impressions of their faculty members' interactions with diverse student and patient populations (Popovich et al., 2018).

Popovich et al. (2018) sought a variety of volunteer students for the research; therefore, three pharmacy student focus groups were amassed based on academic status, such as fourth-year students, third-year students, with first- and second-year students combined as one group. The participants included seven fourth-year students, seven third-year students, and seven first- and second-year students who attended the group sessions. Initially, the number of volunteers was higher, but if students did not attend the group session, they were not invited to participate in the study. Out of the 21 participants, 13 were women, and eight were men; furthermore, six participants were Caucasian, and 15 participants represented ethnic subgroups of African American, Asian, and Hispanic diversities (Popovich et al., 2018).

In spring 2016, the focus groups convened, and students were asked to respond to how they defined diversity; many participants defined diversity as multifaceted (Popovich et al., 2018). According to Popovich et al. (2018), an advantage of using focus groups was that students responded genuinely, reflected on their personal experiences, verbalized their opinions, and heard the experiences of their peers. Eighty-four pages of transcripts were coded, and a thorough qualitative analysis identified emergent themes. The emergent themes included faculty awareness, or lack of awareness, of cultural diversity, contrasting cultural perspectives and preferences within student groups, teaching approaches to prepare students to be more culturally competent, and student group dynamics (Popovich et al., 2018).

While the third- and fourth-year students emphasized a lack of preparation for the realities of contemporary practice based on instructional methods, the first- and second-year students emphasized student-to-student interactions (Popovich et al., 2018). The need for more practical applications instead of theoretical knowledge was a common finding of this study, which Popovich et al. (2018) stated was similar to other studies. The participants suggested that incorporating cultural awareness elements into patient cases and creating an environment for positive student growth in cultural awareness across courses would be welcomed approaches. The results of the study suggested students viewed the majority of their faculty as culturally sensitive and aware; however, students experienced microaggressions and discrimination from both faculty and peers (Popovich et al., 2018). Popovich et al. (2018) stated that this study resulted in insights and recommendations for improving the curriculum and the cultural competence of faculty, such as more practical experiences and avoidance of monolithic perceptions of cultures.

### **Implications from the Studies**

The three studies presented in this section support the concept that higher education faculty members must possess cultural competence and cultural sensitivity (Barden et al., 2015; Enyeart Smith et al., 2017; Popovich et al., 2018). Furthermore, the three studies support the need for more research to be completed in the field of faculty members' cultural sensitivity. Therefore, the three cultural competency studies substantiate the need for this dissertation study.

### **The Presentation of the Problem: The Mindset of IHEs' Faculty Members**

The lack of cultural sensitivity in IHEs' faculty members is the emphasis of this dissertation study; further, the focus of the problem is the mindset of IHEs' faculty members (ACE, 2019; Banks & Banks, 2020; Catalano, 2018; Mitchell, 2018; Popovich et al., 2018).

Flexibility and openness to changes are vital characteristics of faculty members' cultural sensitivity levels (Laverick, 2016; Layne & Lake, 2015). Cultural sensitivity is demonstrated by those who implement the principles of the intercultural intelligence theory and the transformational leadership theory (Balwant, 2016; Basham, 2012; Livermore, 2015; Northouse, 2016; Ott & Michailova, 2018).

### **Intercultural Intelligence Theory**

Possessing cultural intelligence (CQ) enables a leader to effectively manage people and projects, whatever the cultural context (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004; Livermore, 2015; Riley et al., 2017; Van der Horst & Albertyn, 2018). The four capabilities of culturally intelligent leaders, as presented by Livermore (2015), are Motivation, Knowledge, Strategy, and Action; furthermore, each capability includes more specific skills that can be measured and enhanced. The first capability is CQ Motivation or Drive, which highlights the need for obtaining the interest, confidence, and drive to adapt cross-culturally (Livermore, 2015). CQ Knowledge is the most emphasized capability, and includes general cultural and context-specific understandings (Livermore, 2015). The third capability is CQ Strategy or metacognitive CQ, which involves planning, awareness, and checking; all of which can be measured and developed (Livermore, 2015; Van der Horst & Albertyn, 2018). CQ Action includes changing verbal and nonverbal actions appropriately when interacting cross-culturally (Livermore, 2015). Livermore (2015) stated that CQ continuously develops as a leader goes about his or her daily work; however, the only way to adapt the intercultural behavior is to respect and value people from other cultural backgrounds genuinely.

To develop CQ, a faculty member must self-assess each of the four capabilities and improve in each one. The first step toward developing CQ Drive is being honest with self and

others (Livermore, 2015). A few ways to be honest with self and others are to identify which cultures are the most unfamiliar, take some association tests to identify biases, and evaluate additional self-assessments to look for essential trends (Mitchell, 2018; Van der Horst & Albertyn, 2018). The second step of CQ Drive is examining one's level of confidence, or self-efficacy, when working cross-culturally. Eating food and socializing comprise the third step of CQ Drive, because both are deeply rooted in people's lives, and most people tend to retreat from uncomfortable food or situations. The fourth step involved in CQ Drive includes counting rewards, such as career advancement, creativity, innovation, salary, and profitability (Livermore, 2015). Working for something more prominent is the final step of CQ Drive because the desire to learn with and about other people and care for the world is honorable (Livermore, 2015). If an educator is driven only by financial gain, then burnout occurs (Livermore, 2015; Stokes, 2013). In higher education, faculty members must be driven by the success of students in life and in academics (Kruse et al., 2017; Stokes, 2013; Van der Horst & Albertyn, 2018). More research is needed in the area of CQ Drive because educators are experiencing burnout (Stokes, 2013).

Developing CQ Knowledge means understanding cultural similarities and differences (Livermore, 2015; Van der Horst & Albertyn, 2018). The path toward improving CQ Knowledge begins by seeing the influence of culture in everything—thoughts, words, and actions (Livermore, 2015; Van der Horst & Albertyn, 2018). Understanding the rules, organizations, and different layers of culture, including subcultures, help shape CQ Knowledge. Another step of CQ Knowledge includes understanding different languages, not only academically, but also the role of consistent, clear communication concerning the other culture. Language barriers can exist within the same language, because different expressions and terms can skew linguistic understanding (Livermore, 2015). The next step of CQ Knowledge

highlights understanding different cultural systems, which include economic, marital, familial, educational, legal, political, religious, and artistic systems (Livermore, 2015; Van der Horst & Albertyn, 2018). The final step of CQ Knowledge is understanding cultural values (Livermore, 2015; Van der Horst & Albertyn, 2018). Some cultural values that Livermore (2015) mentioned include individualism versus collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, cooperation versus competitiveness, short term versus long term, direct versus indirect context, and being versus doing. Each of the cultural systems and values influences higher education in several ways, and more research is needed concerning IHEs' cultural systems and values, because every institution's culture is not only vast and diverse but also valuable (Kruse et al., 2017; Van der Horst & Albertyn, 2018). Studying cultural systems and values would benefit every institution, because the resulting research would enhance student engagement and success; therefore, each institution should appoint an individual or leadership team to conduct cultural systems and values research (ACE, 2019; Kruse et al., 2017; Livermore, 2015).

Strategizing and making sense of cultural experiences is the third capability of CQ (Livermore, 2015; Van der Horst & Albertyn, 2018). A leader's CQ Strategy has three dimensions: planning, awareness, and checking. The first part is to plan for an interaction or project taking place in a different cultural environment. CQ planning entails thinking, communicating, and navigating about how effectively to interact cross-culturally (Livermore, 2015). The second step of the CQ Strategy is becoming more aware of one's self and others in different situations (Livermore, 2015; Van der Horst & Albertyn, 2018). According to Livermore (2015), "awareness is stepping back from what we are doing and reflecting on it" (p. 141). Checking whether or not the cultural assumptions and plans were appropriate is the final step of CQ Strategy (Livermore, 2015). Validating assumptions and plans is one way of



anticipating misunderstandings that might arise; moreover, CQ Strategy is a positive way to enhance culturally sensitive leadership (Livermore, 2015; Van der Horst & Albertyn, 2018).

The final capability is CQ Action, which encompasses adapting communication, leading differently, and knowing when to adapt and when not to adapt. For effective CQ leadership, communication must be adapted to the different cultures, in order to enhance understanding and decrease misinterpretations. In the CQ Action capability, communication includes usage and delivery of words, topics, requests, apologies, and compliments. The words an educator uses can either encourage others to listen attentively or to block the educator's communication. The CQ faculty member needs education on the appropriate words to use according to the cultural context. The delivery of communication includes nonverbal actions, distance, touching, body position, gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact (Livermore, 2015). According to Kruse et al. (2017), communication delivery can make or break the listener's attitude towards the subject and the leader. Leading differently is the second CQ Action step. Leading differently includes negotiating goals and attitudes, personal styles, communication, sensitivity to time, emotionalism, building an agreement, team organization, and risk-taking. Many of the CQ Action dimensions overlap, because they affect every aspect of leading with sensitivity. The final stage of CQ Action, knowing when to adapt and when not to, requires using CQ Knowledge and CQ Strategy to anticipate what people from other cultures expect. During this final stage, the leader should make adjustments according to positive and negative feedback to understand the appropriate behaviors of adapting or not (Livermore, 2015). The final stage determines the level of cultural intelligence, and as the final step, CQ Action requires constant attention and evaluation (Livermore, 2015; Van der Horst & Albertyn, 2018).

Educators who are agreeable and possess emotional stability have a higher level of CQ Action while conscientious educators possess a higher level of CQ Strategy. The most effective educators who have the highest degree of CQ are those who acquire an openness to experiences and perspectives (Livermore, 2015; Van der Horst & Albertyn, 2018). The most effective CQ leaders have high results in technical proficiency, trust-building, sales and service, and creativity and innovation (Livermore, 2015). Acquiring cultural intelligence should be a required mindset for higher education faculty because of the vast cultural diversities exemplifying a need for cultural sensitivity (ACE, 2019; Kruse et al., 2017; Van der Horst & Albertyn, 2018); however, a minimal amount of CQ research has been conducted in higher education leadership; therefore, more is needed.

### **Transformational Leadership Theory**

Transformational leadership theory is a process that transforms and changes people; furthermore, transformational leadership includes attentiveness towards followers' motives, satisfying their needs, and treating each with respect, while helping followers accomplish their full potential. The interactions between followers and leaders raise the level of motivation and morality in all parties (Northouse, 2016). Transformational educators engage followers through "inspiration, exemplary practice, collaboration, and trust" (Basham, 2012, p. 344), which creates a culture of embracing mistakes, vision, and innovation (Balwant, 2016; Northouse, 2016). Educators who exemplify the transformational leadership theory are charismatic and draw from deeply held personal value systems, which enable them to be strategic and adaptable to changes in the organization and community (Basham, 2012; Northouse, 2016). Researchers have found that possessing charisma and a deep value system also enables the leader to utilize cultural sensitivity towards others (Balwant, 2016; Basham, 2012; Livermore, 2015).

Another factor of transformational leadership is intellectual stimulation, which involves challenging students to be critical thinkers (Balwant, 2016; Basham, 2012; Northouse, 2016). Coaching and advising are actions within transformational leadership and require that faculty desire their students to be more effective and successful; furthermore, through coaching and advising, faculty empower and nurture students to handle change. A transformational faculty member is aware of the goals and outcomes of the college and students and advocates change for others, which in turn attracts people to follow the educator (Balwant, 2016; Northouse, 2016).

Transformational leadership is essential within higher education so that necessary adaptation can be made to meet continually changing economic and academic environments (Balwant, 2016; Basham, 2012; Lindsey et al., 2019). Transformational faculty members are willing to learn from others and are sensitive to each student's needs for achievement and growth (Balwant, 2016; Basham, 2012; Stokes, 2013). Transformational leadership theory encompasses cultural sensitivity, because transformational leadership empathizes with students and their needs (Balwant, 2016).

### **Flexibility and Open-mindedness**

Culturally sensitive faculty exhibit flexibility and open-mindedness (Banks & Banks, 2020; Stonestreet & Kunkle, 2017; Ortberg, 2012). IHEs' faculty members must demonstrate flexibility, because no class is the same, and no student body is the same. Leaders of higher education institutions have identified cultural changes on their own campuses and have embraced the need to be flexible (ACE, 2019; Layne & Lake, 2015); however, other leaders of IHEs have not actively taken steps to train faculty and staff about fundamental concepts of flexibility in order to adapt to cultural shifts (Klemenz, König, & Schaper, 2019).

One concept of flexibility involves class formatting and scheduling. Many traditional classes meet three hours for 15-16 weeks; however, according to Layne and Lake (2015), classes that meet six hours for eight weeks are effective due to increased contact time between students and faculty throughout the week. Another concept of flexibility is related to learning environments, including classroom layout, instruction, and technology (Ashwin, 2014; Balwant, 2016; Gay, 2010; Layne & Lake, 2015). A traditional classroom layout consists of desks and chairs facing forward with a podium at the front, and the educator providing instruction through a lecture (Layne & Lake, 2015). Various researchers have found that classrooms with chairs in groups enhance learning, especially when the educator lectures for a short amount of time and floats around the room to facilitate students' critical thinking (Ashwin, 2014; Balwant, 2016; Gay, 2010; Layne & Lake, 2015). Technology allows for instructional flexibility; researchers have indicated educators who incorporate a small amount of technology, whether for games or research, have significantly increased student engagement and success (Ashwin, 2014; Balwant, 2016; Layne & Lake, 2015).

Cultural sensitivity requires higher education faculty members not only to be flexible, but also to exemplify open-mindedness (Mitchell, 2018). Some educators are perceived as culturally insensitive because of the manner through which they convey their opinions (Banks & Banks, 2020; Kruglanski, 2004; Torres & Gilzene, 2019). Some individuals are not willing to explore belief systems other than their own; therefore, open-mindedness is a process that takes time (Banks & Banks, 2020; Kruglanski, 2004; Mitchell, 2018; Torres & Gilzene, 2019). Cultural self-awareness will lead to increased cultural sensitivity; therefore, faculty members must be willing to be introspective (Bennett, 2017; Banks & Banks, 2020; Kruglanski, 2004; Livermore, 2015). Integrating cultural concepts into course content demonstrates open-mindedness and

flexibility, because cultural integration provides opportunities for cultural exploration and growth (Banks & Banks, 2020; Torres & Gilzene, 2019). Research in the concepts of flexibility and open-mindedness has been minimal; hence, more research is needed as higher education becomes more culturally diverse, and the need for cultural sensitivity increases (ACE, 2019; Torres & Gilzene, 2019).

### **Justification and Implications**

Culturally intelligent and transformational faculty members have seen significant student engagement because of the valuable traits of these instructional leaders (Balwant, 2016; Basham, 2012; Livermore, 2015; Van der Horst & Albertyn, 2018). In Balwant's (2016) study, transformational faculty positively influenced students' motivation, academic performance, and cognitive learning. Balwant's (2016) study focused on a meta-analytic review of transformational teacher-leadership literature in IHEs and analyzed research in which the leadership was linked to the hypothesized student outcomes. Balwant (2016) followed six hypotheses that focused on student outcomes. The hypotheses held that transformational instructor-leadership is positively related to the students' motivation, perceptions of the instructor's credibility, satisfaction with the instructor, academic performance, affective learning, and cognitive learning. The results of Balwant's (2016) study supported all the hypotheses, concluding that transformational educator-leadership was positively associated with students' outcomes. Results of the analysis revealed that culture, course delivery, and gender were all significant moderators of the relationship between educator and student outcomes (Balwant, 2016). A recommendation from Balwant's (2016) study was that administrators of IHEs should consider training transformational educator-leaders. If the mindsets of IHE faculty members

were consistent with CQ theory or transformational leadership theory, then educators would have a culturally sensitive mindset, because the educators would be focused on the students' needs.

Flexibility and open-mindedness are non-negotiable traits for culturally sensitive IHE faculty members, because these traits are emblematic of cultural sensitivity (Banks & Banks, 2020; Mitchell, 2018; Torres & Gilzene, 2019). Flexibility and open-mindedness are also traits found in intercultural intelligence and transformational leadership theories (Livermore, 2015; Northouse, 2016). Some educators have negative traits, such as stubbornness, rigidity, and closed-mindedness, which do not exemplify cultural sensitivity (Banks & Banks, 2020; Kruglanski, 2004; Mitchell; 2018; Torres & Gilzene, 2019). Many faculty members deny being inflexible and closed-minded; however, student evaluations have included feedback indicating that some educators are not diverse with teaching methods, environments, or content (Klemenz et al., 2019).

Insufficient research has been conducted regarding the relationship between intercultural intelligence theory, transformational leadership theory, and the educator's cultural sensitivity; therefore, more research is needed (Balwant, 2016; Basham, 2012; Livermore, 2015; Van der Horst & Albertyn, 2018). Research concerning the flexibility and open-mindedness of IHEs' faculty members, especially in the area of cultural sensitivity, is lacking; therefore, the present research study was needed.

### **Faculty Professional Development**

Professional development must be focused on increasing the knowledge of an educator so that the reflection of that knowledge is seen in student outcomes (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017). Professional development is the best way to affect the culturally sensitive mindset of faculty members. This section focuses on types of professional development at Tribal Colleges and

Universities (TCUs), professional development teaching strategies, and collaborative online professional development.

### **Professional Development at TCUs - Al-Asfour and Young (2017)**

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) were constructed in the late 1960s to provide higher education for the Native Americans living on reservations. TCUs have played a critical role in Native American lives, because many mainstream IHEs have failed to meet Native Americans' specific needs in the areas of culture, traditions, and families. TCUs play a vital role in higher education for Native Americans, because TCUs educational philosophy focuses on the needs of the students, tribal values, community, higher education, and vocational education. In the United States, 37 TCUs exist, with more than 75 sites which are tribally governed; furthermore, Canada has one TCU. With over 30,000 Native American students, TCUs employ over 1,000 faculty members; therefore, faculty development is an essential aspect for the growth of faculty in higher learning. TCU faculty must understand students' needs, especially since many students are the first in their families to pursue higher education (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017). Some first-generation college students (FGCS) lack identity and purpose as a college student. FGCS' identities can be discovered with the help of IHEs' faculty members who take the time to advise and give culturally sensitive instruction (Whitehead & Wright, 2017). TCU faculty must also be culturally responsive to students and show respect for the culture of their students by actively learning and participating in their culture (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017).

Al-Asfour and Young (2017) examined the faculty development needs of educators at TCUs. The study entailed four research questions about faculty members' main challenges to teaching, differing Native American and non-Native American faculty perceptions of the challenges, the best perceived professional development strategies and practices, and the most

needed areas of professional development to resolve the challenges (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017). Al-Asfour and Young (2017) utilized an online survey that consisted of a 35-item scale and a set of demographic items. Initially, 389 faculty members stated interest in the research; however, only 126 participated in the survey, which was lower than anticipated. The majority of the participating faculty members were over 55 years of age, female, non-Native Americans, and had 1-5 years of experience teaching at TCUs (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017).

In answer to the first research question, faculty were asked to rate five areas identified as challenges facing TCU faculty, ranking from highest to lowest (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017). According to Al-Asfour and Young (2017), the highest item was workload, followed by low salary, working with difficult students, adapting to institutional culture, and learning Native American culture. The second question dealt with Native American faculty and non-Native American faculty and how they differ on their perceptions of challenges (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017). Al-Asfour and Young (2017) conducted independent sample *t*-tests to compare means of Native American and non-Native American faculty members; the non-Native American faculty reported more significant challenges in learning Native American culture than the Native American faculty. To answer the third research question, faculty members were asked to rate 15 areas identified as faculty development strategies and best practices that are successful at TCUs. TCU faculty rated that the most successful professional development strategy was a session about TCU accreditation because of the modules related to multiple agencies and policies that are continually changing and being updated. The second most successful professional development strategy was the session related to understanding student culture. To answer the fourth research question of the most needed faculty development areas, the faculty members were asked to rate 15 areas in which they perceived professional development was needed. The



highest means for the most needed training was instructional development to enhance faculty members' work to serve students better; however, Al-Asfour and Yong (2017) stated that only the Native American faculty members indicated that they need more instructional development compared to the non-Native American faculty. The Native American faculty considered understanding student culture a successful professional development. On the other hand, the non-Native American faculty members saw understanding student culture as more of a challenge and a needed area of development, which was an indication of the importance of focusing on culture in faculty development (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017).

According to Al-Asfour and Young (2017), professional development for faculty members at TCUs is a critical aspect that must not be ignored. Al-Asfour and Young (2017) determined the study was critical for stakeholders to understand the needs of faculty and to allocate resources needed for development and career advancement. Furthermore, Al-Asfour and Young (2017) recommended that administrators of IHEs invest in the personal and professional development of faculty members, because faculty are the “backbone of any higher education institution” (p. 47).

### **Professional Development & Teaching Strategies – Layne and Lake (2015)**

Though students can provide feedback through end-of-course evaluations, students do not always give recommendations to instructors about changes in pedagogy. Administrators of IHEs are responsible for affecting pedagogical change through offering appropriate faculty development based on demographic, cultural, and societal changes of students. Teaching methods and strategies have changed over the years, and faculty need to be aware of what is currently working to engage students, so that positive learning environments are developed and student success is maintained (Layne & Lake, 2015).

Layne and Lake (2015) began a 2-year investigation of course format, delivery, and duration in teaching and learning at Elon University; however, the investigation turned into a global collaboration among IHEs' faculty and students who shared innovative learning within the contexts of engaging students. Also, Layne and Lake (2015) discovered that culture dictates the meaning and terms of learning, whether in the United States or some other nation; therefore, administrators of IHEs must focus on the student, institutional, and national cultures for ideas about faculty professional development.

In 2015, with the pressures of economics, space, and the increased number of non-traditional students (25 and older) in higher education, administrators of IHEs began to focus on the format of courses and experiment with 8-week courses instead of 12-16 week courses (Layne & Lake, 2015). Layne and Lake (2015) posited these 8-week courses as concentrated learning experiences for students; concentrated learning led to deeper learning, less procrastination, more robust academics, and a greater connection between knowledge and application. Another teaching strategy evaluated by Layne and Lake (2015) was the delivery of courses. Some deliveries included lectures, digital, group activities, hands-on instruction, and games. Layne and Lake (2015) presented cooperative learning, which focused on a group of students working together in harmony to discover different outcomes. In collaborative learning, students work together but have different opinions and viewpoints, actively working to discover, research, and debate about the objectives of the shared tasks. Another teaching strategy evaluated was self-reflection, which connects learning, experience, and writing (Layne & Lake, 2015). Layne and Lake (2015) presented another innovation, concept mapping, that enhances student engagement through a creative and visual process. Each teaching strategy enhanced student engagement, and

Layne and Lake (2015) challenged IHEs' faculty members to learn more modes to facilitate instruction.

Another aspect of professional development that Layne and Lake (2015) evaluated was teaching abroad to enhance student engagement. Study abroad programs have been impactful on academic and non-academic learning outcomes, in that, studying abroad often shifts the student from ethnocentric thinking to ethno-relative thinking, increasing cultural sensitivity and competence. Cultural sensitivity is a learned response to cultural differences, and inexperienced educators may lack the capability to understand the differences and commonalities of people outside their culture group. When an educator observes a student's cultural differences as an obstacle, the teacher doubts the student's ability to learn and succeed (Layne & Lake, 2015). According to Layne and Lake (2015), if an educator studies abroad, that educator opens the door to experiences and learning about other cultures, becoming more sensitive and understanding of other cultures; therefore, the obstacles become diminished.

According to Layne and Lake (2015), as IHEs become increasingly multicultural, faculty must challenge the context, delivery, format, structure, and impact of courses. Professional development of IHEs' faculty must focus on pedagogy that increases student engagement and enhances the student as a whole person: mind, body, and spirit. The most critical factor for determining pedagogy and professional development must be meeting the diverse needs of the students (Layne & Lake, 2015).

### **Collaborative Online Professional Development - Teräs (2016)**

Teräs (2016) investigated the learning experiences of seven educators who participated in a collaborative, authentic online professional development (OPD) program for university educators. The reflective, collaborative, long-term OPD program was integrated into the

everyday activities of the educators (Teräs, 2016). Teräs (2016) chose a narrative analysis design in order to understand the participants' experiences, align with the educational philosophy and pedagogical underpinnings of the program, and improve the online human interactions. An email invitation was sent to 22 participants who completed the full 21<sup>st</sup> Century Educators program; seven of the invitees, four women and three men, expressed willingness to participate in the research (Teräs, 2016). Teräs (2016) gave the participants a choice of an oral interview via videoconferencing or a written narrative. The same questions utilized in the oral interviews were sent to the participants who chose the written narrative. The questions invited stories about the participants' professional journey, prior experiences with technology and e-learning, first impressions of the program, rewarding and frustrating experiences during the program, and moments in which they applied learning (Teräs, 2016).

After collecting the data, Teräs (2016) compiled and analyzed the narrative. The participants' stories illustrated that individual learners always brought their unique motivations, learning strategies, ambitions, cultural backgrounds, and life situations into the learning context. Despite all the different learning strategies and needs, the participants benefitted from the OPD. Some participants had distinguished climatic points (profound learning experiences and personal growth) that were challenging, and yet stimulating at the same time (Teräs, 2016). Teräs (2016) described the participants as educators who overcame difficulties and presented with highly developed self-regulation skills, such as persistence, willingness to learn, self-reflection, and controlling one's motivation. Scaffolding the authentic learning process and collaboration with adequate learning design and skillful, responsive online facilitation enabled all the participants to have a positive outlook on the design of the OPD (Teräs, 2016).

Teräs (2016) stated that OPD is “complex, messy, and admittedly, challenging to facilitate” (p. 271); however, learning with colleagues is a powerful OPD experience that should not be overlooked. The collaborative OPD had challenges, such as different learning needs, expectations, and preferences of the participants; however, the collaborative OPD led to significant professional growth (Teräs, 2016). In the conclusion of the study, Teräs (2016) recommended that IHEs’ administrators and stakeholders must have faculty professional development that focuses on the mindsets of faculty, such as self-regulation skills and strengthening the facilitation of collaborative learning processes.

Professional development enhances the knowledge of IHEs’ faculty members. The main focus of faculty professional development is to increase the pedagogical skills of each educator, so student engagement and success are increased. In the TCUs study (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017), every faculty member perceived professional development differently, but the result of increased knowledge was the same. Layne and Lake (2015) discovered the value of sharing knowledge and constant evaluation of student learning to be the main objective for professional development. Additionally, Teräs’ (2016) narrative study outlined the importance of self-regulation and evaluation skills that assisted in the change of faculty mindsets. Knowing how to assist students to achieve academic and life success must be the number one priority of IHEs. Finding ways to increase the cultural sensitivity of faculty members will assist in changing the mindset of faculty, thus, increasing student engagement and success.

### **Conclusion**

Institutions of higher education consist of multicultural student populations, with some faculty members lacking the cultural sensitivity that must be actively utilized to engage those students. The mindset of faculty members must be adapted to facilitate and educate multicultural

student populations, thus impacting teaching strategies of educators (Banks & Banks, 2020; Gay, 2013). The cultural competency studies in this literature review demonstrated the lack of cultural sensitivity training required of IHEs' faculty members (Barden et al., 2015; Enyeart Smith et al., 2017; Popovich et al., 2018). The problem is not only the lack of cultural competence, but the problem is also the faculty members' mindsets; faculty must adhere to and implement innovative ways of engaging students, and faculty must be flexible and open-minded (Banks & Banks, 2020).

Research is lacking in the area of higher education faculty members and cultural sensitivity training; therefore, more research must be conducted to discover the best solutions for equipping faculty members to effectively teach students from multicultural backgrounds. The purposes of this dissertation study were to explore how undergraduate education faculty members engage students of culturally diverse populations, discovering the culturally sensitive professional development needs of those faculty members to engage culturally diverse students. The results of this dissertation study assist IHEs' professional developers to enhance cultural sensitivity training of IHEs' faculty members. To effectively facilitate new knowledge through an inclusive learning environment, faculty members at all institutions of higher education must adopt a diversity-centric mindset, employ flexible pedagogical practices, and demonstrate cultural sensitivity.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The purposes of this qualitative case study were to explore how undergraduate education faculty engage culturally diverse students and to discover the professional development needs of those faculty members to engage culturally diverse students. This chapter describes the methods used in this study to investigate culturally sensitive teaching strategies of faculty members and the professional development needed to engage culturally diverse students. The research design for the study was a qualitative case study. An interview was created to explore culturally sensitive teaching strategies and professional development needs for engaging culturally diverse students. The following represents a description of the essential elements of the methodology of the study.

#### **Description of Research Design**

##### **Participants**

This study was conducted in a university in the southeastern region of the United States. After receiving the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the researcher began investigating cultural sensitivity among higher education faculty members. The participants for this study included a random purposive sampling of undergraduate education faculty members from an institution of higher education (IHE) in the southeastern region of the United States. Creswell (2013) encouraged qualitative case studies at a single site to include small random purposive sampling from 1-10 individuals, because small samples identify transferability to similar concepts. Another concept that guided the researcher was that all participants experienced the same phenomenological experience regarding cultural sensitivity and engaging diverse student populations (Creswell, 2013). Seven undergraduate education faculty members at this IHE received an invitation consent email (see Appendix B). The invitation informed the

potential participants about the study and the recorded, transcribed phone interview. Of the seven undergraduate education faculty members, five faculty members accepted the invitation to participate. In a week, the interviews were scheduled according to each participant's availability.

### **Role of the Researcher**

After working in higher education for over four years, the researcher of this study developed a passion for being culturally sensitive to the continuously changing student populations. Bracketing is a requirement for researchers conducting case studies, because bracketing requires the researcher to set aside opinions and subjective experiences related to the topic. During the data collection and analysis process, the goal was to bracket personal experiences as much as possible. The reality of the researcher's presence during the study process made it difficult to thoroughly remove oneself from the study (Creswell, 2013).

Gay and Mills (2016) discussed that the researcher's role in a qualitative case study must exemplify a feeling of openness and authenticity between self and the participants, because, if the researcher is not open, the participants may not be able to convey all of their emotions and responses. The researcher's primary emphasis is to allow the participants to feel comfortable and natural without barriers responding with integrity (Gay & Mills, 2016).

### **Measures of Ethical Protection**

Being clear about seeking permission from participants in the study and checking requirements for consent establishes mutual support between the researcher and the participants (Gay & Mills, 2016). The IRB approved the email invitation to consent for the undergraduate education faculty members to participate (see Appendix B). Utilizing an online password-protected software for recording the interviews, Otter ai, the researcher ensured the participant that only the researcher had access to the information. Each participant verified the interview



transcriptions because the verified transcription protects the participant from any misquotes (Creswell, 2013). Confidentiality protects the participants if they should reveal something that could be used against them; therefore, this researcher utilized pseudonyms—Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), Participant 3 (P3), Participant 4 (P4), and Participant 5 (P5)—to protect their identities. Participants were given pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative researchers must research to minimize potential harm for the participants (Gay & Mills, 2016); therefore, minimal to no risk of harm was the focus of this study. The Golden Rule of doing unto others was the central ethical focus that encompassed this qualitative case study (Creswell, 2013; Gay & Mills, 2016).

### **Research Questions**

An interview guide was the main qualitative instrument for this case study. The emphasis of this case study was to answer the following questions:

1. How do undergraduate education faculty engage culturally diverse students?
2. What are the professional development needs of undergraduate IHEs faculty members to engage culturally diverse students?

The interview guide focused on the experiences of the undergraduate education faculty regarding the engagement of culturally diverse student populations, because all data gathered must present substantial evidence towards the purpose of the study (Gay & Mills, 2016).

### **Data Collection**

#### **Instrument, Validity, Reliability, and Procedures Used in Data Collection**

The data collection consisted of phone interviews that were recorded, transcribed, and verified. After the participants accepted the consent invitation to participate, a day and a time were scheduled for the interview. Interviews are utilized in qualitative case studies to illuminate

the participants' experiences about the central focus of the study (Gay & Mills, 2016). To validate an interview, Creswell (2013) mentioned that the evidence gathered from the interview matches the proposed research questions and purposes for the study. An interview guide of seven questions was designed and utilized (see Appendix A). Furthermore, the seven open-ended questions were verified by an expert, the doctor of education methodologist.

The first interview question focused on the culturally diverse student populations in which the participant serves in the classroom. Interview questions two and three focused on teaching strategies and differentiating those strategies that undergraduate education faculty use to engage culturally diverse students. Interview questions four, five, and six focused on assisting other faculty members and identifying professional development for the education faculty to engage culturally diverse students. In the final interview question, the researcher reminded the participant of this qualitative case study's purpose and asked for any other important information that the faculty member would like to contribute. Again, the methodologist validated the interview guide because the questions provided sound evidence for the research questions.

Each interview lasted between 20-30 minutes and was conducted by phone. Adequate interview procedures included being respectful and courteous to each participant; therefore, those procedures were a high priority to the researcher (Creswell, 2013; Gay & Mills, 2016). The researcher utilized a password-protected online recording website entitled Otter ai. Otter ai recorded and transcribed the data; the transcripts were edited for accuracy. Then, the researcher sent the transcript to the participants for verification. Sending the transcribed interview to the participant is a way to validate the instrument (Creswell, 2013). Each participant examined the transcript, made comments, and verified the interview. Once the interviews were verified, the researcher could combine all the transcripts into one document for analysis.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Research Question 1: How do undergraduate education faculty engage culturally diverse students?**

To reiterate, interview question one gave a reference point that described the diversity of the student populations. Interview questions two and three focused on answering research question one, because those questions asked the faculty member how they engage culturally diverse students in the classroom, as well as how they differentiate the strategies for disengaged culturally diverse students.

### **Research Question 2: What are the professional development needs of undergraduate IHEs faculty members to engage culturally diverse students?**

Interview questions four, five, and six focus on answering research question two because those questions refer to the undergraduate faculty's professional development needs. While question seven brought the interview to an end by having the faculty member hear the case study's purpose statement and to give any other information that could contribute to the study.

The five undergraduate education faculty members participated in recorded interviews. The interviews were transcribed, and each participant verified their transcripts. After the verification, the researcher combined the transcriptions into one document for easy access.

To analyze the data, the researcher read the transcriptions and literature review numerous times and highlighted similar phrases, recurring words, concepts, and themes aligned with the two research questions. Next, the researcher categorized the different words and phrases into categories such as expected, surprising, and interesting or unusual responses (Creswell, 2013). The researcher then compiled the information into thematic concepts and utilized a table to simplify the categories to relate the concepts to other IHEs (Gay & Mills, 2016). Finally, the

researcher compiled three themes that explored culturally sensitive classroom engagement strategies, including a description of the professional development needs of higher education faculty members to engage culturally diverse student populations.

### **Summary**

The purposes of this qualitative case study were to explore how undergraduate education faculty engage culturally diverse students and to discover the professional development needs of those faculty members to engage culturally diverse students. Interviews were conducted, and a list of methods faculty utilize to engage culturally diverse students in the classroom was compiled. Furthermore, a list of higher education faculty members' professional development needs to engage culturally diverse students was determined. This study will help IHEs' faculty members engage culturally diverse student populations with teaching strategies and professional development.

## IV. RESULTS

The purposes of this qualitative case study were to explore how undergraduate education faculty engage culturally diverse students and to discover the professional development needs of those faculty members to engage culturally diverse students. This chapter describes the methods and findings in this study, which investigated culturally sensitive teaching strategies of faculty members and the professional development needed to engage culturally diverse students. The research design was a qualitative case study consisting of interviews with undergraduate education faculty at one university in the southeastern region of the United States. Employing the qualitative case study design enabled the researcher to create the essence of how undergraduate education faculty members engage culturally diverse students and identified the professional development needs of those faculty members to engage culturally diverse student populations.

### **Methods of Data Collection**

The exclusive data collection was from interviews. An email invitation was sent to a purposive random sampling of undergraduate education faculty members at a university in the southeastern region of the United States (see Appendix B). Five undergraduate faculty members responded to the invitation, and designated times were scheduled for interviews. Interviews were conducted via phone calls. Each interview was guided by the same interview protocol with

a set of seven semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix A). The interview guide was structured to address the two main research questions:

1. How do undergraduate education faculty engage culturally diverse students?
2. What are the professional development needs of undergraduate IHEs faculty members to engage culturally diverse students?

The interview questions guided the direction of the sessions and were the sole collection of data for this study. Each interview recording was transcribed using the Otter ai. software application. The Otter ai recorded each interview and transcribed the interview as it was recorded; however, the interviewer edited the transcripts for accuracy. Then, the transcripts were sent to the participants for verification. Once the transcripts were validated, the data were analyzed. To protect the rights of the participants, pseudonyms were assigned in the analysis process, such as Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), Participant 3 (P3), Participant 4 (P4), and Participant 5 (P5).

### **Analysis by Research Question**

The interview transcripts were read numerous times to understand the data to the fullest extent (Creswell, 2013). Then, the transcripts were coded and categorized according to the subject matter of the seven-open ended questions using cross-case analysis. A comparison and contrast of the experiences of the five participants were demonstrated through the cross-case analysis, and the data was processed more systematically into categories (Gay & Mills, 2016) (see Table 1). Ultimately, the cross-case analysis developed into three predominant themes that encompassed the experiences of all the participants (see Table 2).

To establish a baseline of the student population, the first interview question focused on the students' diversity. All the participants stated that the majority (about 80%) of the undergraduate education program students were female. Furthermore, the participants stated that the majority of the ethnic groups were European Americans or Caucasian; however, the ethnic minorities were increasing, especially African Americans, Asians, and Hispanics. Participant 2 expressed an interest in recruiting minority students, referring to ethnicity, socioeconomics, gender, disabilities, and first-generation college students, to help create more campus diversity. The increased number of students with disabilities had also brought a change in the classroom with engagement issues; disabilities of students included learning, mental, and physical. As stated by the participants, students' typical age was 18-25; however, there were a few in their late twenties, with P1 and P4 mentioning a student in her 50s. Each participant shared that first-generation college students had increased over the last few years; therefore, knowing about the increase influenced how they engaged the diverse student population.

The descriptive and exploratory data from the participants' own words, perceptions, and experiences are the results of this qualitative case study. A cross-case analysis was the best way to illustrate the research questions, and then the information was categorized into codes (see Table 1). Each participant had unique and diverse views about engaging diverse student populations and the professional development needs of IHEs' faculty members to engage diverse populations; however, the findings reflect three common themes (see Table 2).

### **Research Question 1**

How do undergraduate education faculty engage culturally diverse students? The participants gave evidence for this question by answering questions two through four of the interview guide (see Appendix A). Three of the seven interview questions enabled the education

faculty members to contemplate this research question and think critically about engaging culturally diverse students. All participants discussed using small groups, role-modeling, discussion questions, and interacting with students, as beneficial forms of engaging culturally diverse students. Participant 4 stated, “I just think that there are so many ways to assess students, but it doesn't always have to be the same cookie-cutter, you know, way, or whatever.” Another way to engage culturally diverse students, P2 discussed utilizing literature of “a variety of authors from different backgrounds”, because these authors have a different perspective than others. When asked how to help other faculty engage students, P4 mentioned lecturing “20 minutes maximum”, because any longer “students were lost or disengaged.” P1 stated that educators needed “to be more clear and to provide a more variety of strategies so that we are reaching the different learning styles and ways students process information.”

Engaging culturally diverse students requires the faculty member to be aware of the students, and as P4 stated, “read the room.” Also, P3 stated, “Be aware that not everyone thinks the same way...and sometimes I need to ask a question several different ways so that the students can understand it better or connect with it better.” P1 had a similar statement about asking questions, “Let me rephrase this for you”, because “individualization is used when someone is having trouble with the concept.” Hence, a commonality with the participants was that student-centeredness strategies would engage culturally diverse students. For instance, P4 stated, “I start the semester off by showing the students how diverse we are, but that God created us all in the same image.” Allowing the students to think critically about diversity in one class enabled the students to be reminded that each person is unique, but similarities are still evident; furthermore, P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5 discussed individualization as a benefit for those students that might need a little more assistance, whether it be inside the classroom or outside. P1 stated,



“The individualization happens when I, whenever it appears to me that someone is having a little bit of trouble.” P2 stated, “I thought much about differentiation so much as I tried to just pursue them as an individual and draw them in, you know, find a way to engage them.” P3 shared about individualization:

I try to draw in the students that seem to be a little bit hesitant or resistant to participating and trying to be sensitive to know everyone is coming from a different place, and so some people feel more comfortable and confident about speaking. Some people are still working through, and some may have had experiences that could even be traumatic for that matter, and it may not be best for them to share. So just try to be sensitive to all the different scenarios that students could be bringing with them.

P4 also shared about individualization, “I just think that there are so many ways to assess students, but it doesn't always have to be the same cookie cutter.” P5 addressed individualization as well: “And whenever, I try to always connect with each one of them one on one.”

## **Research Question 2**

What are the professional development needs of undergraduate IHEs’ faculty members to engage culturally diverse students? This research question was addressed by the interview guide questions five and six (see Appendix A). All participants shared the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) and how beneficial the training of best practices was. P1 described:

It’s a full year of professional development where every week we watch videos, we look through documents, and they gave us five to six strategies to try, and then we report on it by the weekend. We have to do a reflection every single week on things that we're doing. And then, include how we are engaging the disengaged, how we are working with diverse

students, how are we providing feedback. Are we listening, being in tune either what students are saying, I need more help, or watching how our students are reacting to the activities that we do in class, or the feedback that they get so that we can be more effective with them.

P2 shared a little more about ACUE, “There are a couple of modules on honoring diversity in our classroom and creating a welcoming environment and, you know, trying to balance your bias.”

P2 also shared about taking a diversity class at the university and that the class enhanced P2’s understanding of diversity and bias perspectives. All participants shared the micro-credentialing and badges for participating in ACUE, and the implementations of best practices were vital to help with the engagement of culturally diverse students and are needed. Participant 1 suggested, “A class entitled that [engagement of culturally diverse students] would be beneficial training.”

P1 also mentioned the need for training regarding “the age of smartphones.”

The nation had recently gone through a racial upheaval with Georg Floyd; therefore, P3 was concerned about engaging with students and stated,

I reached out to a colleague of mine in the College of Education, who is African American, and asked him to suggest to me something that I could read or be exposed to that would help me have a better understanding of individuals that are not like myself...And he suggested the video, and the book, *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander.

Participant 3 was grateful for the information from the other colleague; P3 read and watched the video and, as a result, had “a better understanding of people.” Most participants suggested implementing informal professional development as a need for IHEs’ faculty members to engage culturally diverse student populations, because collaborations with colleagues were practical and

effective. P4 stated, “Professional development even at an informal level...which was more beneficial than the formal.”

### **Cross-Case Analysis and Themes**

This qualitative case study involved five undergraduate education faculty members at a university in the southeastern region of the US. These five educators brought different insights into engaging culturally diverse student populations and the professional development needs of IHEs’ faculty members to engage culturally diverse students; therefore, a cross-case analysis was the best way to compare and contrast these individual cases. After the cross-case analysis, the information was categorized into codes grouped by categories (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Codes Grouped by Category*

Materials	Methods	PD Formal	PD Informal
Movies	Relationships	ACUE	Colleagues
PowerPoints	Individualization	Best practices	Multicultural Affairs
YouTube	Small Groups	E-learning	Collaborations
Music	Role-modeling	Conferences	Reading Pro. Articles
Literature	Q & A Time	Classes	Lifelong learning
Diverse Authors	Discussion	Smart Phone Gen.	Global Mindset
Technology	Personal Experience	Micro-credentialling	Diversity Panels
Current Events	Meet one-on-one	Badges	Travel
Draw/ Doodle	Meet outside of class	Current Topics	Perspectives
	Student backgrounds	Current Trends	Seek it out

Of those concepts, three themes predominantly emerged (see Table 2). The two common threads from all participants to engage culturally diverse students were utilizing various materials, such as visuals, auditory materials, and literature, and utilizing various methods, such

as student-centered approach, small groups, role modeling, and discussions. All the participants had various professional development needs for undergraduate IHEs' faculty members; however, formal and informal professional development needs were mentioned. The formal professional development included the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE), especially training on best practices. The informal professional development included collaborations with colleagues to understand others' perspectives, utilizing the concept of being a lifelong learner, and having a global mindset.

**Table 2**

*Theme Descriptions*

Theme	Description
1	Utilizing Various Materials
2	Utilizing Various Methods
3	Professional Development

**Theme 1: Utilizing Various Materials**

Among the five participants, one of the most significant aspects of engaging culturally diverse students was utilizing various materials. All the undergraduate education faculty members in this study emphasized using audio and visual aids during teaching, including PowerPoint, movies, YouTube, and drawings. Participant 1 stated, “Good gracious, we are education people. We love bringing in paper and markers. Students doodle and draw their way through the process of the questions that they have.” Participant 1 shared more on the subject:

What can be done differently to help engage because it's not always on the student, and it's not always on the teacher its a matter of figuring out which type of communication is

going to work. And that's bringing his learning style to the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.

Sometimes the culturally diverse students would not understand the directions P4 would give; therefore, P4 showed YouTube videos giving the same instructions to help the students comprehend the concept. P4 stated, "I want to quickly show you just a really quick clip, just to kind of change the flow of what I'm talking about." P5, a self-identified visual learner, emphasized the use of movies or video clips to engage the culturally diverse students more because the students were able to relate to the situations or observe the concept in practice. P5 stated, "But anything that's kinesthetic, visual, lots of visuals are used like movies, are biggest in my classes."

Literature is another material that participants used to engage culturally diverse students. P2 described the importance of finding various authors from different backgrounds and incorporating their material in lessons to create an open-mind in the student outside of their cultural backgrounds. Participant 2 discussed the importance of varying curriculum to engage culturally diverse students, because the mainstream literature sometimes focused on one cultural background than the other and some students felt overlooked or excluded.

P2 stated,

I tried to choose material that is very diverse there as well. Diverse, but not stereotypical. And so, expose them to a variety of literature that they can then turn around and related with the kids. Something I thought of this semester that I hadn't thought of before, but I read an article that made me think of. I'm trying to now look at the textbooks that I use, and consider you know the diversity of backgrounds and perspectives that the authors of textbooks. So, things like that. I tried; you know I try to avoid. You know, those kinds of

generalizations. You know, you must be feeling this way because you are, whatever. I work really hard not to do that. I work really hard not to make any assumptions. I don't always get it right, but I try.

## **Theme 2: Utilizing Various Methods**

According to the research, the participants utilized various methods to engage culturally diverse students. One predominant method was the student-centered approach. All participants shared that building relationships and being student-centered with culturally diverse students assisted in the engagement process. Each participant emphasized that the vitality of student-centeredness enabled the faculty members to engage the students. P1 commented on being sensitive even to the political views of students:

I certainly try to be as sensitive to diversity as I can, if nothing else, even just the diversity of Republican versus Democrat this semester, because I teach methods in social studies for Elementary Ed. And so, we do talk about current events, and of course, the debate and the election are certainly current events, so being sensitive to that is a priority for me.

Participant 1 went a little further about building relationships and focusing on the student as an individual, "I always try to include everybody and make sure when I looked at my roster, or look at the faces in the class I try to make sure I've engaged everyone at some point in the class."

Participant 2 stated, "Building relationships is one of the most important things I can do to honor the diversity of my students." P2 added, stating:

I need to learn about them; learn their stories. You know, learn if they are first and family to attend college. I think that helps me serve them better because it's easy to take for

granted that they know how to do something or they know how things work. So, there's that. Um, I try to be very diverse, and I reach my students.

Participant 3 shared about being student-centered with the in-depth conversation:

So, I make it a point in my classes on campus that at the start of every class, I have a student go through a series of clip questions that I've created for them to introduce themselves and tell us about why they chose to come [to this university], what their major is, why they chose that major, and then also what is their dream job, or ministry. And it helps us to understand a little bit about where they're coming from collectively as a class. So, I think that is very important in this whole process of understanding the different backgrounds that each of us bring to the classroom.

Furthermore, P4 shared,

Basically, I start the semester off by, pretty much, showing the students how diverse we are, but yet how God created us all in the same image, right. So, I do this thing, and I call it I am. I asked these questions, and the answer is yes, or you identify with that, and you stand up. So, it's like I am from a different country. I, other than us. I speak multiple languages. I didn't even go into, um, I have different colored skin. Um, I used to have different things and a different religious belief but now I'm Christian or, you know I just have all of these. I know what poverty is like all kinds of questions that if the student is comfortable answering. They stand if not, they don't, but basically, it just is the opportunity to, to see what the person has in common with me so now, maybe they can make a new friend or identify with someone in the class, so I just see that it brings that climate and culture, to where we have that family atmosphere, versus not. But that's one thing I do.

P5 emphasized the importance of student-centeredness even “learning to pronounce the students’ names correctly” added to the students’ engagement, because, when the instructor cannot pronounce the name of the student, the student does not feel a need to engage in the discussion. P2 and P5 stated that asking culturally diverse students questions about their personal lives and backgrounds seemed to engage them more in the classroom, because an authority figure made a connection. P2 stated, “and learn their students’ stories because I think once you know that, then you can kind of get a better picture, or how to serve better.” P5 stated, “I try to always connect with each one of them one on one. And just find out, and I ask a lot of questions. And most of the time, they’re very open.”

Other methods utilized were small group activities, role-modeling, and discussions. Participant 1 stated, “When I put them in groups, even if it is on Zoom, usually it’s a random collection of people.” The small group activities allowed the students to engage with one another and with the concepts. P4 emphasized,

Sometimes it takes that quick little diverging, you know, an effort to get them back on track. I’ll be like, I think pair share, where they’re quickly talking to their shoulder partner like anything just to kind of distract them, and redirect them from where I lost them, and try to get them back on track to get them again. So, partners and small groups help in that.

P4 also stated, “And think of delivering your content in a variety of ways like, not only are we meeting diverse learners, but it’s meeting different learning styles.”

Especially since the students wanted to be educators, the faculty members made sure to role-model how to interact with students, and all of the participants emphasized sharing personal experiences with the students. Participant 1 shared,



And I'm going to do everything I can to help them be the best person that each of them is and help them develop their individual field, and determine their own assets that they in their experiences can bring into the classroom as well. And I do encourage them to share with each other because I don't have all the answers to everything. I love it when they find things that I've made mistakes on, whether it be a grammar error or something.

This role-modeling method helped to engage culturally diverse students. Participants 1 and 3 emphasized the importance of discussions and rephrasing questions to understand the concepts and interact with others and the material. P1 shared thoughts about rephrasing:

I make sure that I tell everybody, "Oh good, let me rephrase this for you." So, the individualization happens when I, whenever it appears to me that someone is having a little bit of trouble. So again, I don't know that that's necessarily a diversity thing, but it's certainly an individualization kind of thing.

The question and answer time or discussions engaged the culturally diverse students and helped them utilize critical thinking skills. Participant 3 shared about utilizing discussions:

Even during the lessons and stuff like that, I try to be aware that not everyone thinks the same way that I do. And being aware of that helps me to incorporate other viewpoints in our teaching. And so sometimes that means maybe asking something, or asking a question several different ways so that people can understand it better or connect with it better because of their background that they're coming from. A lot of times when I've talked about examples of situations, especially like an introduction education class. I asked the students to share their personal experiences. And so, I'm able to draw out the diversity that they bring to the classroom as well.

### **Theme 3: Professional Development**

#### ***Formal***

Formal professional development enhanced all the undergraduate education faculty who participated in this case study. P1 discussed that the most effective professional training for engaging culturally diverse students was ACUE:

The program helps to enhance, to identify, and to practice best practices. It's a full year of professional development, where every week we watch videos, we look through documents. They give us five or six or more strategies to try, and then we report on it by the weekend. We have to do a reflection every single week on things that we're doing. And then, including how we are engaging the disengaged, how we are working with diverse students, and how we provide feedback.

The other four participants confirmed that ACUE was valuable because each participant stated ACUE was professional development that was required, but practical and useful. In addition, P2 stated:

I'm currently going through a teaching course through, um, it's called ACUE. It's designed for higher educators, and there have been a couple modules there on honoring diversity in our classroom and creating a welcoming environment and, you know, trying to balance your bias.

The professional training enhanced the educators to practice new ways of engaging students that others had tried and succeeded. P3 stated, "I think it's just going to be up to individuals to seek out different opportunities for professional development." P4 mentioned the micro-credentialing and badges earned from professional development increased the desire to participate in the

training because P4 always sought to develop more skills and learn more creative ways of engaging students. P4 shared a little bit about the best practices:

The one on best practices, like different strategies that other professors use that maybe I just haven't thought of, or I really learn by like visuals I see, so other people, like, and some of the videos that are included in those training show specific scenarios from classrooms.

P4 went on to discuss the formal development:

We [the university] had adopted a program that walks you through all kinds of different professional development training. And then if you master all the skills and concepts that are taught, like the constant skills. Then they give you a badge saying that you have mastered this skill.

Learning the best practices in which other IHEs' faculty members utilized encouraged all participants to actively participate in this formal professional development. P1 stated, "As busy as we all are, it is a nice opportunity for us to examine our own practices and try some new things. And that's been the fun part about it."

### ***Informal***

Undergraduate IHEs' faculty members need to utilize informal professional development to enhance culturally diverse student populations' engagement. The participants utilized various forms of informal professional development. The first form of informal professional development was collaboration with colleagues. Participant 3 was on a diversity panel at the university, and each panel member shared personal perspectives on situations. As a result of this panel, P3 gathered new knowledge and perspective on how to relate and engage culturally diverse students. P3 shared about the diversity panel experience:

I was able to bring to the table how students in the classroom bring different backgrounds, be it disabilities or ethnic backgrounds, that type of thing, how it is addressed in the classroom where some of the other panel members talked more about maybe the psychology aspect of it, social aspect of it. So, it's very informing to not only the students that watched but also to us panelists to hear that from one another. And, again, you're not a formal training professional development session but, again, that just lends itself to helping all of us become better professionals to do what we're doing and what we plan.

Another informal professional training for all the participants was conferring with culturally diverse colleagues on a one-on-one basis, which enhanced their understanding of other cultures. Participant 2 shared about some informal settings:

In our university, we have an office of Multicultural Affairs, and the director there will sometimes, you know, provide space for collaborative conversations among professors with regard to issues, and students with regard to issues of diversity, but nothing really formal that I could think of.

P3 shared, “You know, it wasn't something in a session or a class, but during an event experience I just shared with you with a colleague was professional development even at an informal level.” In informal training, faculty members began to know and understand culturally diverse perspectives that helped engage culturally diverse student populations.

Two other aspects of informal professional development which the participants stated that assisted in engaging culturally diverse students were a global mindset and lifelong learning mentality. As lifelong learners, P2, P3, P4, and P5 stated the importance of seeking current research articles on best practices and current events to engage culturally diverse students. As

professional educators, P3 stated, “it behooves us to be the best professional educators we can be.” Furthermore, P3 pressed more about being a lifelong learner:

We throw out the phrase, lifelong learner, quite a bit, but it's very true. That we never arrive at the destination of knowing, and we need to know and be full of education. I think this is one of those areas and topics that we need to continue to improve and become better equipped and prepared to help our students.

According to P4 and P5, being a lifelong learner enables faculty members to relate and engage culturally diverse students in a continuously changing world. P4 discussed the value of being a lifelong learner:

I'm just a continual learner. And I also participate in professional development like doing micro-credentials, getting badges, and stuff like that. Because I'm just kind of a nerd, I just continue to love being in school, and I got multiple master's degrees and a doctoral degree just because I love learning the newest and latest information.

P5 also discussed the importance of being a lifelong learner:

I'm a lifelong learner. I love to learn new things. So, I think it's very important to help people learn, to keep up with current strategies, to listen to different perspectives because it's been a while since I got my doctorate.

Furthermore, if undergraduate education faculty members are not equipped with current material, how can those faculty members instill the same values in the students who want to be educators.

P5 addressed the issue of current material using the lifelong learner mentality:

And so, I have had to learn about new strategies that come out. Also, populations change, experiences that I have today are not like the students I have seven years; they will be very different. So, I have had to learn about these different generations I have to keep

current with strategies. Something I love to do is reading, I love to read research articles, and I guess I'm a kind of a geek in that way. But I love research articles

All IHEs' faculty members are influencers on the next generation; therefore, according to P3, faculty need to be lifelong learners, continually learning about new strategies and practices for engaging culturally diverse students. P3 discussed this concept: "We throw out the phrase lifelong learner, quite a bit, but it's very true, that we never arrive at the destination of knowing, we need to know and full of education."

Participant 4 stressed the importance of having a global mindset, because a global mindset helps a person know and seek diverse perspectives. P4 commented:

If professors had a global mindset and thought to all students instead of just kind of like I always think of like a round peg in a square, you know, like if professors would just think outside the box. And just are teachers in general.

Some participants had opportunities to visit other countries and culturally diverse universities, which were different from their personal cultural backgrounds. P4 discussed working with other countries as global opportunities to learn:

It just gives me kind of like a global look on where other students are, and then where other teachers are with their curriculum. Usually, besides China, the countries are behind; however, the rigor might be there, but the content is just years behind us. But that's how I kind of stay abreast with everything. I just keep exposing myself to going to those different countries.

P5 also spoke on working with or in other countries and being current on the world events:

Yeah, just keeping current with what's going on in the world. I also believe that we don't exist in isolation. So, everything that happens around us, everything that happens outside

of the university, of any country, and in the world, is going to influence how our students learn. So you have to keep up with what's happening, and you have to hear different perspectives. And you have to understand that, you know, you might have certain beliefs that might not be the beliefs of your students. And that's what I always tried to teach them that you know that you're going to be working with a lot of people who have different perspectives, and you have to be able to be open enough to be able to try to examine issues from different perspectives.

Those undergraduate education faculty were appreciative of those global opportunities because the opportunities enabled them to have a global mindset about knowing students from other cultures and engaging culturally diverse students in the classroom. P5 continued the discussion about global mindset: “to consider that the way they are behaving and how they're reacting towards you and towards the material is going to be influenced by their lives and by what's happening in society.”

### **Evidence of Quality**

Validity and reliability are vital in producing credible research (Creswell, 2013; Gay & Mills, 2016). Creswell (2013) recommended that qualitative researchers employ a minimum of two strategies to validate qualitative research. Three strategies were used in this qualitative case study. First, bracketing personal experiences as an ESOL instructor and cultural awareness organizer was utilized to maintain objectivity during the interviews and data analysis. Second, feedback and verification from each participant regarding the accuracy of the interview transcripts were requested. Finally, the dissertation methodologist acted as a peer reviewer for coding and cross-case analysis.

The reliability of the qualitative findings was enhanced by utilizing the same procedures throughout the interview process. A standard interview guide was used with each participant; each interview was recorded and transcribed using Otter ai; furthermore, the editing of the transcripts for accuracy was utilized. Before the analysis of the transcripts to discover themes, each participant reviewed and verified the interview.

### **Summary of Results**

Chapter four presented an overview of the qualitative case study related to undergraduate education faculty members engaging culturally diverse students and the professional development needs of those faculty members to engage culturally diverse student populations. According to the qualitative findings, the undergraduate education faculty need to build relationships with students and utilize various materials and methods to engage culturally diverse students. Furthermore, formal and informal professional development is needed for those faculty members in areas of best practices, collaboration with colleagues, lifelong learners, and global mindsets, to engage culturally diverse student populations. Chapter five will provide detailed discussions of the findings, limitations of the current case study, future practice implications, and future research recommendations.



## V. DISCUSSION

The purposes of this qualitative case study were to explore how undergraduate education faculty engage culturally diverse students and to discover the professional development needs of those faculty members to engage culturally diverse students. The IHEs' faculty members need to be culturally sensitive because of the ever-changing student demographics (Kruse et al., Popovich et al., 2018; Starr-Glass, 2014). The lack of cultural sensitivity among post-secondary faculty has become an increasing problem due to the culturally diverse student bodies in higher education (DeBettencourt, Hoover, Rude, & Taylor, 2016; Kruse et al., 2017; Popovich et al., 2018). This case study explored how undergraduate education faculty members engage culturally diverse students. Furthermore, this study discovered the professional development needs of faculty members to engage culturally diverse students.

### **Methods of Data Collection**

This qualitative case study aimed to explore how undergraduate education faculty engage culturally diverse students and discover their professional development needs to engage culturally diverse students. First, a seven-open-ended interview guide was designed, and the expert methodologist approved the guide (see Appendix A). An email invitation was sent to all the undergraduate education faculty members of one university in the southeastern region of the United States (see Appendix B). Five faculty responded to the invitation and subsequently met at the scheduled times for the interviews. Otter ai, a recording and transcribing software

application, was utilized during the interviews; the transcripts were edited for accuracy and sent to the participants for validation. Once the transcripts were validated, the data analysis began. The interview transcripts were read numerous times to understand the data to the fullest extent. The transcripts were coded and categorized according to the subject matter of the seven open-ended questions using cross-case analysis. A comparison and contrast of the five faculty members' experiences were illustrated through a cross-case analysis, and the data were processed more systematically into categories (Gay & Mills, 2016). Three predominant themes encompassed the experiences of all the participants.

### **Summary of Results**

The five participants answered seven open-ended questions in an interview, and the similarities and differences were compared in a cross-case analysis and divided into categories. The participants shared various materials and methods to engage culturally diverse students, such as videos, movies, PowerPoints, YouTube, diverse literature, hands-on activities, student-centered approach, small groups, and discussions. The qualitative findings revealed that undergraduate education faculty needed to utilize various materials and methods to engage culturally diverse students. The five participants discussed the importance of formal professional development, especially ACUE, best practices, and seeking professional development to be better educators. One predominant discussion among the five participants was the value of informal professional development, such as working with colleagues of different cultural perspectives and seeking current research on engaging culturally diverse students. Therefore, formal and informal professional development are needed for faculty members in areas of best practices, collaborations with colleagues, lifelong learners, and global mindsets to engage culturally diverse student populations.

## Discussion by Research Questions

The ever-changing college student demographics have increased over the last ten years; therefore, the IHEs' faculty members must utilize teaching strategies and methods to engage culturally diverse students (Kruse et al., 2017; Layne & Lake, 2015). Furthermore, IHEs' faculty members' professional development needs must encompass cultural sensitivity training to engage culturally diverse student populations (Barden, Shannonhouse, & Mobley, 2015; Teräs, 2016). The following discussion addresses the two research questions.

### **Research Question 1: How do undergraduate education faculty engage culturally diverse students?**

The first few interview guide questions addressed this question (see Appendix A), and the participants expressed how they engaged culturally diverse students in the classroom. The undergraduate education faculty shared about utilizing various methods and materials to engage culturally diverse students.

The participants shared about the different methods utilized to engage culturally diverse students. P1 expressed,

I truly do try to make sure that no matter who the students are, I'm excited to have them in the class. And I'm going to do everything I can to help them be the best person that each of them is and help them develop their individual field, bring out their own, and determine their own assets that they in their experiences can bring into the classroom as well.

P2 stated, "I tried to just pursue them as an individual and draw them in, you know, find a way to engage them." Most of the participants stated similar contexts, which illustrates the student-centered approach to teaching, because the student-centered approach focuses on the individual

student's needs, and this method is focused on reaching that student and effectively engaging them. Furthermore, P3 stated, "It helps us to understand a little bit about where they're coming from collectively as a class. So, I think that is very important in this understanding the different backgrounds that each of us brings to the classroom." Also, P3 continued, "One of the things that I believe very strongly in is building relationships and that everybody has a story to tell about where they've been, the journey they've been on, [and] the experiences they've had." P5 stated, "Reach out to them and just try to meet with them one on one, and just get their perspective." So from the interviews, undergraduate education faculty must be focused on who the students are and what they represent, because the student-centered approach was useful for engaging culturally diverse students.

Another method mentioned was sharing personal experiences with students significantly helped the undergraduate education faculty engage culturally diverse students. P1 said, "And I do encourage them to share with each other, because I don't have all the answers to everything." Continuing, P3 similarly stated, "I asked the students to share their personal experiences. And so, I'm able to draw out the diversity that they bring to the classroom as well." P4 stated, "I share some of my hands-on lessons that I do and see if they can adapt it to their class, or to their content." P5 stated, "I tell them they love to hear about my experiences in the classroom before I got on my doctorate." Each of the undergraduate education faculty members emphasized the importance of engaging culturally diverse students by utilizing shared experiences, whether from the instructor or other peers. Understanding the perspectives of others different from oneself enabled the participants to engage culturally diverse students. P2 expressed the importance of utilizing literature from varying perspectives to assist in culturally diverse students' engagement: "Consider the diversity of backgrounds and perspectives of the authors of textbooks." When

students are exposed to a variety of literature, the students exemplify cultural intelligence (CQ), because CQ embraces the perspectives of others (Livermore, 2015). Acquiring cultural intelligence must be a necessary mindset for higher education faculty because of the vast student cultural diversities exemplifying a need for cultural sensitivity. The participating undergraduate education faculty members appear to embrace CQ to engage culturally diverse students, because each expressed the importance of understanding and acknowledging other people's perspectives.

The undergraduate education faculty members mentioned utilizing a variety of audio and visual materials. P5 stated, "They'll [students] say, 'I'm an auditory learner,' or 'I'm a very visual learner.' Or I've even heard 'that PowerPoint, you have to really work on it, and it was confusing to me.'" Identifying students' learning styles enables an education faculty member to engage culturally diverse students. P1 stated, regarding learning styles, as "a matter of figuring out which type of communication is going to work. And that's bringing his learning style to the visual, auditory, [or] kinesthetic." Knowing the students' learning styles and adjusting accordingly were vital to the participating education faculty members in engaging culturally diverse students. Technology has increased over the last few years, and students utilize the technology; therefore, adjusting teaching styles to incorporate that technology is vital. P4 stated, "Pull up like a really quick YouTube video. And when I was in the classroom. I would say we're going to do a quick virtual field trip." P5 also shared, "But anything that's kinesthetic, visual, lots of visuals are used like movies- are biggest in my classes." The culturally intelligent education faculty member who has technical proficiency, creativity, and innovation will engage more culturally diverse students. Having a flexible and open mind about adjusting teaching materials to relate to the students' learning styles is vital for engaging culturally diverse students

## **Research Question 2: What are the professional development needs of undergraduate IHEs' faculty members to engage culturally diverse students?**

Professional development (PD) enhances the knowledge of IHEs' faculty members. This research question was addressed by the interview guide questions five and six (see Appendix A). The participating undergraduate education faculty members shared professional development needs via formal and informal methods to assist faculty in engaging culturally diverse students.

All participants shared the importance of formal professional development from the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE), especially regarding best practices. P1 shared information about the ACUE PD, "the professional development program to help enhance, to identify and practice, the best practices." Continuing about ACUE, P2 shared, "designed for higher educators and there have been a couple modules there on honoring diversity in our classroom and creating a welcoming environment and, you know, trying to balance your bias." P3 felt that formal professional development was "okay... and take advantage of opportunities to come along;" however, the most needed professional development involved informal professional development, which P3 considered, "more beneficial than the formal." Participant 1 suggested, "A class entitled that [engagement of culturally diverse students] would be beneficial training." P1 also mentioned the need for training regarding "the age of smartphones." Having PD classes that address engaging culturally diverse students and the age of smartphones would be beneficial PD, because undergraduate education faculty members need to be aware of new engagement strategies and new technology trends to be more effective educators.

The informal professional development shared by all the participants included collaborating with colleagues, researching current articles, and having lifelong learner and global mindsets. P2 shared,

We have an office of Multicultural Affairs, and the director there will sometimes, you know, provide space for collaborative conversations among professors, you know, with regard to issues, and students with regard to issues of diversity, but nothing really formal that I could think of.

P3 shared an experience of being on a panel for diversity and inclusion:

I was able to bring to the table how students in the classroom bring different backgrounds, be it disabilities or ethnic backgrounds, that type of thing, and how it is addressed in the classroom. Some of the other panel members talked more about maybe the psychology aspect of it, the social aspect of it. So, it's very informing to not only the students that watch but also to us panelists to hear that from one another.

The nation had recently gone through a racial upheaval with Georg Floyd; therefore, P3 was concerned about engaging with students and stated,

I reached out to a colleague of mine in the College of Education, who is African American and asked him to suggest to me something that I could read or be exposed to that would help me have a better understanding of individuals that are not like myself...And he suggested the video, and the book, *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander.

Participant 3 was grateful for the information from the other colleague; P3 read and watched the video and, as a result, had “a better understanding of people.” Collaborating with colleagues enabled the participants to learn different cultural perspectives and created a unique way to

engage culturally diverse students. The benefits of interacting with colleagues enabled them to gain other perspectives and diverse techniques with increased student interactions and success. The main focus of faculty professional development is to increase each educator's pedagogical skills so that student engagement and success are increased.

Researching current articles and having a lifelong learner mindset was expressed throughout all the interviews, with the two items being grouped together as one mindset. As professional educators, P3 stated, “It behooves us to be the best professional educators we can be.” Furthermore, P3 pressed more about being a lifelong learner:

We throw out the phrase, lifelong learner, quite a bit, but it's very true. That we never arrive at the destination of knowing, and we need to know and be full of education. I think this is one of those areas and topics that we need to continue to improve and become better equipped and prepared to help our students.

According to P4 and P5, being a lifelong learner enables faculty members to relate and engage culturally diverse students in a continuously changing world. P4 discussed the value of being a lifelong learner: “I'm just a continual learner. And I also participate in professional development like doing micro-credentials, getting badges, and stuff like that.” P5 also discussed the importance of being a lifelong learner: “I'm a lifelong learner. I love to learn new things. So, I think it's very important to help people learn, to keep up with current strategies, to listen to different perspectives.” The term *mindset* means a representation of “the set of beliefs and assumptions we hold about ourselves, others, and the world” (Adams, 2013, p. 26). A lifelong learner mindset encompasses researching current articles, books, and more while always being curious, questioning things, and continuously learning. If a faculty member desires to engage culturally diverse student populations, the faculty member must embrace being a lifelong learner.



Being a lifelong learner will open opportunities for the faculty member to learn and grow, just like the culturally diverse students they desire to help succeed in academics and life.

A global mindset compliments a lifelong learner mindset, because a global mindset should be a characteristic trait of undergraduate education faculty members. All participating faculty members shared personal experiences about working with students of different ethnicities and the importance of understanding various perspectives. P3 shared an opportunity in which P3 participated on a panel of faculty members and discussed culturally diverse perspectives. P3 stated that “It was the most beneficial professional development.” P4 and P5 discussed traveling to other countries and observing how other educators conducted lessons. As they interacted with students, it gave them a different perspective and enhanced their skills of engaging culturally diverse students. P5 stated, “So, everything that happens around us, everything that happens outside of the university, of any country, and in the world, is going to influence how our students learn.” A professional development need to assist IHEs’ faculty members to engage culturally diverse students is having a global mindset. A global mindset encompasses cultural intelligence, because having a global mindset means the person does not differentiate between other cultures but acknowledges and tries to grasp each culture despite differences. Having a global mindset does not happen overnight, but an educator develops one by immersing oneself in culturally diverse situations and opportunities.

### **Discussion by Themes**

The qualitative data gathered from five undergraduate education faculty members revealed shared concepts regarding culturally diverse students' engagement. The participants shared numerous commonalities, and a cross-case analysis of the interviews revealed concepts

that were categorized and coded into themes. Three themes emerged from the interviews: utilizing various materials, utilizing various methods, and professional development.

### **Theme 1: Utilizing Various Materials**

Each participant shared various materials to engage culturally diverse students. P1 shared, “It’s a matter of figuring out which type of communication is going to work. And that’s bringing his learning style to the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.” A variety of tools were utilized, and Participant 1 discussed, “Good gracious, we are education people. We love bringing in paper and markers. Students doodle and draw their way through the process of the questions that they have.” Participant 2 discussed the importance of varying curriculum to engage culturally diverse students, because the mainstream literature sometimes focused on one cultural background than the other, and some students felt overlooked or excluded. P2 utilized literature from varying perspectives to engage culturally diverse students, exemplifying cultural intelligence (CQ) because utilizing diverse literature embraced other perspectives. Sometimes students did not understand P4; therefore, P4 would try to use video clips to illustrate a concept or a statement. P4 stated, “I want to quickly show you a clip, just to kind of change the flow of what I’m talking about.” Technology has advanced and become an intrinsic part of society that faculty cannot deny. They must use technology to increase student engagement.

### **Theme 2: Utilizing Various Methods**

According to the research, the participants utilized various methods to engage culturally diverse students. The student-centered approach was significant for all participants in engaging culturally diverse students. P1 shared, “I always try to include everybody and make sure when I looked at my roster, or look at the faces in the class, I try to make sure I’ve engaged everyone at some point in the class.” P2 stated, “and learn their students’ stories, because I think once you

know that, then you can kind of get a better picture, or how to serve better.” P5 stated, “I try to always connect with each one of them one on one. And just find out, and I ask a lot of questions. And most of the time, they're very open.” Teaching and learning activities must be aligned with desired course outcomes and student-centeredness, because having a connection with the students increases engagement. Student-centered teaching focuses on the students' cultural backgrounds and learning needs; therefore, culturally diverse students are engaged more in the content.

The participants mentioned a few other methods to engage culturally diverse students: small group activities, role-modeling, and discussions. Participant 1 stated, “When I put them in groups, even if it is on Zoom, usually it's a random collection of people.” Higher education faculty utilize various deliveries: lectures, digital, group activities, hands-on instruction, and games, because the various deliveries engage culturally diverse students and their diverse learning styles. P1 shared about engaging culturally diverse students “a matter of figuring out which type of communication is going to work. And that's bringing his learning style to the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.”

Role-modeling was an effective method utilized to engage culturally diverse students. P1 shared the importance of role-modeling to the students:

And I'm going to do everything I can to help them be the best person that each of them is and help them develop their individual field, and determine their own assets that they in their experiences can bring into the classroom as well. And I do encourage them to share with each other because I don't have all the answers to everything. I love it when they find things that I've made mistakes on, whether it be a grammar error or something.

Undergraduate education faculty members learn to be role-models and are genuine with their students because role modeling allows the culturally diverse students to relate to the content and embrace their roles as potential educators.

Discussions engage culturally diverse students and enhance critical thinking skills, because P3 stated that the questions help “draw out the diversity that they bring to the classroom.” Furthermore, Participants 1 and 3 emphasized the importance of discussions and rephrasing questions to understand the concepts and interact with others and the material. P1 shared thoughts about rephrasing:

I make sure that I tell everybody, “Oh good, let me rephrase this for you.” So, the individualization happens when I, whenever it appears to me that someone is having a little bit of trouble. So again, I don't know that that's necessarily a diversity thing, but it's certainly an individualization kind of thing.

Discussions engaged culturally diverse students and helped them utilize critical thinking skills. Participant 3 shared about utilizing discussions: “Even during the lessons and stuff like that, I try to be aware that not everyone thinks the same way that I do. And being aware of that helps me to incorporate other viewpoints in our teaching.” When faculty present questions or topics for discussions, students are able to connect with and integrate a new understanding of their experiences, which results in new learning. Student engagement is increased due to facilitated discussions or reflections.

### **Theme 3: Professional Development (PD)**

The undergraduate education faculty members discussed the importance of formal and informal professional development to engage culturally diverse students. Professional development enhances the knowledge of IHEs’ faculty members. The main focus of faculty

professional development is to increase each educator's pedagogical skills, so student engagement and success are increased. Each participant stated that more professional development is needed, and one cannot be fully prepared, but should always seek growth opportunities. P3 stated, "I think it's just going to be up to individuals to seek out different opportunities for professional development."

### ***Formal PD***

For the participants in this study, formal professional development conducted through the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) was the primary source for the university. P1 stated that it was a yearly commitment "where every week we watch videos, we look through documents, and they gave us five to six strategies to try, and then we report on it by the weekend." P2 also shared, "There are a couple of modules on honoring diversity in our classroom and creating a welcoming environment and, you know, trying to balance your bias." Professional development for undergraduate education faculty members is critical for stakeholders to understand the faculty's needs and allocate resources needed for development and career advancement. Furthermore, administrators of IHEs invest in faculty members' personal and professional development, because faculty interact the most with the students, and increasing student engagement and success must be a top priority in higher education.

Participant 1 suggested, "A class entitled that [engagement of culturally diverse students] would be beneficial training." Multicultural education professional development contributes to teachers' self-efficacy and success in working with culturally diverse students. Some educators have resistance or disengagement of culturally diverse students because of a lack of current information or awareness of student cultures and multicultural education PD. Understanding how educators reconsider their views of diversity and equity is more than multicultural education

PD research. Developing this understanding would benefit everyone in education, seeking a future in which students from all backgrounds receive inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education. Professional development of IHEs' faculty must focus on pedagogy that increases student engagement and enhances the student as a whole person: mind, body, and spirit. The most critical factor for determining pedagogy and professional development must be meeting the students' diverse needs. Knowing how to assist students in achieving academic and life success must be the number one priority of IHEs, and finding ways to increase the cultural sensitivity of faculty members will help change the mindset of faculty; thus, increasing student engagement and success.

P1 also mentioned the need for training regarding “the age of smartphones.” Maintaining current in technology must be a vital aspect for higher education PD, because students utilize technology daily. Context and technology are vital components of course design, because, if the context and technology were not easily accessible, many students suffer and do not demonstrate mastery in the course. A current technology learning environment embraces culturally diverse populations, because the students can learn in a way that they understand, and the learning atmosphere helps increase student engagement.

### ***Informal PD***

Undergraduate IHEs' faculty members need to utilize informal professional development to enhance engaging culturally diverse students. The participants suggested various forms of informal professional development. P3 discussed informal PD, which “lends itself to helping all of us become better professionals to do what we're doing and what we plan.” The first form of informal professional development discussed was collaborations with colleagues. Participant 3 was on a diversity panel at the university, and each panel member shared personal perspectives

on situations. As a result of this panel, P3 gathered new knowledge and perspective on how to relate and engage culturally diverse students. P3 shared about the diversity panel experience:

I was able to bring to the table how students in the classroom bring different backgrounds, be it disabilities or ethnic backgrounds, that type of thing, how it is addressed in the classroom. Some of the other panel members talked more about maybe the psychology aspect of it, the social aspect of it.

The collaborative PD led these undergraduate education faculty members to significant professional growth. Professional developers and stakeholders at IHEs must have faculty professional development that focuses on faculty's mindsets, including self-regulation skills and strengthening the facilitation of collaborative learning processes.

The participants mentioned another informal PD, mentoring, or conversing with culturally diverse colleagues to become more aware of diverse perspectives. P3 shared, "You know, it wasn't something in a session or a class, but during an event experience ... with a colleague was professional development even at an informal level." Faculty are considered role models for students; however, faculty should mentor other faculty, because every faculty member has a different experience and a different perspective on engaging culturally diverse students. Being a genuine and transformational faculty member allows the students to fully understand the value of being an educator and being passionate about student engagement and success. Participant 2 shared about some informal settings: "In our university, we have an office of Multicultural Affairs, and the director there will sometimes, you know, provide space for collaborative conversations among professors with regard to issues, and students with regard to issues of diversity." As faculty mentor one another, the faculty members are able to grow and

learn more, which enables them to be mentors to students, and the lifestyle of learning is reciprocal, with student engagement increasing.

Two critical informal professional development needs in order to engage culturally diverse students mentioned by the participants: being lifelong learners and having global mindsets. P3 stated, “It behooves us to be the best professional educators we can be.” P4 discussed the value of being a lifelong learner, “I’m just a continual learner... I love learning the newest and latest information.” P5 stated, “I’m a lifelong learner. I love to learn new things. So, I think it’s very important to help people learn, to keep up with current strategies, to listen to different perspectives.” Being a lifelong learner is a mindset that must be embraced by all faculty members of IHEs, because, if faculty are not willing to grow and learn, then why should faculty expect students to be reciprocal and excel through academics. Hennessy (2018) described a lifelong learner as a curious person, asks questions, researches, reads, learns from others, and continues to succeed by being prepared and always learning and growing. The undergraduate education faculty member who has a lifelong learner mindset discovers new ways of engaging culturally diverse students daily.

P4 shared the following about having a global mindset: “It just gives me kind of like a global look on where other students are, and then where other teachers are with their curriculum.” The concept of engaging culturally diverse students is contingent upon the global mindset and the openness of the faculty member. P5 stated, “You have to be able to be open enough to be able to try to examine issues from different perspectives.” If the bond between student and teacher is open and honest, student engagement is positive. P5 discussed cultivating a global mindset: “to consider that the way they [the students] are behaving and how they’re reacting towards you and towards the material is going to be influenced by their lives and by



what's happening in society.” Many faculty members ask the same questions and struggle with the same challenges; in separate countries, faculty members imagine solutions and test different innovations to shared problems. P5 shared,

Keeping current with what's going on in the world. I also believe that we don't exist in isolation. So, everything that happens around us, everything that happens outside of the university, of any country, and in the world, is going to influence how our students learn. So you have to keep up with what's happening, and you have to hear different perspectives. And you have to understand that, you know, you might have certain beliefs that might not be the beliefs of your students.

P4 discussed working with other countries as global opportunities to learn:

It just gives me kind of like a global look on where other students are, and then where other teachers are with their curriculum. Usually, besides China, the countries are behind; however, the rigor might be there, but the content is just years behind us. But that's how I kind of stay abreast with everything. I just keep exposing myself to going to those different countries.

Traveling, observing, and interacting with educators from diverse countries enables faculty to experience opportunities observing culturally diverse educators engage students. As undergraduate education faculty members cultivate a global mindset, engaging culturally diverse students increases, because the faculty members embrace cultural intelligence, recognizing diverse perspectives.

### **Study Limitations**

The data from this qualitative case study indicated how education faculty members engage culturally diverse students and explored the professional development needs of faculty

members to engage culturally diverse students. However, this study included a few limitations. First, this study was limited to exploring the engagement of culturally diverse students from a university in the southeastern region of the United States, which was limiting, because the data from one geographic region may not apply to all higher education institutions. Second, only one institution of higher education participated in this study. The study's sample represented less than 1% of the 4,000 IHEs in the US (Duffin, 2019). Another limitation was that the global COVID-19 pandemic forcibly impacted the nature of the study's data collection, leading to a lower response rate. Many educators had to switch from face-to-face classes to online classes, which meant some faculty members had to have more training in areas, and participating in this study was not a top priority.

### **Implications for Future Practice**

Some higher education faculty members experience difficulty relating to and interacting with some students in the classroom because of cultural differences and some implicit discrimination (Edwards, 2009; Popovich et al., 2018). This qualitative case study's objectives were to explore how undergraduate education faculty engage culturally diverse students and discover the professional development needs of those faculty members to engage culturally diverse students. This study has given a meager exploration of how undergraduate education faculty members have engaged culturally diverse students; furthermore, this study discovered those faculty's professional development needs to engage culturally diverse students. Future practice implications include the various methods and materials the participants utilized, and their expressed professional development needs to engage culturally diverse students.

If education faculty members desire to engage culturally diverse students, the faculty members must build relationships with students to know the student personally, enabling the

student to feel open and welcomed in the classroom (Banks & Banks, 2020). One strategy that enhances culturally diverse student engagement is building a connection with the student (Kozleski & Handy, 2017; Layne & Lake, 2015). Cultural barriers hinder many students from interacting with others; therefore, a challenge to faculty members is to overcome the barriers and embrace the differences as part of the individual (Banks & Banks, 2020; Bennett, 2017; Livermore, 2015). Student-centeredness creates a bond between the teacher and student that is open and honest, then student engagement is positive and successful (Gay, 2013; Gist, 2017; Morong & DesBiens, 2016).

If education faculty members desire to engage culturally diverse students, the faculty members must utilize various materials and instructing methods (Banks & Banks, 2020; Layne & Lake, 2015). One of the various materials should be books written by culturally diverse authors, because these books will allow students to interact and relate to the concepts on a more intimate level and become more engaged (Banks & Banks, 2020; Layne & Lake, 2015; Morong & DesBiens, 2016). Another strategy should involve utilizing technology, whether computer, phone, or tablets, in the learning process, because technology is an instrument that today's students utilize daily; therefore, engagement will be increased (Ashwin, 2014; Banks & Banks, 2020). YouTube videos and movies are visual methods that will assist in engaging culturally diverse students, because statistics demonstrate that students utilize and relate more with current visual methods (Banks & Banks, 2020; Layne & Lake, 2015).

Higher education faculty members must participate in formal and informal professional development if faculty members want to increase culturally diverse student engagement (Banks & Banks, 2020; Han et al., 2014; Teräs, 2016). The whole purpose of professional development is to increase student engagement and student success; however, some faculty members think

professional development is a waste of time, energy, and funds (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017; Teräs, 2016). Administrators and professional developers have a challenging task to perform, because those stakeholders must find relevant professional development for their IHEs (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017; Banks & Banks, 2020; Teräs, 2016). The best practice for developers is to research demographic information in their geographical areas and then discover the most effective and interactive professional development that helps engage culturally diverse students; ACUE appears to be an excellent place to start in the southeastern region of the United States.

Informal professional development is more of a challenge, because it relies on the individual faculty member to embark on a journey to discover the most helpful instruction. Teräs (2016) and Adams (2013) stated that the best way to develop one's mind and methods is to self-evaluate and seek collaborations with colleagues, which means faculty members must cultivate a lifelong learner mindset. Cultivating a lifelong learner mindset begins with developing a curiosity and moving outside of one's comfort zone and old thinking processes (Adams, 2013). Having a global mindset for an education faculty member will take as much time as cultivating a lifelong learner mindset; however, when the faculty member embraces the global mindset, the faculty member will observe the walls of cultural barriers dissolve, and student engagement will increase (Banks & Banks, 2020; Bennett, 2017; Livermore, 2015).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The researcher's primary recommendation is the current study could continue, but in the absence of a global event, such as a pandemic, because replication would allow for a larger sample size and qualitative data without the external influence of an event, the global pandemic. Further research could also include repeating the study with an expanded population, to include education faculty members from other universities.

Additionally, in light of the qualitative results, empirical research could be conducted to test a professional development course written to address the education faculty members' needs for engaging culturally diverse students. Pre-course and post-course data could be gathered from the faculty members to assess the impact of the course on preparedness for working with culturally diverse students.

Overall, this study gave only a glimpse of what higher education faculty members struggle with when engaging culturally diverse student populations. Therefore, more research must be conducted to describe the essence of how faculty members engage culturally diverse student populations, preparing them for the cultural barriers with professional development.

### **Conclusion**

The ever-changing demographics of current universities display an increasing need for administrators and stakeholders of IHEs to help faculty members be equipped to engage the culturally diverse student populations (Banks & Banks, 2020; Barden, Shannonhouse, & Mobley, 2015; DeBettencourt, Hoover, Rude, & Taylor, 2016; Han et al., 2014; Kruse et al., 2017). This current qualitative case study established a need for higher education faculty members to be lifelong learners, be globally-minded, seek new professional development opportunities, and look for innovative teaching strategies to engage culturally diverse students. Each participant shared the importance of engaging all students in the lessons to understand the concepts and succeed in academics, and, hopefully in life. Undergraduate education faculty members must learn to engage culturally diverse students; therefore, those faculty members should leave bias and personal perspectives outside the classroom and allow a safe cultural learning environment to guide all aspects of teaching (Banks & Banks, 2020; Barden, Shannonhouse, & Mobley, 2015).

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## APPENDICES

## **Appendix A: Interview Guide**

### Purpose Statement

The purposes of this qualitative case study were to explore how undergraduate education faculty engage culturally diverse students and to discover the professional development needs of those faculty members to engage culturally diverse students.

### Research Questions

1. What cultural sensitivity classroom teaching strategies are IHE faculty members implementing?
2. What are the professional development needs of undergraduate IHE faculty members to engage culturally diverse students?

### Interview Questions

1. Tell me about the diversity of your students that you currently serve.
2. What are some teaching strategies for cultural sensitivity that you use to engage students?
3. If the culturally diverse student does not engage with your strategy, how do you differentiate your instruction?
4. If a faculty member struggles to engage diverse students, how would you assist or advise that member to be more effective?
5. What are some examples of professional learning that has enabled you to engage culturally diverse students?
6. What professional training areas would enhance your engagement of culturally diverse students?
7. What else would you like to contribute to this important study?

## Appendix B: Email Invite and Consent

Greetings, esteemed undergraduate education faculty. I thank you for taking a moment out of your day to consider being a valuable part of this research study for my dissertation. This qualitative study aims to explore teaching strategies of undergraduate education faculty members and discover the culturally sensitive professional development needs of those faculty members to engage culturally diverse students

This interview is designed to gather information for a research project conducted by Christina Luther for the purpose of her dissertation for the Doctor of Education program at Southeastern University (SEU). The principal investigator at SEU is Dr. Amy Bratten, SEU Associate Provost, and the methodologist is Dr. Janet Deck, Chair of the EdD program.

Participation in the interview is voluntary; therefore, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. The participants will not have any risks. Furthermore, the participants will receive no immediate compensation or benefits.

This interview should take only about 20-30 minutes of your time and serve to further explore higher education faculty members' cultural sensitivity strategies in the classroom and enhance cultural sensitivity professional development. The participants' names will be coded to maintain confidentiality. The interview will be recorded, transcribed, and sent back to the participant for verification before analysis.

If you choose to participate in the interview, please email me the times you are available. I work full-time from 7:30am until 3:30pm M-F CST, but I will strive to accommodate your schedules. Hopefully, you have time this week or next to complete the interview with me.

If you respond back with an interview time, this response certifies that you are over 18 years old and a faculty member who is consenting to participate.

If you have any questions related to this interview about participants' rights, please feel free to contact Mrs. Christina Luther at [crluther@seu.edu](mailto:crluther@seu.edu), Dr. Janet Deck at [jldeck@seu.edu](mailto:jldeck@seu.edu), or Dr. Amy Bratten at [anbratten@seu.edu](mailto:anbratten@seu.edu).

Thank you so much for your assistance in this important research project!

Sincerely,

Christina Luther,

EdD Candidate