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Cultivating Culturally Responsive Elementary Teachers in a Suburban Title I School

Dissertation

by

Angela L. Mack

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education in Teacher Leadership

Bagwell College of Education

Kennesaw State University

Dr. Raynice Jean-Sigur, Committee Chair

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Fall 2021

CULTIVATING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHERS

Abstract

Research suggests increased enrollment of students with diverse cultural, racial, linguistic, and social backgrounds will continue in schools across the United States over the coming years; thereby, imposing a challenge for some teachers with differing backgrounds to instruct culturally and linguistically diverse students. Without adequate professional development focused on culturally responsive teaching, it has been purported teachers will continue to adopt deficit perceptions and subpar practices that negatively impact students of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Thus, this study aimed to explore how a series of in-service professional development focused on culture, race, and pedagogy may influence teacher perceptions and practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students served in a suburban Title I elementary school. The study was also conducted to determine beneficial components of the professional development. A collective case study involving interviews, questionnaire surveys, and reflective journaling was conducted over a 6-week period to gain insight into eight teacher participants' perceptions and practices before, during, and after engaging in the professional development designed to promote transformation of their thoughts and actions through the processes of critical reflection and rational discourse. The study revealed how the reflective nature of the professional development fostered notable changes in the participants' perceptions and practices. The findings also yielded implications and recommendations for stakeholders – teachers, teacher leaders, school leaders, district leaders, teacher preparation programs, and policymakers – regarding the significance of prioritizing the learning needs of all students by maximizing opportunities for ongoing professional development intended to cultivate and sustain a culturally responsive teacher workforce.

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Keywords: culturally responsive teaching, cultural relevance, multicultural education, professional development, transformative learning, critical reflection, rational discourse, teacher leadership, teacher education, teacher preparation

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First and foremost, I must give praise and honor to God for guiding me through this season of my life and placing the right people in my path. As a teacher leader, I have been given a divine assignment to advocate for equity in education, and I have been blessed with the genuine support of family, friends, faculty, and colleagues to ensure my purpose is fulfilled. With that, I would like to express sincere gratitude and appreciation for all who have encouraged and supported me throughout this doctoral journey.

To my loving husband, Jermaine, thank you for understanding my desire to fulfill this calling and encouraging me with your positive words and actions. Although this work was time-consuming and daunting, you never deterred me, and you refused to let anything, or anyone stop me from achieving my dream. Our sons are lucky to have a father like you as their role model. To my amazing sons, Donovan and Cameron, thank you for extending grace to me as I attempted to balance the demands of being your mom while pursuing my personal and professional goals. Through this experience, I hope I have modeled for you how to follow your dreams and how to advocate for what you believe is good and just. To my amazing brother, aunts, uncles, and cousins thank you for keeping me grounded in our family's values throughout this process by reminding me of what matters to us – faith, family, love, laughter, and excellence. To all my family and friends, thank you for not allowing me to give up whenever an inkling of doubt emerged in my mind. Your words of encouragement carried me through this process.

To my brilliant dissertation committee, Drs. Raynice Jean-Sigur, Lateefah Id-Deen, and Camille Sutton-Brown, words cannot express the gratitude I have for each of you. I greatly appreciate your willingness to offer your expertise and guidance throughout this doctoral journey. Thank you for believing in me and challenging me to think broadly about the relevance

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and possible impact of this work. Your words of wisdom and support will be cherished forever. I would like to extend an exclusive expression of appreciation to Dr. Jean-Sigur, my dissertation committee chair, for keeping me focused on my goal when life, fear, and doubt tried to interfere. Your calming spirit and passion for this work provided the assurance I needed to confirm this journey was ordained for a purpose during this season with the support of the abovementioned committee of pure excellence.

To my supportive colleagues who either participated in this study or offered words of encouragement at any point of this journey, I am forever grateful. May your contributions to this project or the actions you plan to take from this point forward promote equity and a sense of hope for culturally and linguistically diverse students served in schools across the nation.

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Dedications

“Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

(King James Online Version, 2020, Proverbs 22:6)

This work is dedicated to my loving and supportive parents and grandparents who have trained me to remain faithful and steadfast in pursuit of attaining my goals and fulfilling my destiny. Throughout my childhood and beyond, each of them has prepared me to take on my divine quest for equity in education as presented in this manuscript by sharing their stories of turning struggles into triumphs, extending kindness to others, and trusting the power of prayer. Fortunately, I have not departed from my family’s teachings as I have remained mindful of others and prayerful throughout this process in the hope of igniting the change needed to turn marginalized students’ struggles into triumphs by promoting fair and equitable learning opportunities for all.

Although some of whom this work is dedicated to have transitioned from this Earthly realm, each has watched over me throughout this journey, and each is responsible for the unwavering dedication and passion I have poured into completing this dissertation. Thus, I proudly dedicate this work to:

The late Joyce McCrary, mother

The late Charles Moore, father

Eddie McCrary, stepfather

Louise Garrett, grandmother

The late James Garrett, grandfather

The late Anita Carter, grandmother

Nathaniel Carter, grandfather

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Personal Vignette

As a young Black child growing up in the 1980s, all of my social settings – school, church, and neighborhood – were filled with people with whom I shared racial experiences and cultural backgrounds. The student population of my elementary school was comprised of 99% Black, lower-class children from Southern-rooted homes, yet the majority of the teachers were White, middle-class women. I recall encountering my first Black teacher when I entered fifth grade. Fortunately, I enjoyed learning and earned the acceptance of many of my teachers prior to and after this encounter by being a well-mannered, high achiever. However, some of my classmates did not have the same experience as quite a few appeared to be "defiant" or to "struggle" with assignments which in hindsight may have been provoked by our teachers' lack of cultural responsiveness. Unfortunately, some of my schoolmates' struggles seemed to continue as we progressed through middle and high school. Incidences of unfair and inequitable school experiences for students of color, including me, continued to manifest throughout my matriculation of the K-12 public school system within my small city in a southern state. It was not until I encountered two advocates in high school who sought to change the narrative for students who looked like me – my counselor, a Black female, and my history teacher, a Black male. Both were what I now call transformative leaders as they provided relevant programs, experiences, and opportunities designed to promote self-worth and lifelong success for all students, especially students of color.

My experiences as a K-12 student in the South along with my 20-year experience as an educator in Southern schools with Title I programs have contributed to my awareness of the need for and influence of culturally responsive teachers in public school classrooms, particularly in

suburban schools with large populations of culturally and linguistically diverse students. In the Title I schools in which I have served, I have noticed how marginalized groups of students, specifically Black and Latinx students, encounter disenfranchising struggles similar to what I lived and witnessed as a young Black student in the South. It appears as though some of the challenges of teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students continue to exist in schools with large numbers of minority students being served by teachers of differing races or cultures. The continuation of such may be related to internal or external factors influencing teachers' perceptions and practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students' academic mindsets as well as the lack of professional development opportunities designed to develop culturally responsive teachers.

Statement of the Problem

According to Gay and Howard (2000) and Howard (2003), the United States endures the largest influx of immigrants and number of U.S. born ethnic minorities than any other country; thereby, causing a rapidly growing cultural-knowledge gap between teachers and students often referred to as the *demographic divide*. As of 2017, nearly 80% of public school teachers in the United States were identified as White, whereas approximately 60% of public school students were identified by other race categories – Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, or Multiracial (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Nearly 30% of the total number of school-age students spoke a language other than English at home while the majority of the teachers in the United States were classified as White, monolingual, middle-class females (Mellom et al., 2018). Moreover, diverse populations have steadily increased in suburban schools over the past few decades along with the proportion of low-income students in suburban areas (Children's Defense Fund, 2010 as cited by Holme et al.,

2014). The steady increase in the enrollment of diverse students in public schools across the nation has been noted to pose critical implications for education as racial, cultural, and social incongruences between students and teachers have been linked to the achievement gap between students of color and students of the dominant race (Gay et al., 2000; Howard, 2003).

At the time of this study, the demographics of my school district, a suburban school district located in a southeastern state in which this study was situated, closely reflected the aforementioned racial demographic divide and cultural incongruence between teachers and students across the nation. Nearly 73% of the teachers within my district were White, whereas approximately 65% of the students were of non-Eurocentric, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2020). Thus, most teachers within my district, and school, were serving students with cultural, ethnic, linguistic, racial, and social experiences that differed from their own (Howard, 2003). Yet, opportunities for culturally responsive professional development appeared to be limited.

It can be assumed teacher practices and student learning in schools with Title I programs across the district, including my “own backyard”, are often most affected by the limited opportunities for in-service teacher development. Within my district, schools with Title I programs most often served a vast population of Black and Latinx students – those who will be identified as *culturally and linguistically diverse students* for the purpose of this study. In addition to serving a high percentage of culturally and linguistically diverse students, Title I schools often serve a substantially large percentage of socioeconomically disadvantaged students (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). For some teachers, this places them in a challenging position as they are expected to teach a group of students of which they are unable to relate regarding cultural, racial, or socioeconomic backgrounds (Gay & Howard,

2000). However, Howard and Rodriguez-Minkoff (2017) assert the lack of cultural congruence between students and teachers is not located merely within a White teacher-student of color framework as teachers of color can also subscribe to the problematic depictions and deficit beliefs of student culture suggested to negatively impact student achievement. Thus, all teachers may benefit from professional development designed to cultivate culturally responsive practices.

Scholars argue most teacher preparation programs produce teachers who are unprepared to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students due to a lack of engagement in reflective conversations and real-world praxis related to the intersection of race, culture, and pedagogy (Gay et al., 2000; Gordon et al., 2020; Griffin et al., 2016; Milner, 2003; Siwatu et al., 2011). Many in-service teachers have not only been deprived of culturally responsive pre-service teacher development, but also limited in their options for culturally responsive ongoing, job-embedded professional development opportunities (Hammond, 2015). Pre-service and in-service teachers alike have been known for simplifying culturally responsive pedagogy to convey specific actions associated with multicultural education or behavior management strategies rather than pedagogical practices designed to foster equitable learning opportunities for all learners, especially culturally and linguistically diverse students. Hence, I found it fair to assume the possible deficiencies existing amongst in-service teachers within my school and district regarding their understanding and application of culturally responsive practices. As purported by Gay et al. (2000), "without comprehensive training, teachers will continue to be threatened by cultural diversity and unsure about their abilities to effectively teach ethnically diverse students" (p. 16).

Rationale for the Study

Over the past couple of decades, studies of culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching have focused solely on schools in urban communities (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Gay et al., 2000; Howard et al., 2017). However, researchers indicate the need for expanding the exploration of culturally responsive teaching and professional development in rural and suburban school districts (Pledger, 2018). As related to this study, suburban school districts have been viewed by some as a promising setting in which students of color do well as the schools are better resourced and wealthier than urban and rural school districts; hence, the increase in the number of diverse families moving into suburban areas over the past few decades (Dixson et al., 2017; Warren-Grice, 2017). However, individuals fail to acknowledge how the demographic divide between teachers and students still exists in suburban school districts (Warren-Grice, 2017). Although diverse populations may be on the rise in suburban communities, the percentage of culturally responsive teachers in suburban schools remains relatively low (Warren-Grice, 2017). Without a sustainable professional development plan designed to cultivate culturally responsive teachers in suburban schools experiencing an increase in the number of diverse students, the same inequitable outcomes plaguing urban school districts will continue to persist for culturally and linguistically diverse students in suburban school districts across the nation (Warren-Grice, 2017).

Due to the steady influx of culturally and linguistically diverse students in suburban schools across the United States, including the school selected for this study, I have deemed this study as relevant to the field of education and the context of the research site. I believe my study presents implications regarding knowledge, practice, and policy that is worthy and relevant to school leaders and teachers serving culturally and linguistically diverse students, especially in

suburban schools with Title I programs in which the demographic divide and cultural incongruence between teachers and students are prevalent.

Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

The conceptual framework of this study is based on the tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy. Although various scholars have contributed to the continuous development of culturally responsive pedagogy over the past few decades, the concept remains rooted in social justice as it promotes equity in education through the application of practices deemed beneficial for all learners, specifically students of color.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Building on the notions of culturally relevant pedagogy coined by Gloria-Ladson Billings (1995) and the concept of culturally responsive teaching introduced by Geneva Gay (2000), Zaretta Hammond (2015) describes culturally responsive teaching as:

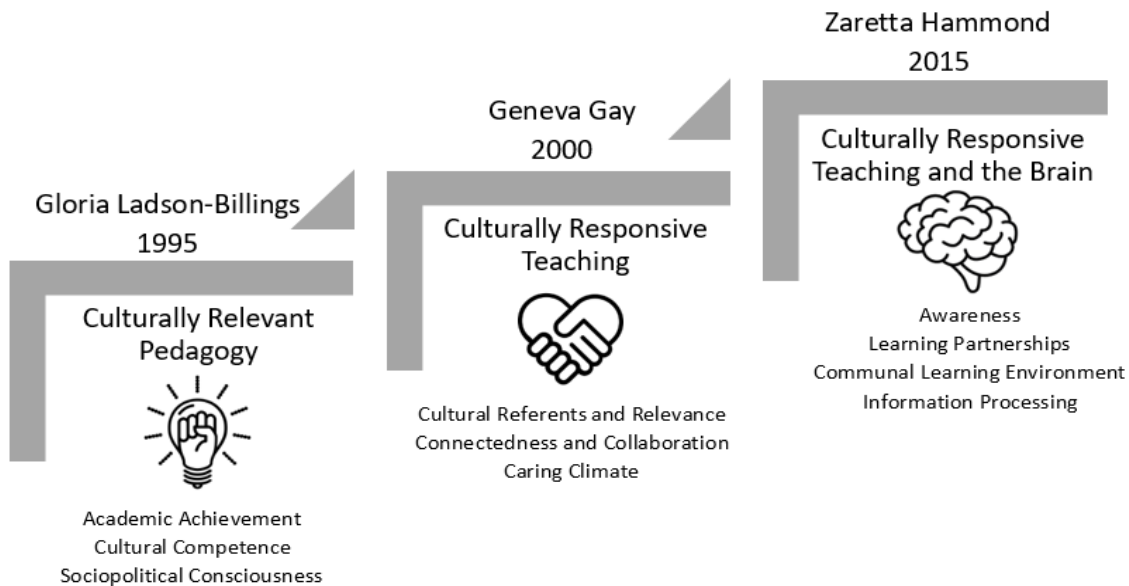
the ability to recognize students' cultural displays of learning and meaning-making and appropriately implement teaching moves that use cultural knowledge to connect what the student knows to new concepts and content to promote effective information processing. All the while, the educator understands the importance of being in a relationship and having a social-emotional connection to the student to create a safe space for learning (p. 15).

As illustrated in Figure 1, Hammond's (2015) concept of culturally responsive pedagogy acknowledges the relevance of empowering students by engaging them in tasks designed to increase academic achievement, cultural competence, and critical or sociopolitical consciousness as aligned to Ladson-Billings' (1995) tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy, while continuing to build on Gay's (2000) notions of culturally responsive teaching that focuses on recognizing the

need for developing cultural knowledge and using cultural referents to teach the whole child and maintain a genuinely connected and collaborative community of learners. Hammond (2015) extends the foundational work of Ladson-Billings and Gay by intertwining neuroscience with culturally responsive pedagogy to emphasize how one’s culture programs the brain; thereby, influencing teachers’ ways of thinking and doing and students’ ways of responding to and engaging in the learning experience. In general, Hammond (2015) purports culturally responsive teaching involves the application of “pedagogical approaches firmly rooted in learning theory and cognitive science” (p. 16). Scholars further purport culturally responsive pedagogues develop cultural competence by acknowledging their own culture and associated biases for the purpose of understanding and appropriately using students’ cultures to create caring and empowering spaces for learning to occur (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2000; Hammond, 2015).

Figure 1

Model of Conceptual Framework



For this study, Hammond's (2015) culturally responsive teaching framework, *Ready for Rigor* (see Appendix A), was used to guide the structure and content of the culturally responsive professional development that was offered to teachers. The quadrants of the framework draw teachers' attention to fostering equitable learning experiences for culturally and linguistically diverse students by acknowledging the relevance in developing cultural awareness, learning partnerships, information processing, and communal learning. Moreover, Hammond's (2015) framework emphasizes the use of culturally appropriate instructional moves to stimulate information processing rather than compliance and develop independent learners rather than learned helplessness amongst culturally and linguistically diverse groups of students who are often marginalized and subjected to subpar educational experiences. By using Hammond's (2015) model of culturally responsive pedagogy to guide this study, it was desired to promote teachers' acceptance of structures designed to respect and appreciate culturally and linguistically diverse students' cultural socializations and funds of knowledge as doing so may diminish the existing deficit syndrome and blame the victim mentality of some teachers and close the perceived achievement gaps between White-students and non-White students (Gay, 2018).

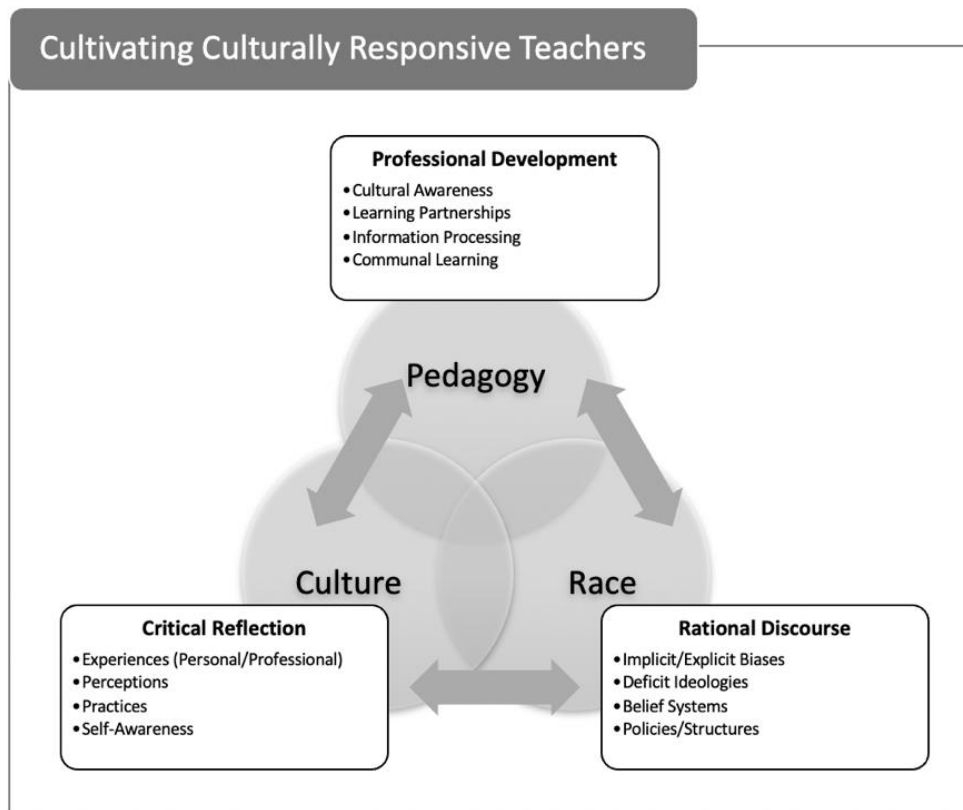
The Intersection of Race, Culture, and Pedagogy

As a critical theorist, promoting equity in education required a critique of teacher perceptions and practices that may be influenced by historical and structural conditions of oppression (Glesne, 2016). Moreover, researchers suggest pedagogical practices should be explored with regard to having a clear understanding of the difference between race and culture (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015; Milner, 2017). Hence, as illustrated in Figure 2, the professional development designed for this study involved critical reflection and rational discourse that

revolve around the intersection of race, culture, and pedagogy and how each contributes to the cultivation of culturally responsive teachers.

Figure 2

Framework for Cultivating Culturally Responsive Teachers



Race. Culture, ethnicity, and race are often used interchangeably and misconstrued to have the same meaning (Milner, 2003, 2017). It is vital to understand that although race is considered a central dimension of culture, race and culture are different constructs. Milner (2017) contends race is constructed (a) physically based on skin pigmentation, (b) socially based on how people identify and categorize themselves and others, (c) legally based on laws determining racial identity and consequences (i.e., the "one-drop rule" from *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896), and (d) historically based on how people have been treated and fared in society. While

there may be shared experiences amongst a race of people, there may also exist an array of cultural differences.

Culture. As cited by Geneva Gay (2018), an instrumental scholar in culturally responsive pedagogy arena, “*culture* refers to the dynamic system of deeply rooted social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, languages, worldviews, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to our own lives as well as the lives of others” (p. 8). Culture influences how we think, believe, behave, teach, and learn (Hammond, 2015; Milner, 2017). Thus, Howard et al. (2017) suggest culture should be examined as the core of students’ socialization and ways of knowing; thereby considered a fundamental aspect of the learning process.

Pedagogy. As described by Ladson-Billings (2009), *pedagogy* is a concept that draws attention to the processes through which knowledge is produced and is referred to as the art or science of teaching. Moreover, Ladson-Billings (2009) purports:

Pedagogy refers to the deliberate attempt to influence how and what knowledge and identities are produced within and among particular sets of social relationships...When one practices pedagogy, one acts with the intent of creating learning experiences that will organize and disorganize a variety of understanding of our natural and social world in particular ways. (p. 15)

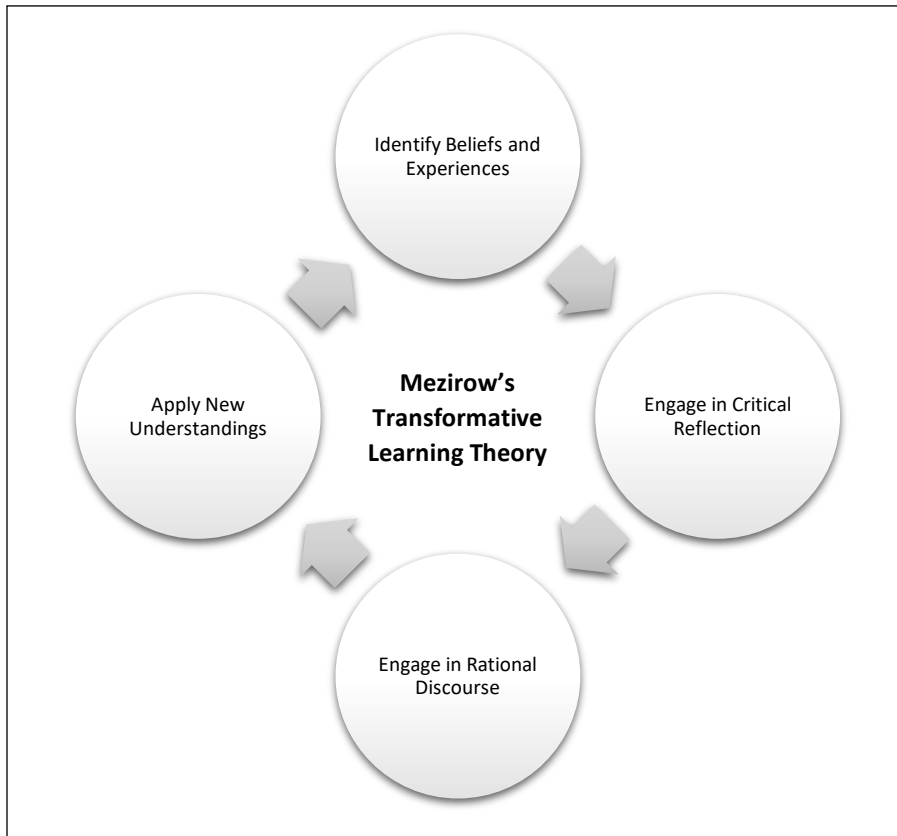
Thus, pedagogy refers to teaching practices that are implemented to assist individuals with processing and making sense of information for the purpose of learning and appropriately applying new understandings.

According to Gay (2018), many teachers are unaware of how "teaching is most effective when ecological factors, such as cultural backgrounds, prior experiences, community settings, and ethnic identities of teachers and students are included in the implementation" (Gay, 2018, p.

28). When teachers fail to acknowledge the intersection of race, culture, and pedagogy, deficit ideologies and unjust educational structures form and invade culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms.

Transformative Learning Theory

As aligned to Jack Mezirow's (1994) transformative learning theory, critical reflection, and rational discourse may be essential to developing teachers' understanding of the relationship between culture, race, and pedagogy and changing their ways of thinking and doing in diverse classrooms. Thus, Mezirow's (1994, 1997) transformative learning theory was applied to this study of cultivating culturally responsive teachers as it places theoretical attention on changing habits of the mind by engaging in critical reflection and rational discourse. According to Mezirow (1997), "transformative learning involves sociolinguistic perspectives that result in adult learners motivated to take collective social action to change social practices, institutions, or systems" (p. 226). Through critical reflection and rational discourse, adult learners engage in a process of learning to make meaning of notions that challenge habits of the mind and points of view (Mezirow, 1994, 1997). Mezirow (1994) contends adults transform their mindsets by (a) identifying and examining their beliefs and experiences through the process of reflection, (b) using critical reflection strategies either individually or with peers to assess their incorporation of new, and different innovations, (c) engaging in reflective and rational discourse that leads to a transformation of perceptions and practices, and (d) acting by implementing what they have learned through reflective processes (see Figure 3).

Figure 3*Model of Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory***Summary of the Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to investigate how, if at all, do teacher perceptions and practices regarding the academic mindsets of culturally and linguistically diverse students in suburban schools with Title I programs change after participating in culturally responsive professional development designed by in-house instructional coaches. I also sought to identify the most beneficial and least beneficial components of the professional learning sessions with the anticipated intent of using data gleaned from the study to present the possible value in and need for implementing a professional learning plan focused on developing culturally responsive teachers in suburban schools with Title I programs.

The structure of the culturally responsive professional development planned for the study was intended to enhance the teacher participants' perceptions and practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students and ultimately improve teaching and learning experiences for them and their students. I believed the participants would not only develop a better understanding of self through critical reflection, but they would also construct newfound knowledge and understandings needed to foster genuine relationships and culturally responsive practices to ensure equitable learning experiences for all students, especially their culturally and linguistically diverse students.

As the researcher, I desired to gain insight from the teacher participants' truths to confirm, deny, or develop my assumptions about how professional development and other factors may influence teacher perceptions and practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students. I hoped to obtain knowledge and understandings from the study that could be shared with other teacher leaders, school leaders, and district leaders for the purpose of devising a beneficial culturally responsive professional development plan for teachers within my school, district, and beyond. Moreover, I believed there would exist power within the findings to promote a change in policy regarding in-service teacher development focused on cultivating the cultural responsiveness suggested to increase engagement and achievement of culturally and linguistically diverse students in schools of the 21st century and beyond.

This dissertation includes a review of the literature regarding educational structures impacting marginalized students, teacher preparedness, culturally responsive pedagogy, and transformative learning theory; a detailed description of the professional development plan that was designed and implemented for this study along with the adult learning components selected to engage the teacher participants in transformative reflection and discourse; an

explanation of the qualitative methods used to collect and analyze the data retrieved from the participants; a richly descriptive explanation of the findings from the research; and a thorough discussion of the study's strengths, limitations, and implications.

Pertinent Terms

The following list provides definitions of the key terms used throughout the study:

Black: A socially constructed category used to describe a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021a)

Culture: A deeply rooted system of social values, worldviews, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, traditions, and beliefs shared by a group of people (Gay, 2015).

Three levels of culture will be defined and discussed in this manuscript: surface, shallow, and deep.

Culturally and linguistically diverse students: This phrase will be used to describe Black and Latinx students in public elementary schools.

Culturally Responsive Teaching: The application of pedagogical practices centered around the affective and cognitive aspects of teaching and learning and focused on improving the learning capacity of diverse students who have been marginalized educationally (Hammond, 2015).

Deficit Thinking: Perceiving students' lack of success in school is caused by their deficiencies, lack of motivation, or family's lack of value for education rather than inequitable or unjust educational systems, policies, and practices (Hammond, 2015).

Ethnic: Relating to groups of people identified or classed according to common racial, cultural, linguistic, tribal, or religious origin or background (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Eurocentric: Reflecting a tendency to interpret the world in terms of European or Anglo-American values and experiences (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Hispanic: A socially constructed category to describe a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race (National Center of Education Statistics, 2021a). Often used interchangeably with the term Latino/Latina/Latinx. However, most individuals view Hispanic as being of European descent whereas the terms Latino, Latina, and Latinx are often associated with indigenous people.

Latino/Latina/Latinx: A socially constructed category to describe a person [men, women, or gender-neutral individuals] of Latin-American culture or origin whose language is not necessarily Spanish (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Often used interchangeably with the term Hispanic. However, most individuals view Hispanic as being of European descent whereas the terms Latino, Latina, and Latinx are often associated with indigenous people.

Multiracial: A socially constructed category to describe a person being of two or more races or having parents or ancestors of different races. Often used interchangeably with the term biracial.

Non-White/Other Races: Socially constructed race/ethnicity categories used to identify individuals who are not of European origin and identify as Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, Biracial, or Multiracial.

Pedagogy: The art or science of teaching; the process through which knowledge is produced (Ladson- Billings, 2009).

Perception: A way of regarding, understanding, or interpreting something or someone.

Practice: The application of teaching or pedagogical concepts, ideas, or methods.

Race: A socially constructed category used to identify and categorize a group of people.

Race is constructed (a) physically based on skin pigmentation, (b) socially based on how people identify and categorize themselves and others, (c) legally based on laws determining racial identity and consequences (i.e., "one-drop rule" from Plessy versus Ferguson, 1896), and (d) historically based on how people have been treated and fared in society (Milner, 2017).

Suburban School: A school located in a territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with a population of 100,000 or more (National Center of Education Statistics, 2021b).

Title I Program: A federal program that provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to ensure that all children meet challenging academic standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

Title I School: A public school that serves a significant percentage of students from low-income families and receives federal funds to support teaching and learning initiatives.

Tourist Approach: Viewing or teaching about diversity mainly through surface-level understandings of culture such as cultural holidays or events.

Urban School: A school located in a territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with a population of 100,000 or more (National Center of Education Statistics, 2021b).

Warm Demander: A culturally responsive teacher who communicates personal warmth towards students while at the same time demanding they work towards high standards. A

teacher who extends push and care while offering concrete guidance and support in culturally responsive ways (Hammond, 2015). See Appendix B to review a chart detailing the Warm Demander characteristics along with a bulleted list of descriptors for other types of teaching styles mentioned in this study.

White: A socially constructed category use to describe a person having origins in any of the original people of Europe or the Middle East (National Center for Education Statistic, 2021a).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The scholarship retrieved for this literature review was obtained from digital databases to develop a deeper understanding of the research related to culturally responsive pedagogy, transformative learning theory, and teacher development; specifically, as related to teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. The literature review presented in this chapter encompasses five points of discussion. First, the literature review begins with a historical overview of the inequities in education and systems of oppression regarding marginalized students. Next, it unpacks the evolution of culturally responsive pedagogy. Third, a critique of teacher preparation programs and in-service teacher development as related to teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students is provided. Then a detailed explanation of the transformative learning theory along with evidence of how the theory aligns with the study is discussed. Lastly, the literature review delves into how the theoretical framework of this study connects to constructing and facilitating transformative professional development to cultivate culturally responsive teachers.

Educational Inequity and Oppression of Marginalized Students

In 1954, the historic outcome of the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* case ignited the process of school integration and changed the teaching and learning experiences of students and teachers across the United States. As a result of school integration, institutions for students of color were dismantled, thousands of Black educators were terminated, and the existing Eurocentric approach to curriculum and instruction was normalized (Warren-Grice, 2017). According to Dixson and Ladson-Billings (2017), the *Brown v. Board* decision amplified the shortcomings of the "one size fits all" approach to curriculum and pedagogy that ignore the steadily increasing cultural differences amongst students and teachers across the United States.

Contrary to the alleged intentions of school integration, students of color have and continue to experience overt and covert forms of marginalization in schools; thereby creating experiences that are detrimental to their social, emotional, and intellectual development (Dixson & Ladson-Billings, 2017; Warren-Grice, 2017).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2020), Black and Latinx students constitute the largest ethnic minority groups in U.S. public schools. Yet, over the years, as compared to White students, they have been underperforming academically, dropping out of school at larger rates, and overrepresented in special needs categories (Howard, 2003; Howard, et al., 2017). Researchers argue the growing achievement gaps and “deficiencies” of culturally and linguistically diverse students exist as a result of other gaps (i.e., teacher quality gap, teacher training gap, school integration gap, opportunity gap, etc.) that are coercing teachers into negatively perceiving the abilities of students of color (Howard, et al., 2017). Likewise, Hammond (2015) contends many children start school with small learning gaps, but as they progress through school, the gap between Black and Latinx students and White students grows due to some teachers frequent acts of (a) underestimating the intellect of Black and Latinx students, (b) postponing or withholding challenging tasks by only focusing on “the basics”, and (c) depriving marginalized groups of students of relevant learning experiences that stimulate critical thinking and build intellectual capacity. Researchers purport Black and Latinx students do not perform lower than White students because of race, language, or poverty, but rather from the deficit ideologies and practices of teachers who lack cultural responsiveness (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015, Ladson-Billings, 1995a).

Teachers’ skewed perceptions of culturally and linguistically diverse students often led to subpar expectations regarding what students can and cannot do rather than reflecting on ways

teachers can change the narrative (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015; Mellom et al., 2018; Milner, 2017; Young, 2010). This *deficit syndrome* as described by Gay (2018) results in a blaming the victim mindset that provides the basis for policymakers and school leaders' attempt to remedy the achievement gaps by implementing one reform after another rather than offering opportunities to educate and transform teachers' practices and understanding of the relationship between culture and pedagogy.

As noted by Howard and Rodriguez-Minkoff (2017), “teacher ideology centered on terms such as privilege, cultural hegemony, White supremacy, and systematic ideologies that permeate media, politics, policy, and law...easily contribute to implicit bias and the replication of practices which continue to negate the cultural strengths students possess” (p. 25). Gay (2018) purports, “deficit ideologies, coupled with the unfamiliarity of people different from us, often breed negative attitudes, anxiety, fears, and the seductive temptation to turn children into images of ourselves” (p. 30). For instance, in a study to examine teachers’ attitudes towards English Language Learners, Mellom, Straubhaar, Balderas, Ariail, and Portes (2018) contend teachers' beliefs about culturally and linguistically diverse students negatively (a) affect teachers' expectations of students and themselves; (b) influence teacher actions or the way they conduct themselves in the classroom; and (c) impact student behavior and achievement. Similarly, Kohl (1994, as cited by Howard et al., 2017) suggests students deliberately choose to disengage in learning from teachers who do not recognize their uniqueness as learners or respect their ways of knowing and communicating along with their need to be humanized in the classroom. Consequently, students of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds suffer the most from the educational inequities associated with the negative perceptions of teachers (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015; Mellom et al, 2018).

To transform teachers' deficit ideologies and promote equitable learning opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse students, Howard (2003) posits the need for "reconceptualizing teacher practices and [perceptions] in a manner that recognizes and respects the intricacies of cultural and racial differences" (p. 19). Likewise, scholars advocate the implementation of frameworks and practices such as culturally responsive pedagogy to foster equitable and meaningful schooling experiences for all students, specifically students of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015, Ladson-Billings, 1995a). According to Seriki and Brown (2017), a vast amount of empirical research has been conducted to identify the tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy and examine the perceptions and practices of culturally responsive teachers. Inquiries of this kind often reveal many teachers possess limited understandings of the notions, struggle to turn theory into practice, or minimize culturally responsive teaching to a set of fixed actions for managing student behaviors. Hammond (2015) purports culturally responsive pedagogy extends beyond a set way of doing as it focuses on ways of being, therefore requiring a transformative shift in thinking.

Evolution of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Grounded in the notions of multicultural education introduced in the 1970s along with the approach to culturally compatible instruction adopted in the 1980s, culturally relevant pedagogy was presented in the 1990s by Gloria Ladson-Billings (Howard et al., 2017). Culturally relevant pedagogy was proposed by Ladson-Billings (1995a; 1995b; 2009) as a way to engage learners whose experiences and cultures are traditionally excluded from mainstream settings by focusing on yielding academic success, developing students' cultural identity, and promoting social justice. Building on the work of Ladson-Billings, Geneva Gay (2018) introduced a pedagogical

framework with a stronger focus on engaging marginalized groups of students through the implementation of instructional practices that focused on using cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles to make learning experiences more relevant. Zaretta Hammond (2015) extends the work of Ladson-Billings and Gay by describing how culture programs the brain, thereby influencing teaching and learning as related to culturally and linguistically diverse students. While the notions of Ladson-Billings, Gay, and Hammond are not identical, each emphasizes "the marriage of culture and pedagogy as a more suitable means to provide students of color with equitable opportunities for success in the classroom" (Howard et al, 2017, p. 5).

Culturally Relevant versus Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Although researchers have tried to make a clear distinction between the terms *culturally relevant* and *culturally responsive*, an examination of the terms reveals minimal differences in the scope, definition, aims, and purpose of each (Howard et al., 2017; Young, 2010). "Both recognize the salience of student culture, contend that the affirmation of students' identities is important, and advocate for student achievement to occur without compromising cultural integrity" (Howard et al., 2017, p. 7). Accordingly, culturally responsive teachers ground their practices on the tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015). They recognize the rich, complex, and robust set of cultural practices, experiences, and knowledge – the unique essentials for learning and understanding – that are possessed by culturally and linguistically diverse students (Hammond, 2015). Culturally responsive teachers use such awareness to teach to and through the personal and cultural strengths, intellectual capabilities, and prior accomplishments of all learners, specifically culturally and linguistically diverse students (Gay, 2018; Howard et al., 2017). Both, culturally relevant and culturally responsive

pedagogues focus on the collective empowerment of students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart relevant skills, attitudes, and knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2009; Hammond, 2015; Young, 2010). Although each framework defies deficit-oriented teaching methods, they have distinct differences (Muniz, 2019).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995a) defines culturally relevant teaching as a pedagogy of opposition that is committed to collective empowerment of a marginalized group of students, specifically Black students. After six years of studying successful teachers of Black students, Ladson-Billings (1995a, 1995b, 2009) grounded the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy on three tenets: (a) academic achievement, (b) cultural competence, and (c) critical/sociopolitical consciousness. *Academic achievement* refers to student success and engagement in the learning experiences which is dependent upon the teachers' capacity to make learning relevant, set high and equitable expectations for all students, and express belief in each students' ability to succeed (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 2009; Milner, 2017; Warren-Grice, 2017). *Cultural competence* refers to connecting students' culture to the educational content while cultivating their understandings of other cultural systems (Ladson-Billings, 1995a; 2009; Milner, 2017; Warren-Grice, 2017). Ladson-Billings (1995a) refers to this concept as maintaining students' cultural integrity. To accomplish the aforementioned, teachers must be able to move beyond mainstream notions of culture by developing a deep understanding of self and others (Warren-Grice, 2017). In addition to academic success and cultural competence, culturally relevant teachers tend to foster students' development of *sociopolitical consciousness* – the ability to think critically about inequities, self-

dignity, and transformative actions (Ladson-Billings, 1995a; 2009; Milner, 2017; Warren-Grice, 2017).

Ladson-Billings (1995a, 1995b, 2009) posits culturally responsive teachers possess positive perspectives regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students that are rooted in the conception of self and others, social relations, and knowledge. They understand the importance of maintaining students' cultural integrity, establishing learning partnerships, providing communal learning experiences, and sharing the construction of knowledge (Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Thereby, students are encouraged to accept and affirm their cultural identities while developing critical perspectives needed to challenge inequities perpetuated in schools and other institutions of society (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2009; Young, 2010). The overall goal of culturally relevant pedagogy is to empower students not only intellectually, but also socially, emotionally, and politically (Muniz, 2019).

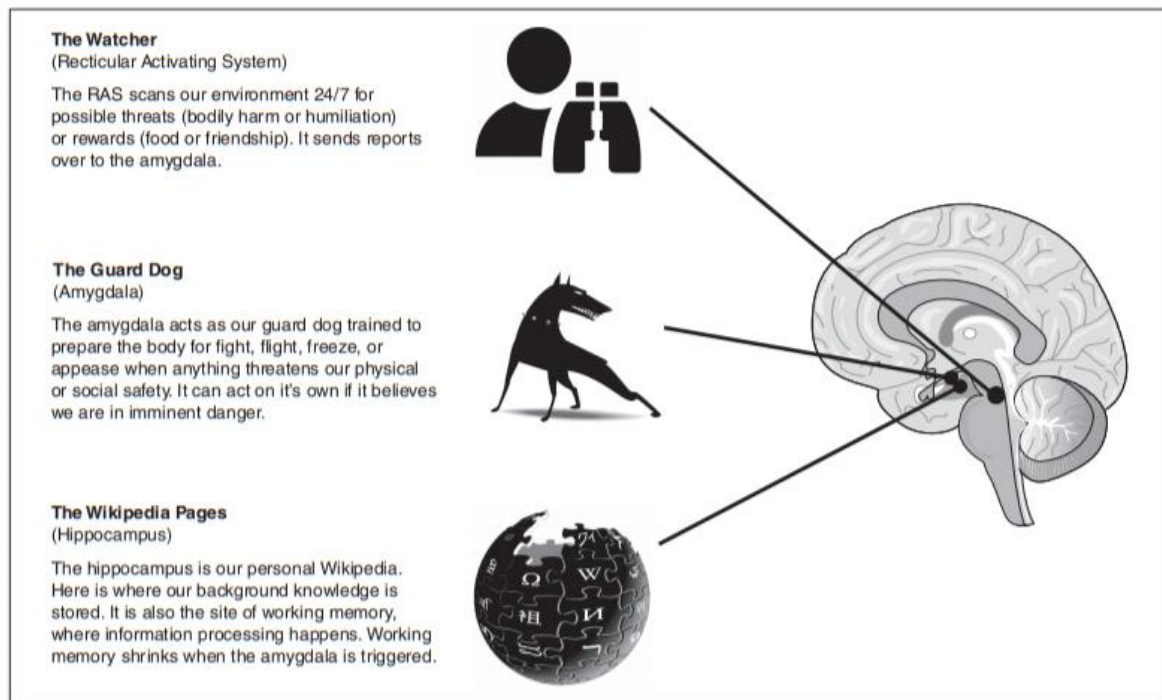
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Building on the work of Ladson-Billings, Geneva Gay (2018) coined the notion of culturally responsive teaching as a pedagogical practice that involves the use of cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of references, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them. Gay (2018) purports implementing culturally responsive teaching requires teachers to transform their instructional techniques, instructional materials, student-teacher relationships, classroom climate, and self-awareness to improve learning for all students. Moreover, Gay (2018) suggests “culturally responsive pedagogy validates, facilitates, liberates, and empowers ethnically diverse students by simultaneously cultivating their cultural integrity, individual abilities, and academic success” (p. 53).

To further expand the work of Gay, Zaretta Hammond (2015) introduced the relationship between neuroscience, culture, teaching, and learning in her book titled *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*. In addition to solidifying the relevance of cultural awareness, learning partnerships, and safe learning environments, Hammond (2015) explains how culture programs the brain and influences information processing (see Figure 4). Not only does the culturally informed functioning of the brain impact students' ability to engage in information processing and learning, but it also affects how teachers engage in reflective adult learning tasks designed to acknowledge implicit biases, name microaggressions, and develop the cultural responsiveness needed to effectively teach ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse students.

Figure 4.

Illustration of the Three Critical Limbic Brain Functions



From *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Amongst Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students* (p. 39), by Z. Hammond, 2015, Corwin, Copyrighted 2015 by Corwin. Reprinted with permission (see Appendix C).

Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain Rules

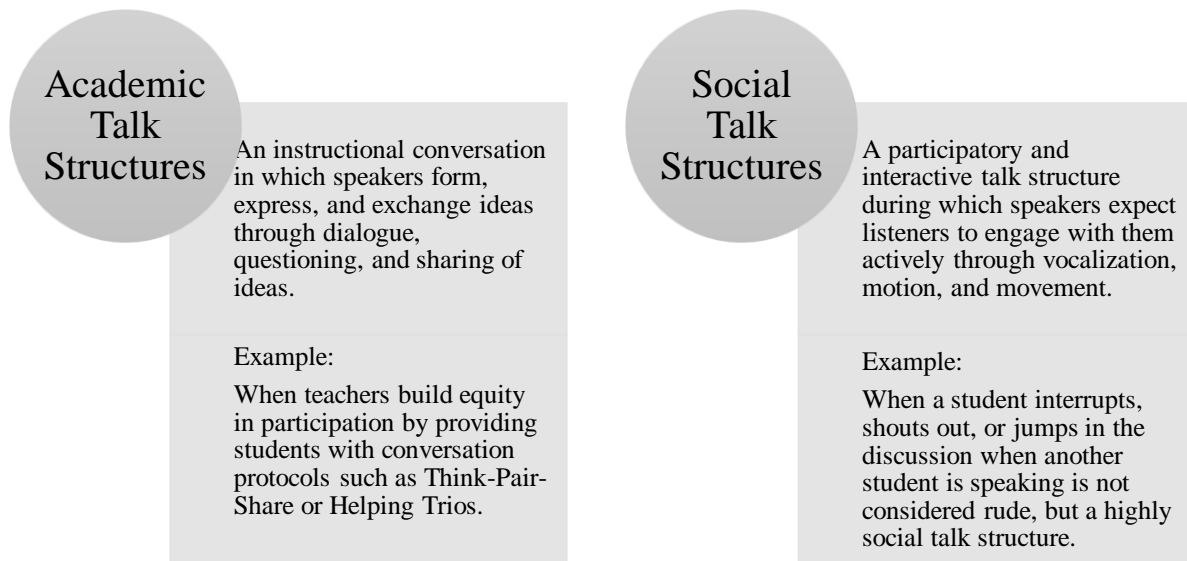
To foster connectedness and positive learning experiences in a culturally and linguistically diverse classroom, Hammond (2015) emphasizes the importance of understanding how the brain uses culture to interpret social threats and seek opportunities to connect and thrive amongst teachers and peers. Understanding the implications of operationalizing the “*Brain Rules*” as detailed below has been noted by Hammond (2015) as a vital principle of culturally responsive teaching:

- *The brain seeks to minimize social threats and maximize opportunities to connect with others in the learning community.* The amygdala of the brain stays on alert for threats such as microaggressions that may prohibit students from feeling safe or valued in the classroom. The brain works best when submerged in a caring social community conducive to developing the brain’s sense of well-being rather than a threatening environment that impedes the brain’s ability to reach a state of relaxed alertness.
- *Positive relationships keep our safety-threat detection system in check.* Oxytocin produced by positive relationships aids the amygdala of the brain in staying calm. Positive relationships reduce the brain’s need for scanning the environment for social and physical threats and increase the brain’s ability to focus on learning.
- *Culture guides how we process information.* Students learn best when given opportunities to process information using modes of learning that are common amongst their cultures. For instance, in collectivist cultures, the primary way to engage in learning is through the use of storytelling, conversations, and highly interactive social structures. Culturally responsive teachers acknowledge such by incorporating academic and social talk structures (see Figure 5) along with cultural-based instructional strategies purported to foster information processing.

- *Attention drives learning.* The brain is attracted to the novelty, relevance, and emotion associated with the information presented in the classroom. However, the brain's interpretation of the aforementioned components is determined by a student's cultural lens. Hammond (2015) suggests for teachers to develop a deep understanding of students' cultural ways of thinking and doing to identify ways to grab students' attention.
- *All new information must be coupled with existing funds of knowledge in order to be learned.* Students' schema, or background knowledge, is developed and organized by the brain according to their cultural experiences, values, and concepts. When processing new information, the brain seeks to connect new content with preexisting knowledge. Hence, the importance of implementing culturally-based connections and scaffolds to support teaching and learning in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms.
- *The brain physically grows through challenge and stretch, expanding its ability to do more complex thinking and learning.* Rather than presenting culturally and linguistically diverse students with a "watered down" curriculum and tasks, teachers should focus on validating and empowering marginalized students by offering more opportunities for complex thinking and information processing. When the brain is challenged by tasks requiring higher-order thinking, its capacity to learn and apply new understandings grows. High-demand tasks also increase independent learning and academic success.

Figure 5

Description of Academic and Social Talk Structures (Hammond, 2015)



As noted by Hammond (2015), “our deep cultural values program our brain on how to interpret the world around us – what a real threat looks like and what will bring a sense of security” (p. 37). Students’ brains are unable to function properly in the classroom when they experience anxiety and stress intensified by threats imposed by a teacher’s deficit ideologies and oppressive actions that make culturally and linguistically diverse students feel marginalized and unsupported (Hammond, 2015). When threats trigger the brain’s defense mode, students subscribe to negative academic mindsets and disengage in learning. Often the aforementioned behaviors are perceived by some teachers as culturally and linguistically diverse students’ lack of concern or poor family values regarding education rather than the result of the teacher’s deficit ideologies and subpar practices (Hammond, 2015).

By recognizing students’ cultural displays of learning and meaning-making and responding positively and constructively with culturally appropriate teaching moves, culturally responsive teachers often guide students towards the development of positive academic mindsets

(Hammond, 2015). When students adopt positive academic mindsets – positive attitudes, beliefs, or ways of perceiving oneself concerning learning and academic tasks – they begin to develop a sense of belongingness in the classroom, relevance in the academic work, and growth in effort, ability, and competence (Hammond, 2015; Farrington et al., 2012). To develop and maintain students' independence and success as a learner, the culturally responsive teacher forges learning partnerships, or an alliance with students, and applies a warm demanding balance of push and care to validate and support students' cultural and academic needs (see Appendix B).

Pre-Service Teacher Preparation and In-Service Teacher Development

According to Gordon and Espinoza (2020), most teachers do not enter the field of education with the capacity to apply culturally responsive teaching practices. A vast majority of the teacher workforce begin their professional career as educators with “little to no knowledge of themselves as racial beings and without context or experience recognizing power and privilege in all its forms” (Griffin, Watson, & Liggett, 2016, p. 3). Limited understandings of culture and awareness of self-identity often lead to the adoption of color-blind and culture-blind teaching ideologies that profoundly affect culturally and linguistically diverse students (Griffin et al., 2016; Maye & Day, 2012). Therefore, teachers may benefit from structured opportunities to deconstruct their preconceived notions, reflect on their practices, and develop in-depth understandings of how to interact with diverse learners.

Although some teacher preparation programs and new teacher induction programs have been intentional about covering topics of multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy, the transfer of theory to practice has been noted as limited in many culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms across the nation (Hammond, 2015; Howard et al., 2017; Young, 2010). Hammond (2015) argues, "Most school districts only offer teachers one-shot

professional development training with little or no support [to sustain culturally responsive teaching practices]" (p. 16). Yet, researchers suggest ongoing, transformative professional development may significantly alter teachers' perceptions and practices regarding the learning experiences they offer culturally and linguistically diverse students (Adams, Brooks, & Kandel-Cisco, 2017; Griffin et al., 2016; Gordon et al., 2020; Hammond, 2015, Mellon et al., 2018, Warren-Grice, 2017). Warren-Grice (2017) further contends the need for facilitating “ongoing, equity professional development [for teachers] where confronting issues of racism and other forms of marginalization is deliberate” (p. 21).

Hammond (2015) posits, developing as a culturally responsive teacher is a journey that requires teachers to be mindful, present, and reflective. “Engaging in reflection helps culturally responsive teachers recognize the beliefs, behaviors, and practices that interfere with their ability to respond constructively and positively to students” (Hammond, 2015, p. 53). Thus, for transformation to occur, teachers must be willing to (a) develop the right mindset, (b) engage in self-reflection, (c) check one’s implicit biases, (d) practice social-emotional awareness, and (e) hold an inquiry stance regarding the impact of one’s interactions on students (Hammond, 2015). Moreover, Gay (2018) purports, “If the potential of culturally responsive pedagogy is to be realized, then widespread instructional reform is needed, as well as major changes in the professional development, accountability, and assessment of teachers” (p.53).

Mezirow’s Transformative Learning Theory

Cultivating culturally responsive pedagogues poses the need for offering teachers opportunities to participate in transformative professional development structured as a rigorous and possibly emotional reflection process focused on how individual experiences and beliefs influence one’s capacity to teach students of differing cultural backgrounds (Hammond, 2015;

Howard, 2003; Mezirow, 1997; Milner, 2003). As related to teacher development, critical theorists advocate the application of a theoretical framework that promotes transformation by challenging dominant ideologies that perpetuate deficit notions of marginalized students (Graham et al., 2019). Suitably, Jack Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory suggests transformation amongst adult learners involves sociolinguistic perspectives that challenge habits of the mind and points of view; thereby, yielding collective or individual action to change social practices, institutions, or systems. Mezirow's (1994, 1997) transformative learning theory focuses theoretical attention on changing perceptions and practices of adults through a cyclical process that involves (a) acknowledging the influence of personal beliefs and experiences; (b) examining individual perceptions and practices through critical reflection; (c) engaging in rational discourse to develop new understandings, justify interpretations, and transform ways of thinking and doing; and (d) taking action by applying new knowledge and understandings.

Beliefs and Experiences

Professional development designed to engage teachers in critical reflection and rational discourse focused on understanding how one's beliefs and experiences influence thoughts and actions is suggested to transform mindsets and practices (Mezirow, 1997). Identifying and examining one's beliefs and experiences are where transformation of perceptions and practices begins (Mezirow, 1994, 1997). According to Gay (2018), "how we teach, what we teach, and how we relate to children and each other...is rooted in the norms of our cultural experiences [and personal beliefs]" (p.30). Our lived experiences based on the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and culture influence our sense of "normal" and ultimately our dispositions and actions towards people of different groups. This neurologically constructed ideology of "normal" leads to implicit and explicit acts of marginalization (Hammond, 2015). Implicit biases, the

unconscious attitudes and stereotypes that shape our responses to specific groups of people, operate involuntarily and often without personal awareness or intentional control (Hammond, 2015). Hammond (2015) posits one of the major challenges of becoming an effective culturally responsive teacher is learning how to acknowledge and shift one's implicit biases. Unchecked biases along with the unfamiliarity of cultures outside a teacher's norm have the potential to breed negative perceptions of students, specifically culturally and linguistically diverse students (Gay, 2018).

Critical Reflection

Howard (2003) and Milner (2003) assert changing teacher practices and perceptions regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students involves developing teachers' cultural consciousness through critical reflection. Critical reflection should be structured to provoke teachers to engage in an open and honest examination of self that challenges each teacher to see how one's positionality influences students in either positive or negative ways (Howard, 2003; Milner, 2003). Researchers purport teacher development that is culturally relevant and reflective in nature increases teachers' knowledge and skills to effectively engage culturally and linguistically diverse students in culturally responsive ways (Gay et al., 2000; Hammond, 2015; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Siwatu, Frazier, Osaghae, & Starker, 2011). "Facilitation of the [critical reflection] process must be sensitive and considerate of the lived experiences that people bring to their current time and space", yet dynamic enough to foster the construction of pedagogical practices in ways that are "culturally relevant, racially affirming, and socially meaningful for students" (Howard, 2003, p. 201, p.197).

Rational Discourse and Action

Building safe, critically reflective professional learning communities that are diverse in membership and respectful of adult learner needs is considered vital to fostering culturally responsive teachers (Moore, 2018). Within these communal learning spaces, as suggested by Howard et al. (2017), culturally responsive professional development should involve “courageous conversations wherein teachers and school leaders are willing to engage in honest, sustained, and structured dialogue centered in questioning what teachers really believe, think, and feel about race, culture, students, and the communities in which they teach” (p.24). Siwatu et al. (2011) purport developing teachers’ self-efficacy regarding the teaching of culturally and linguistically diverse students is influenced by mastery experience, vicarious experience, and verbal persuasion. Mastery experiences involve opportunities to apply what has been learned whereas vicarious experiences encompass the observation of specific modeling of behaviors (Siwatu et al., 2011). Feedback or verbal persuasion from colleagues and supervisors affirms teachers' self-efficacy to successfully apply new understandings and practices (Siwatu et al., 2011). According to Fullan (2007, as cited by Adams et al., (2017) it is "destructive and counterproductive to simply demand growth and transformation from educators as genuine change requires time, patience, risk-taking, and reflection from within a supportive community of learners" (p. 29). Thus, researchers propose the need for ongoing, job-embedded professional development that is focused on the process of adapting teachers’ content knowledge and pedagogical skills to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Hudley & Mallinson, 2017; Wachira & Mburu, 2019).

Transformative Professional Development

As suggested by Adams et al. (2017) after conducting a four-year action research study regarding professional development in culturally diverse schools, transformative professional development emerges from shared consciousness, shared ethic, and shared commitment to the long-term achievement of culturally diverse students. Transformative professional development focused on teaching for equity and culturally responsive pedagogy should "authentically addresses teachers' needs to drive their learning, consider the specific context, develop an understanding of sociopolitical injustices, and promote collaboration" (Riordan et al., 2019, p.330). Martin et al. (2019) purport culturally responsive professional development should also provide ample opportunities and time for teachers to transform problematic sets of fixed assumptions, expectations, and habits of the mind into inclusive, open, reflective and emotionally rooted constructs that can be changed. Moreover, scholars suggest transformative professional learning should offer multiple opportunities for teachers to engage in sessions that involve (a) reading scholarship and/or viewing videos related to culturally responsive pedagogy, (b) reflective dialogue, writing, and sharing of cultural understandings, (c) demonstrations and practice in the form of role-playing, simulations, or real-world application with feedback; and (d) follow-up sessions to include reflective journaling and discussions (Gordon et al., 2020; Hammond, 2015; Siwatu et al., 2011).

Researchers further imply professional development rendered outside of the classroom, mandated, presented by experts, and/or delivered in workshop or conference formats are less effective than job-embedded professional development supported by in-house teacher leaders (Darlington-Hammond, 2011; Gordon et al., 2020; Howard et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2019). Thus, Hammond (2019) encourages school districts to invest in building the capacity of their

teacher leaders, in particular their instructional coaches, before offering system-wide transformational professional development focused on culturally responsive pedagogy (Hammond, 2019). In preparing teacher leaders to facilitate professional development of the aforementioned, opportunities to engage in their own inquiry cycles of reflection focused on cultural proficiency, implicit bias, and pedagogy may be needed before guiding colleagues through the process of making morally sound changes regarding equity in education for students of color (Hammond, 2015, 2019).

Accordingly, Mezirow's transformative learning theory was used as a guide in this study to develop and facilitate a sustainable transformative professional development plan that would allow opportunities for teachers to examine the origin, nature, and consequences, if any, of their perceptions and practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students. The theory was also considered when presenting opportunities for meaningful interactions suggested to guide adult learners in solidifying their understandings and transforming habits of the mind. The transformative learning framework was also used to design and implement a professional development plan that provided opportunities for teachers to recognize how their own experiences and dispositions influence their interactions with students of different racial and cultural backgrounds. By doing so, I attempted to not only foster teachers' acceptance, respect, and appreciation for culturally and linguistically diverse students' cultural socializations and funds of knowledge but also expose the deeply embedded ideologies associated with educational inequities while cultivating the essence and relevance of culturally responsive pedagogy. As purported by Gay (2018), imposing the aforementioned may diminish the existing deficit syndrome or blame the victim mentality of some teachers and close existing achievement gaps between White students and students of color, specifically in suburban school settings.

Summary of the Scholarship

A majority of the scholarship concerning culturally responsive pedagogy focuses on the understandings, attitudes, and practices of pre-service or novice teachers in the context of urban communities. Within the past five years, novice researchers have explored the potential of in-service professional learning focused on developing culturally responsive teachers (Affolter, 2017; Jarvis, 2015; Pledger, 2018; Septor, 2019). In each study, successes and challenges were noted along with the suggestion of further exploring the implementation of culturally responsive professional development in various settings and formats to identify the influence on teacher perceptions and practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students (Affolter, 2017; Jarvis, 2015; Septor, 2019). Researchers have also suggested the need to learn more about the beneficial components of the professional learning structures (Affolter, 2017; Jarvis, 2015; Septor, 2019). Additionally, Pledger (2018) recommends more exposure and exploration of culturally responsive professional development in suburban and rural school districts, accountability systems to ensure the use of culturally responsive pedagogy and the effectiveness of in-house culturally responsive support specialists.

Based on the review of literature, I believed providing ongoing, professional development opportunities for teachers to acquire and apply their understandings of culturally responsive teaching would initiate the change needed to foster equitable learning opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse students in my suburban school district. Therefore, to cultivate culturally responsive teachers in suburban schools with Title I programs I considered the need for engaging teachers in ongoing, job-embedded professional development that involves opportunities for critical reflection and courageous conversations as related to race, culture, and pedagogy. Offering sustainable professional development related to the intersectionality of race,

culture, and pedagogy while providing opportunities for critical reflection and courageous conversations related to socially constructed ideologies, institutional structures, personal experiences, and pedagogical approaches appeared to be vital to transforming the teacher perceptions and practices that may potentially pose inequities in education for culturally and linguistically diverse students in suburban Title I schools.

Considering such, I used qualitative research methods to conduct a collective case study to determine how, if at all, do teachers' perceptions and practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students in a suburban Title I school change after participating in culturally responsive professional development designed and facilitated by in-house instructional coaches. I also applied qualitative inquiry methods to identify the most and least beneficial components of the professional development sessions with the intent of constructing and implementing a district-wide professional development plan focused on cultivating culturally responsive teachers in suburban Title I schools.

Chapter 3: Methodology

A study involving the facilitation of a culturally responsive professional development plan was conducted over six weeks with a group of elementary school teachers serving culturally and linguistically diverse students in a suburban Title I school. Through this research, I hoped to gain insight related to the following questions:

1. How, if at all, do teacher perceptions of culturally and linguistically diverse students change after participating in a structured series of culturally responsive professional development?
 - a. What factors influence teachers' perceptions about teaching and learning as related to culturally and linguistically diverse students?
2. How, if at all, do teacher practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students change after participating in a structured series of culturally responsive professional development?
3. Which components, if any, of the structured series of culturally responsive professional development are perceived as most beneficial to cultivating culturally responsive teachers?
 - a. Which components, if any, of the structured series of culturally responsive professional development are perceived as least beneficial to cultivating culturally responsive teachers?

The Research Design

For this study, I applied qualitative research methods to determine how, if at all, do teacher perceptions and practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students change after participating in a structured series of culturally responsive professional development. I also

used qualitative methods to identify the most and least beneficial components, if any, of the culturally responsive professional development sessions.

Qualitative research is an inquiry process applied to develop an in-depth understanding of social constructs or human interactions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 2010). “Qualitative inquiry is interpretive, experiential, situational, and personalistic” (Stake, 2010, p. 14). Due to the subjective nature of qualitative inquiry, the researcher is often intentional about implementing purposeful sampling and acknowledging the multiple truths and realities of the research participants (Glesne, 2016; Stake, 2010). To provide a trustworthy and descriptive qualitative report, the researcher attempts to develop a thorough understanding and construct a holistic picture of a social or human problem by analyzing words, reporting detailed views of the participants, and conducting the study in a natural setting (Creswell et al., 2018). In some cases, qualitative inquiry may not only reveal the truths and realities of the research participants as the findings may also initiate social or institutional change.

Common trends in modern-day qualitative research reveal "closer attention to the interpretative nature of inquiry and situating the study within the political, social, and cultural context of the researchers, and the reflexivity of the researchers in the accounts they present" (Creswell et al., 2018, p. 43). Creswell and Poth (2018) further purport the characteristics of qualitative research are continuously evolving; therefore, a definitive set of elements is nonexistent. Based on a close examination of the work of various methodologists, Creswell et al. (2018) have identified the following common, yet flexible, characteristics of qualitative researchers. The qualitative researcher:

- collects data in the natural setting of the participants,
- serves as the key instrument in the design and collecting of data,

- gathers and reviews multiple forms of data,
- engages in complex inductive and deductive reasoning processes,
- focuses on the multiple perspectives and meanings of the participants,
- situates the study within the context of the participants or site,
- applies an emergent and flexible research design,
- acknowledges reflexivity and positions himself or herself in the study, and
- provides a holistic account by creating a descriptive report (Creswell et al., 2018).

Researchers often use qualitative inquiry to empower individuals to share their stories, provide opportunities to hear the voices of specific groups, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study (Creswell et al., 2018, Glesne, 2016). Researchers may also engage in qualitative inquiry to develop theories when partial or inadequate theories exist or existing theories do not sufficiently capture the complexity of the issue being examined (Creswell et al., 2018). Methodologists contend qualitative research requires (a) commit to extensive time in the field, (b) engagement in complex and time-consuming data analysis processes, (c) the composition of lengthy and descriptive reports, (d) acceptance of dynamic and emergent procedures, and (e) attention to anticipated and developing ethical issues (Creswell et al., 2018; Glesne, 2016). In general, “qualitative research focuses on qualities...that are difficult to quantify and lend themselves to interpretation and deconstruction” by asking questions, observing behaviors, interacting with participants, examining artifacts, seeking patterns in the data, and reflecting on his or her position (Glesne, 2016, p. 299).

In social, behavioral, and health sciences, the most frequently applied qualitative research approaches include, but are not limited to, ethnography, grounded theory, case study, participatory action research, phenomenology, and narrative research (Creswell et al., 2018). I

chose to implement a case study approach for this study. Although consensus regarding the design and implementation of a case study has not been established amongst researchers, three influential methodologists – Robert K. Yin, Susan B. Merriam, and Robert E. Stake – have provided similar yet different procedures for conducting case study research (Yazan, 2015). The approaches suggested by Yin, Merriam, and Stake have greatly impacted educational researchers' use of the case study design (Yazan, 2015). Yin describes case study research as an empirical and sequential inquiry that investigates a case as a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context by addressing the "how" or "why" regarding the identified point of interest (Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2009). Merriam describes case study research as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yazan, 2015). Stake defines case study research as a flexible inquiry of the particularity and complexity of a single case and understanding its activity within given circumstances (Yazan, 2015). Yin's approach to case study research is based on the epistemological commitments aligned to positivism and focuses on the commonalities between quantitative and qualitative research (Yazan, 2015). Positivists believe logical and sequential research designs lead to findings that yield facts (Glesne, 2016). On the other hand, Merriam and Stake suggest case study methods that are grounded in constructivism and the exclusive use of qualitative inquiry (Yazan, 2015). Constructivists believe truth is relative and dependent on individuals' varying perspectives and socially constructed realities (Glesne, 2016; Baxter & Jack, 2008).

As presented in the constructivist views of Merriam and Stake, I believe the foundation of this qualitative study was based on the collaborative relationship between the researcher and participants from which the researcher's understandings about constructs were

formed by the participants' stories gathered through the processes of interviewing, observing, and analyzing documents or artifacts. (Yazan, 2015; Baxter, et al., 2008). However, the overall design of this research mostly aligned with the case study procedures suggested by Merriam. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) posits a case study as a search for meaning and understanding in which the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigation strategy is applied, and the end product is richly descriptive. Moreover, the trustworthiness of qualitative case study research is enhanced by triangulation, member checking, disclosure of researcher bias and positionality, and the use of thick descriptions (Merriam et al., 2015). Merriam's case study design also focuses on conducting a literature review, constructing a theoretical framework, identifying a research problem, crafting and refining research questions, selecting a sample, collecting multiple forms of data, and making sense of the data by consolidating, reducing and interpreting what was said, seen, and read (Yazan, 2015). Each of the aforementioned components of case study research as described by Merriam was incorporated into this study. In general, as applied to this dissertation, case study research is an intensive exploration over time of a bound system or multiple systems to include an individual, institution, organization, or some bounded group, place, or process through which in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information occurs and a descriptive report with case-based themes is derived (Glesne, 2016; Merriam et al., 2015).

Case study research "can be conducted and written with many different motives, including the simple presentation of individual cases or the desire to arrive at broad generalizations" (Yin, 2009, p. 15). The intent of the qualitative inquiry determines the framework of the case study. The three common types of qualitative case study are intrinsic,

instrumental, and multiple or collective (Creswell et al., 2018). This study was structured as a collective case study. A collective case study involves the purposeful selection of multiple cases to illustrate different perspectives of an issue or phenomenon (Creswell et al., 2018). For this study, a small group of eight teachers, or cases, were selected to participate. The perceptions and practices of the cases were analyzed and compared to generalize about the influence of participating in the structured series of culturally responsive professional development. As advocated by Merriam et al. (2015), this collective case study involved the collection of various forms of data which were analyzed simultaneously to develop a better understanding of the perceptions and practices of a bounded group of teachers across multiple grade levels in a suburban elementary Title I school regarding a phenomenon – culturally responsive teaching and professional development. As suggested by Merriam et al. (2015), interviews and open-ended questionnaires were used as the primary source of data collection as observational data was not easily accessible. The intended use of the data gleaned from this collective case study was to construct a comprehensive report containing substantial evidence to present any changes in the teacher participants’ perceptions and practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students and to convince multiple stakeholders of the benefit of implementing a structured and sustainable culturally responsive professional development.

Research Site

As described by Glesne (2016), the study took place in my “own backyard” at a suburban elementary school in a large school district in a southeastern state. The school was one of the 31 Title I elementary schools out of the school district’s 67 schools serving students in kindergarten through fifth grade (K-5). At the time of this study, the school served

a vast population of culturally and linguistically diverse students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Of the nearly 650 students served, 87% identified as Black and Hispanic, whereas 51% of the teachers identified as White (GOSA, 2020). Additionally, 81% of the students were considered economically disadvantaged and 17% of the students were identified as English Language Learners (GOSA, 2020).

While serving as a teacher and instructional coach within the suburban Title I school for five years prior to the study, I noticed some closures in the demographic and cultural gaps between teachers and students, yet incongruences still existed. Due to intentional hiring practices of the school administrators over a five-year period, diversity amongst the certified teaching staff had increased. From 2015 to 2020, the percentage of Non-White certified teachers increased from 18% to 51% (GOSA, 2020). Of this percentage, the number of Black teachers had increased from 6 to 21 and the number of male teachers had increased from 3 to 6 with half of them identified as Black males (GOSA, 2020). The number of Asian teachers had increased from 0 to 2, and the number of Hispanic teachers had remained steady at 2 (GOSA, 2020).

Within my five years of serving in the school, professional learning to increase teachers' understanding and application of culturally responsive pedagogy had not been offered. Moreover, as an instructional coach, I had observed teachers implementing practices that appeared to stifle the learning experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse students. In response to mainstream media's display of the injustices plaguing people of color just before the start of the study, teachers within my school and district were showing an interest in developing a deeper understanding of cultural awareness and culturally responsive teaching practices. Thus, the selection of the research site was influenced by teachers' interest

in educational equity coupled with the need for further exploration of culturally responsive pedagogy and professional development in suburban school districts as revealed by the review of scholarship. Therefore, I chose to implement this study within the suburban Title I elementary school in which I served as a teacher leader. Conducting the study in my “own backyard” prevented potential issues associated with gaining and maintaining access to other sites and provided convenient opportunities to interact with participants in their natural environment (Glesne, 2016).

Participant Selection

All certified staff members holding state licensure to teach in any capacity (i.e., classroom teacher, school counselor, support specialist) within the selected suburban Title I elementary school were invited by email to participate in the optional series of culturally responsive professional development (see Appendix D). By doing, I hoped to open the study to teachers of various ethnic and cultural groups and increase adult learner interest by not mandating the professional development opportunity. All teachers were given the option to engage in portions of the professional development without committing to participating in this study. To maintain a manageable sampling and secure “information-rich” cases, I anticipated selecting a minimum of six to a maximum of ten teacher participants for this study. From the sampling of cases, I hoped to develop a thorough understanding of the central components of importance as aligned to the purpose of the research and achieve saturation and redundancy in the data (Glesne, 2016). Therefore, the research study participants were selected based on their responses to a survey comprised of questions related to a predetermined set of criteria. The criteria were purposefully crafted to yield a homogenous sampling of participants who were: (a) employed as a certified elementary school teacher serving any K-5 student(s) in any

capacity – teacher, counselor, specialist, etc., (b) assigned to the suburban Title I school selected for the study, (c) committed to completing all components of the culturally responsive professional development study, (d) interested in learning more about culturally responsive teaching, and (e) intended to return to the same school and position for the next school year (see Appendix E). A total of 11 out of the 51 certified staff members responded to the survey or expressed an interest in the research project. Eight individuals met the criteria and committed to completing all components of the study. Eligibility for participating in this study would have been void if a teacher participant did not complete all components of the study as proposed or adjusted.

Within the selected homogenous group of elementary teachers; variation in race, gender, class, age, sexuality, personal and professional experiences, grade level, and education was expected to exist. The desired maximum variation sampling amongst the teacher participants would have allowed for understanding a range of teachers' perceptions and practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students in suburban Title I schools. As noted in the review of literature, the lack of cultural incongruence extends beyond that of the White teacher-student of color relationship as teachers and students of the same racial group may have different cultural experiences. Therefore, variation in the sampling was expected to yield themes and patterns relevant to the study and desired for transforming teachers regardless of race, gender, class, age, and/or sexuality. Although variations in race, gender, and sexuality were minimal, there were adequate distinctions amongst the participants to gather sufficient data.

Researcher Relationships

The preexisting rapport and shared school-wide purpose established between the research participants and I were conducive to collaboration and accessibility throughout the study (Glesne, 2016). Teachers directly associated with the research site were familiar with seeing me in coaching roles that included facilitating professional learning, monitoring the implementation of programs, and observing classroom instruction. Therefore, assuming similar roles as the researcher of this study was not perceived as abnormal or intrusive to the participants. Moreover, selecting participants from my school was beneficial to all regarding the scheduling of interviews and professional development sessions, especially when adjustments were needed to accommodate district-wide calendar changes influenced by COVID-19 guidelines and procedures.

Professional Development Plan

The culturally responsive professional development designed for this study was structured to potentially foster conscientization and social or institutional transformation (Glesne, 2016). It was desired for the professional development design of this study to allow opportunities for teacher participants to reflect upon, analyze, and transform their thinking and realities regarding their interactions with culturally and linguistically diverse students. To initiate the transformation process, four professional development sessions aligned to each quadrant of Hammond's (2015) *Ready for Rigor* framework (see Appendix A) were planned and implemented for this study. Additionally, the reflective nature of the sessions was based on the culturally responsive research and protocols as presented by Hammond (2015) in her book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*. Each participant received a copy

of the book. To further support teacher development instructional or motivational videos aligned to each session were shown and discussed (see Table 1).

The four professional development sessions for this study were facilitated synchronously in an online learning environment using Microsoft Teams. The virtual platform was used to adhere to the school district's COVID-19 guidelines restricting face-to-face meetings. Each session was scheduled for one hour. By the request of participants for more time to engage in the learning experience, each session was extended by 15 to 30 minutes. As noted in Table 1, each of the virtual professional development sessions was structured to focus on a quadrant of the *Ready for Rigor* framework in which Hammond (2015) has presented a foundation for culturally responsive teaching based on (a) awareness, (b) learning partnerships, (c) information processing, and (d) community of learners and the learning environment (see Appendix A). The professional development sessions were collaboratively constructed and facilitated by the researcher and another in-house instructional coach. Artifacts shared by the participants were used to guide portions of the professional learning sessions and collected to support the data analysis process. As noted in the literature review, adult learners are more willing to engage in job-embedded professional development that is respectful of their contributions and funds of knowledge and led by in-house facilitators (Darlington-Hammond, 2011; Gordon et al., 2020; Howard et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2019).

Table 1*Outline of the Culturally Responsive Professional Development (PD)*

Session	Description of the Culturally Responsive PD Descriptions and Tasks
Session 1	<p>PD Title: Cultural Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Description</u>: Teacher participants will engage in discourse and reflection to develop their sociopolitical consciousness by identifying and acknowledging their sociopolitical position, sharpening their cultural lens, and learning to manage their own social-emotional response to student diversity and socialization (Hammond, 2015). • <u>Topics</u>: Levels of Culture, Individualism versus Collectivism, Sociopolitical Context versus the Culture of Poverty (Hammond, 2015, Chapters 1-2, 4) • <u>Video(s)</u>: A Tale of Two Teachers: M. Crum (TEDx Talks, 2015), Widen the Screen (Procter & Gamble, 2021) • <u>Task</u>: Create a poster or infographic to illustrate your cultural background and frames of reference. Think about how your cultural experiences may be similar or different to that of your students. Plan to share your illustration with the professional learning community of teacher participants. • <u>Journal Entry Prompts</u>: (1) How do you define your culture? How do your cultural experiences compare to your students' cultural experiences? What similarities do you notice? What differences do you notice? (2) What social and learning behaviors trigger you in the classroom? What assumptions might be behind your triggers? • <u>PD Survey/Questionnaire</u>: See Appendix F
Session 2	<p>PD Title: Information Processing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Description</u>: Teacher participants will engage in discourse and reflection to develop an understanding of how culture impacts the brain's information processing and how to create learning experiences designed to build students' intellectual capacity in culturally congruent ways (Hammond, 2015). • <u>Topics</u>: Brain Functions, Culturally Responsive Brain Rules, Neuroscience of Academic Mindset, Building Intellectual Capacity (Hammond, 2015, Ch. 3 & 8) • <u>Video(s)</u>: Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning, Part 1(Erker, 2011) • <u>Task</u>: List those learning behaviors you believe every student should exhibit – talk and discourse patterns, volume of interaction, time on task, collaboration or individual work, seat time versus interaction. How did you come to believe this? What did your culture teach you about intelligence and success? • <u>Journal Entry Prompts</u>: (1) How do you incorporate information processing into your lessons currently? Where do you see an opportunity for incorporating more information processing activities in your instruction? (2) Which of the <i>Brain Rules</i> resonate with you? Which <i>Brain Rules</i> guide your practices and interactions with students? • <u>PD Survey/Questionnaire</u>: See Appendix F
Session 3	<p>PD Title: Learning Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Description</u>: Teacher participants will engage in discourse and reflection to explore the relevance of establishing authentic connections with students to build mutual trust and respect along with the importance of holding all students to high standards

	<p>while offering them new and intellectually challenging learning experiences (Hammond, 2015).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Topics</u>: Trust Generators, Classroom Rapport Assessment, Learned Helplessness, Warm Demander Chart, Academic Mindset (Hammond, 2015, Ch. 5-7) • <u>Video(s)</u>: Building a Belonging Classroom (Edutopia, 2019) • <u>Task</u>: Think of a student you would like to establish a better learning partnership with. Use the Mindful Reflection Protocol (Hammond, 2015, pp. 63-64) to analyze your interactions with the student. After using the protocol to reflect, make a note in your journal of at least one area of strength in your partnership and one area of change needed to improve your partnership with the student. Explain how you will change or respond differently. • <u>Journal Prompt</u>: (1) How do you create a sense of trust and safety in your relationship with our students? Do you do this deliberately or randomly? Explain your thinking. (2) Of the four types of teachers described by Hammond, what type are you? Explain your choice. Provide examples specific to your practices. If you did not select warm demander, what shifts are needed in your perceptions and practices to become more of a warm demander? If you did select warm demander, have you always been this type of teacher. Explain your thinking. • <u>PD Survey/Questionnaire</u>: See Appendix F
<p>Session 4</p>	<p>PD Title: Learning Communities and Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Description</u>: Teacher participants will engage in discourse and reflection to examine the influence of using cultural practices, orientations, universal cultural elements, and themes in the classroom to create a socially and intellectually safe space for learning as well the importance of establishing rituals and routines that reinforce self-directed learning and academic identity (Hammond, 2015). • <u>Topics</u>: Ethos versus Artifacts, Classroom Aesthetics and Symbols, Student Agency and Voice (Hammond, 2015, Ch. 9) • <u>Video(s)</u>: Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning, Part 2 (Erker, 2011), Get Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable: L.A. Jones (TED, 2018) • <u>Task</u>: Create an arts-based presentation (photo collage, infographic, narrative, poem, audio-visual production, etc.) to represent your takeaways and/or feelings regarding the four sessions of culturally responsive professional development. Do not include any identifying information (your name, school name, pictures or video of self or students, etc.). Be prepared to share the presentation with the researcher during your final interview. Your presentation may be anonymously shared with the professional learning community of teacher participants or other stakeholders. • <u>Journal Entry Prompt</u>: (1) What are the different talk structures and protocols used in your classroom? What routines and rituals are in operation? What do they accomplish? Are they aligned with cultural practices significant to your students? (2) Reflect on the poster or infographic you created in session one to illustrate your cultural background and frames of reference. Based on your experience in the culturally responsive professional development, would you change how you described your culture or the relationship between your cultural experiences and your students' cultural experiences? Explain your thinking. • <u>PD Survey/Questionnaire</u>: See Appendix F

Data Collection

Data collection for the study included the use of semi-structured interviews, survey questionnaires, reflective journals, and related artifacts. Semi-structured, virtual interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams and recorded using a voice recorder before and after the completion of the series of culturally responsive professional development sessions. The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the transcriptions were analyzed to develop an understanding of the participants' perceptions and practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students after participating in the culturally responsive professional development. Preestablished questions and response-induced probes were posed during the pre- and post- interviews conducted with each participant to ascertain how, if at all, each participant's thoughts and actions were influenced by internal or external factors as well as components of the professional development sessions (see Appendix G). Questionnaires were administered via Microsoft Forms after each professional development session to collect self-reported data regarding participants' perceptions and practices regarding cultural responsiveness (see Appendix F). The questionnaires were also used to collect the participants' thoughts about the most and least beneficial components, if any, of the professional development experiences. Participants engaged in critical self-reflection by maintaining an electronic journal and responding to journal prompts after each of the four professional development sessions (see Appendix H). In addition, reflective field notes were recorded after each professional learning session to further inform the research. Informal conversations that took place with the participants between professional development sessions were also documented to glean more insight regarding their perceptions and practices related to teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. All audio recordings, interview

transcripts, questionnaires responses, reflective journal entries, and field notes captured during the study were securely stored and locked on my personal computer and flash drive or in a locked file cabinet.

Data Analysis

As noted by Glesne (2016), the use of multiple data collection methods and sources contributes to the trustworthiness of the study. Therefore, data collected from interviews, questionnaires, reflective notes, and artifacts were triangulated to identify any significant patterns and themes or inconsistencies as related to the concept of culturally responsive teaching and the *Ready for Rigor* framework. Before coding the data, the semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim and offered to participants for *member checking* (Glesne, 2016). In addition to extending an opportunity for member checking, reflective memos regarding participants' demeanor and my personal thoughts during the interviews, if any, were placed within the margins to assist with the coding process. The interview transcriptions, questionnaire responses, and reflective journals entries were read thoroughly to familiarize me with the data while searching for similarities and differences (Glesne, 2016). Each was analyzed for emerging themes along with changes, if any, to perceptions and practices as a result of teachers' participation in the transformative culturally responsive professional development sessions. The multiple forms of data were also analyzed for participants' thoughts about the most and least beneficial components of the professional learning sessions with specific regard to the transformative learning theory. Artifacts were analyzed and categorized to support the emerging themes discovered through the analysis of the interview, questionnaire, reflective journal, and field notes data.

I used descriptive coding and in vivo coding. Descriptive coding was used to identify wording within the data that could be used to group quotes and develop codes (Glesne, 2016). Verbatim coding, such as in vivo coding, was used to capture the actual language of the participants and develop an understanding of how teachers perceived the influence of culturally responsive professional development on their practices (Glesne, 2016). A color-coded, handwritten system was used to organize the coded transcripts and assist with the triangulation process. Triangulation of the data and the use of thick descriptions were applied to increase the credibility of my research. The total time dedicated to collecting, analyzing, and reporting the data for this study was sixteen weeks.

Risks and Benefits

The topic of my study had the potential to spark controversy surrounding race relations amongst the participants. Disagreements regarding the probable systemic racism, biases, and assumptions influencing teacher perceptions and practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students may have caused discord between the participants; thereby, impeding work relations. To avoid conflict or maintain comfortability during professional development sessions, some participants may have chosen to withhold their true perceptions about marginalized groups of students or understandings about self. Also, to evade being considered as unresponsive to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students, some teachers may have falsely reported their instructional practices when responding to interview or survey questions. To diminish the possible occurrence of such, I reminded participants of my obligation to abide by ethical standards and practices as the researcher, as well as their commitment, as the participants, to remaining respectful and sensitive to the thoughts and experiences of others and keeping shared information confidential. I also reassured them about the anonymity of their questionnaire

responses. Moreover, I reminded them of our agreement to refrain from imposing judgment as open and honest reflection was encouraged throughout the series of professional development. Therefore, the following norms for facilitating reflective and courageous conversations were implemented and reinforced during each professional development session to maintain a safe space for discourse, mutual respect, and confidentiality:

- Stay engaged
- Speak your truth
- Listen to understand
- Experience discomfort
- Expect and accept non-closure
- Maintain confidentiality (National Education Association of Vermont, 2021)

Although no intentional harm was imposed on the participants, the study could have potentially triggered emotions associated with cultural or race-related experiences. If a teacher participant decided to withdraw from the study for any reason, then he or she would have been given the option to leave the study without any repercussions. Thus, all participants were continually reminded of their option to discontinue the study at any time, if desired. None of the participants withdrew from the study.

Ethics and Confidentiality

In accordance with the federal protocol for conducting research in the field of social science, I completed the Collaborative Instructional Training Initiative (CITI) ethics courses before starting this study which resulted in obtaining certification to conduct research within the field of education. In addition, International Review Board (IRB) applications were

submitted and approved by the university's committee and the selected school district's committee (see Appendix I and Appendix J). Before participating in this study, the voluntary participants read and signed an informed consent letter (see Appendix K). During this study, all data obtained from teacher participants were kept confidential, and teacher participants were reminded throughout the study to keep information shared by others confidential. Interview recordings, transcripts, survey responses, journal entries, and artifacts were stored and locked on my personal computer and flash drive and placed in a locked file cabinet. All identifying information and names were removed and changed to pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

Trustworthiness

According to Loh (2013), “the search for quality in a study...is essential for research to be accepted into the pantheon of knowledge and to be received as suitable for use in various means and ways” (p. 4). For qualitative research, the search for quality lies within the trustworthiness of the study. Trustworthiness provides a naturalistic validation method for evaluating quality that is measured by the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study (Creswell et al., 2018).

Credibility was established by applying a well-recognized research method and using multiple data sources for triangulation. In addition to applying case study methods to my researcher, I also based the theoretical foundation of this study on two well-known notions: culturally responsive pedagogy and transformative learning theory. Moreover, adequate time was dedicated in the field to interview and interact with teacher participants; and member checking was applied to ensure accuracy in capturing the truths of the teacher participants during interviews and other interactions.

Transferability was established by formulating a descriptive explanation of the methodology. Thick descriptions were used in the final report to illustrate the research experience and allow the reader to gain insight by reflecting on the details of the interviews, journal entries, survey responses, and professional development sessions. A detailed outline of the culturally responsive professional development plan, data collection protocols, data analysis process, and copies of the data collection instruments have been included in this manuscript. Moreover, background data was provided to establish the context of the study and increase relatability for the reader.

Dependability was established by soliciting other researchers, such as members of my dissertation committee, to evaluate the proposed methods and final product of the study to ensure alignment to the intended purpose and theoretical frameworks. Feedback was used to strengthen the methodology, instrumentation, and analysis processes implemented to conduct the study. I used previously researched and suggested protocols for facilitating the series of culturally responsive professional development designed for this study.

Confirmability was established by acknowledging the deficiencies and potential effects of the methods applied to the study along with the influence of personal assumptions and biases. Therefore, I ensured confirmability by keeping an audit trail of my research steps, revealing my personal beliefs and assumptions as related to the research topic, sharing personal and professional experiences that have shaped my frames of reference, and triangulating the data to reduce the influence of each.

Researcher's Perspective

As revealed in the introduction of this manuscript, I am a Black female educator born into a working-class family shaped by Southern experiences and Christian values. Born just

over ten years after the apparent end to Jim Crow and failed school integration attempts, I was the only child and grandchild, parentally and maternally, for ten years. My parents divorced by the time I was four years old, and my mother remarried by the time I was seven. As the only youngster in the family, I was frequently exposed to "grown folks" conversations with my family regarding our historical roots spanning across multiple Southern states, the Black experience as a whole, and our realities in a world that seemed to be unfair. Hearing and sometimes engaging in these discussions developed my frames of reference related to oppressive structures associated with slavery, segregation, and school integration. From these conversations, I learned that life would not be easy for me as a Black person, let alone a Black female in the South, and that I would always have to work twice as hard to prove my value and worth to the world. No matter what, I was told to always do my best, treat people with kindness, stand for what is right, and keep my faith in God. Staying true to my family's values, I graduated high school in the top ten percent of my class and completed my undergraduate and graduate programs with honors in the field of education. For my undergraduate studies, I attended a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) and completed each of my graduate programs at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs). Attending an HBCU and three PWIs has also influenced my view on institutional structures of oppression as well as my interpretation of how individuals are prepared differently for the teacher workforce in each of these settings. In my late twenties, I moved from one Southern state to another to experience life away from my close-knit family. Shortly after, I met and married my husband – a Black male from a rural area of a southeastern state – and we have been raising our two young sons in a middle-class suburban area in a southeastern state.

My interest as the researcher in this study was driven by my childhood experiences in the South, my 20 years of service as an educator in Title I schools populated mostly with Black and

Latinx students, and my genuine concern as a parent regarding my own children's experiences in suburban schools with Title I programs. From my previous service as an elementary teacher for 14 years and my current work as an instructional coach for 7 years, I understood the need for and influence of culturally responsive teaching practices in suburban schools with Title I programs. As a classroom teacher, I demonstrated and promoted quality and equitable learning experiences for culturally and linguistically diverse groups of elementary students in schools with Title I programs by modeling and presenting the influence of culturally responsive teaching practices. As an instructional coach, I observed how teacher perceptions and practices perpetuated the inequities in education due to limited understanding or application of culturally responsive pedagogy. Each experience sharpened my equity lens and drive to be a catalyst of change in education, specifically as related to teaching culturally and linguistically diverse populations of students. Hence, I desired to be an advocate for marginalized students just as my high school counselor and history teacher had done for me and many others who may have otherwise been deprived of engaging in learning experiences designed to foster the intellectual capacity needed to become agents of change in our increasingly diverse society.

Biases and Assumptions

As presented above, I entered this study with first-hand experience as a student of color, educator, and parent in an educational system infiltrated with structures of oppression greatly affecting culturally and linguistically diverse students. Additionally, I had second-hand knowledge of my Southern-rooted family experiences and perspectives that fueled many of the overheard discussions during my childhood. Moreover, after five years of serving as a teacher and instructional coach in the research site, I had preexisting knowledge and understandings regarding the history, culture, and professional relationships within the school. Thus, I brought

biases and assumptions to this study based on my racial, ethnic, cultural, and professional experiences. While conducting this study, I had to focus on keeping my emotions in check to avoid compromising elements of the research design or interactions with research participants. I did not want my biases and assumptions to interfere with what I desired to learn nor keep me from perceiving what was to be understood (Glesne, 2016). Thus, keeping a reflective journal as suggested by Glesne (2016) was used to track and name my emotions as a way of fostering openness to other values, attitudes, beliefs, interests, and needs throughout the study.

Passion and Purpose

Although this research was an extension of my professional passion for equity in education, it was also personal. The effort towards this study did not only pay homage to those who advocated for me as a young Black girl in the South, but it also provided the insight needed for me to pay it forward and further promote equitable learning experiences for the culturally and linguistically diverse students in suburban schools with Title I programs. To fulfill my passion and purpose, I designed this study to not only extend my understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy, but to also inform my ability to construct, facilitate, and recommend a transformative culturally responsive professional development plan designed to cultivate culturally responsive teachers.

Justification of Research Design

Maxwell (2008) contends qualitative research design may take on many forms as there is no absolute model for the interactive inquiry process. However, the research design should be explicit and aligned to the goals of the study (Maxwell, 2008). Maxwell (2008) further purports, "The key to research design is the compatibility of your reasons for 'going qualitative' with your goals, research questions, and actual activities involved in doing a

qualitative study" (p. 220). For this qualitative study, I intentionally considered the compatibility of the research site, participant selection process, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and other logistical considerations structured to accomplish the personal, practical, and intellectual goals of the study (Maxwell, 2008). I also considered how each component of the study supports the research questions to obtain information that may potentially transform policies, perceptions, and practices while promoting equitable and culturally responsive learning experiences for Black and Latinx students in suburban schools.

As noted in the review of literature, research dedicated to the exploration of culturally responsive pedagogy in suburban schools was limited at the time of this study. Thus, the selected suburban elementary school serving a large population of culturally and linguistically diverse students was a good fit for this study. Additionally, the research site was in my "own backyard", allowing for accessibility to research participants with whom I had a preexisting rapport and preestablished relationships. The implementation of purposeful sampling methods for this study led to information-rich cases and some variation. The opportunity to participate in this study was extended to the entire staff with purposeful sampling used to narrow the participants to eight cases. This created an intimate professional learning community for the research participants and field experience for me as the researcher in which all individuals felt safe and encouraged to participate in open and honest discourse.

As a novice qualitative researcher, I began this study understanding qualitative inquiry as an exploratory process imposed to comprehend the "what" and "how" of contextual concerns related to a phenomenon. Therefore, I deemed collecting data from the teacher participants by way of open-ended interview questions, questionnaires, and reflective journaling as the best methods for acquiring the descriptive data I needed to understand

teachers' perceptions and practices regarding Black and Latinx students. I further believed the aforementioned data collection methods would provide rich and holistic explanations about teachers' perceptions and practices that cannot be ascertained through the collection of quantifiable data. I desired to immerse myself in the data by using descriptive coding and in vivo coding to become attuned with the words of the participants and enhance my ability to summarize, categorize, and interpret the data, (Glesne, 2016). The selected coding methods were a good fit for discovering the patterns, themes, and thick descriptions I will need to construct a credible and trustworthy report intended to advocate equity in education for culturally and linguistically diverse students. In general, I believe the structured, yet flexible, research design I planned for this study was best for gathering the descriptive data needed to share teachers' stories about how, if at all, a series of culturally responsive professional development influenced their perceptions and practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students in a suburban Title I school.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the 6-week study conducted to determine (1) How, if at all, do teachers' perceptions of culturally and linguistically diverse students change after participating in a series of culturally responsive professional development? (1a) What factors influence teachers' perceptions about teaching and learning as related to culturally and linguistically diverse students? (2) How, if at all, do teachers' practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students change after participating in a series of culturally responsive professional development? (3) Which components, if any, of the culturally responsive professional development were deemed most or least beneficial to cultivating culturally responsive teachers? To provide context and clarity regarding the findings, this chapter includes a description of the teacher participants' demographics, backgrounds, beliefs, and prior knowledge; an overview of the data collected before, during, and after the series of professional development; an analysis of the identified themes and patterns regarding any noted changes in the participants' perceptions and practices as related to teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students; a synopsis of the participants' post-professional development reflections; an overview of the participants' recommendations regarding culturally responsive professional development within the school and district; and a summary of the research findings.

Description of the Participants

Demographics of the Participants

The eight participants selected for this study responded to an interest survey sent via email to a total of 51 certified teachers in a suburban Title I elementary school situated in a southeastern state. Each of the selected participants met the criteria as outlined in chapter 3 of

this manuscript. Participants' demographical data were compiled using the teachers' responses to the Participant Selection Questionnaire (Appendix E) and verified during the first interview conducted with each individual. Table 2 displays the self-reported demographical data obtained from the research participants. Pseudonyms are used in Table 2 and from this point forward to name the participants and maintain the anonymity of each.

Table 2

Demographics of Teacher Participants

Participant (pseudonym)	Gender Identity	Age Band	Race/Ethnicity	Title/Role	Grade Band	Years of Experience	Highest Degree
Morgan	She/Her	30-39	Black	Instructional Coach	K-5	15	Master's
Elaine	She/Her	50-59	Black	Interventionist	K-2	30	Master's
Brenda	She/Her	50-59	White	Teacher	K-2	27	Bachelor's
Lynne	She/Her	40-49	Multiracial	Teacher	K-2	4	Bachelor's
Michelle	She/Her	40-49	Black	Teacher	K-2	11	Master's
Sherry	She/Her	40-49	Black	Teacher	3-5	16	Master's
Garrett	He/Him	30-39	Black	Teacher	3-5	10	Master's
Gina	She/Her	30-39	Black	Teacher	3-5	3	Bachelor's

Although some variance was noted in the data amongst the participants' age band, grade band position, years of experience, and highest degree attained, a minimal variance was noticed as related to the participants' gender identity and race/ethnicity. At the time of the study, three participants identified as being within the age band of 30-39 years old, three participants identified as being within the age band of 40-49 years old, and two participants identified as being within the age band of 50-59 years old. Four participants served students within the kindergarten through second (K-2) grade band; three participants served students within the third through fifth (3-5) grade band, and one participant served students and

teachers within the kindergarten through fifth (K-5) grade band. The years of teaching experience amongst the participant group ranged from 3 to 30 years with an average of 14.5 years. Three participants held a bachelor's degree, and five participants had obtained a master's degree in the field of education. At the time of the study, one participant was enrolled in a Master of Education program and another participant was completing courses to obtain an Educational Specialist degree. Although two male teachers expressed interest in the study, only one agreed to engage in the research project. Therefore, one out of the eight participants self-identified with the pronouns he/him (male), whereas the remaining seven participants self-identified with the pronouns she/her (female). Additionally, six participants identified as Black, one identified as White, and one identified as Multiracial.

Participants' Backgrounds, Beliefs, and Prior Knowledge

In addition to using the Participant Selection Survey (Appendix E) to gather demographical information about the participants, interviews were conducted with each participant before the first session of the culturally responsive professional development series. The interviews were conducted to glean more insight regarding the participants' educational, professional, and cultural experiences along with how each, if at all, may have influenced their perceptions and practices when teaching and interacting with culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Morgan

Morgan's Background and Beliefs. Morgan identified as a middle-class, monolingual, Black woman who grew up in an upper middle-class family in a southern state. At the time of the study, she served kindergarten through fifth-grade teachers and students as an instructional coach at the research site. With 15 years of experience in various urban and

suburban Title I schools, Morgan revealed how each school served students who shared similarities regarding racial experiences yet differed in cultural experiences due to variations in socioeconomic statuses and family structures. She described one school as a poverty-stricken, urban Title I middle school serving predominately African American students and a small percentage of Hispanic students, two schools as Title I middle schools serving mostly lower to upper middle-class African American students, one school as a Title I elementary school serving a vast percentage of African-American and Hispanic students of lower to middle-class working fathers and stay-at-home moms, and the research site as a Title I elementary school serving mostly middle to upper-class African American students of working parents.

In reference to her first teaching experience in the poverty-stricken, urban middle school with a Title I program, Morgan admitted, "It was so hard for me to relate to the things that they were going through, and I felt so awful for them...I loved them, but I didn't necessarily teach them." To truly make a difference, she said, "I had to change my mindset [and] change my expectation of them." Shortly after this experience, Morgan began to intentionally work towards her primary teaching goal of ensuring all of her students were given the opportunity to grow. She stated, "When I say grow, it may not be as much growth academically as it is socially or emotionally or even just building their confidence." As an instructional coach, she expressed the same sentiment for teachers by saying, "I want to help teachers grow and become more reflective."

Morgan's Prior Knowledge. When asked about her pre-service and in-service training as related to teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students, Morgan remembered taking a Multicultural Education course during her graduate studies, but she did

not recall anything about the class besides seeing the changes in the communities as she traveled via public transit from the south side of the city to the north side of the city.

However, completing the gifted endorsement program as an in-service teacher aided Morgan in shifting her mindset towards the idea of making learning experiences more accessible for all students regardless of their social identities, personal struggles, or academic levels.

When asked to define culturally responsive teaching, Morgan replied, "I feel like I've struggled with this [and] explaining it even though I have read that book about culture and the brain." Morgan continued by providing her definition of culturally responsive teaching as "being cognizant of the things that you say, present, how you do it, what you do, and taking into account your students' race, background, and even their socioeconomic status sometimes." When asked to provide a specific example of how she applied culturally responsive teaching practices in her classroom, Morgan described how she focused on holidays around the world to introduce students to other cultures and traditions. She also emphasized how she provided opportunities for students to share their holiday traditions by engaging them in discussions, reading culture-rich books, and asking them to compare differences in traditions. After providing her example of how she implemented culturally responsive teaching, Morgan paused for a moment before admitting, "I don't even know if that's really what culturally responsive teaching is, but I feel like it's a start."

When asked if she would describe herself as a culturally responsive teacher, Morgan replied, "Partially." She clarified this single-word statement by explaining, "I still feel like there are parts of [culturally responsive teaching] that I know I missed. And to be honest, it's been plaguing me for a while." Due to such, Morgan said she decided to participate in the

culturally responsive professional development to acquire "a clear understanding of culturally responsive teaching, how to communicate it to others, and to improve areas of growth."

Elaine

Elaine's Background and Beliefs. Elaine identified as a middle-class, Black female with 30 years of experience in the field of early childhood education. At the time of the study, she had been teaching at the research site for 15 years. She had previously taught in two other elementary schools in two different states – one in her home state located in the Midwest and the other in a southern state on the Gulf Coast. She described each of the settings as schools with Title I programs that served a predominately Black population of students with socioeconomic statuses ranging from lower to working-middle class. Elaine had mostly taught students from varying cultural backgrounds including students of Haitian, Jamaican, and African descent, and claimed she had always been able to connect with her students because of their similar experiences as related to racial and socioeconomic identities. However, she acknowledged her challenge with the changing student demographics in her current school by stating:

We have more Hispanic students, [so] I've tried to learn some basic Spanish words just to let them know, "I'm interested in learning about you. I want to know a little bit about your language, too, as you learn about my language." I think that's important to let them know that your language is important to me, also.

Elaine recognized the need for establishing relationships and a sense of belongingness in the classroom, and she made efforts to connect with all students regardless of cultural differences.

Elaine attended a Catholic elementary school and public secondary schools. Although school was her "happy place" where she liked to excel and impress her teachers, all of whom

were White except one teacher in high school, she recalls everything being taught from a Eurocentric point of view based on what was in the textbooks and without “a healthy dose of anything.” She further explained, “I’m not being dishonest when I say, I thought there were slaves, then Martin Luther King, Jr. came, then we marched, and then we were able to go to school together. And that was it! Black history wasn’t a thing.” She later said, “We allow children to go through thirteen years of schooling, without being heard or feeling seen.”

Elaine indicated her desire to change the narrative by stating, “My primary goal as a teacher is to make a difference. I really want to be an impact on students’ lives and what they think and feel. Therefore, I try to be more well-rounded with my teaching.”

Elaine’s Prior Knowledge. While participating in the study, Elaine was completing graduate coursework to attain a specialist’s degree in instructional technology. She remembered taking a Multicultural Education course during her undergraduate studies and had recently been introduced to the concept of culturally responsive teaching as an in-service teacher while attending a self-selected breakout session during a national conference for educators. Based on her understanding, Elaine defined culturally responsive teaching as “acknowledging the mindset of where students are based on their culture and the way that you’re teaching so that you don’t just teach from your own [or the dominant] perspective.” She explained how she believed she incorporated culturally responsive teaching in her classroom by allowing time for students to use non-standard English or “a little slang” as described by Elaine, using transitional music with beats and tempos that are familiar to students, and giving students opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of concepts in various ways – song, dance, art, and so on. When asked if she would describe herself as a culturally responsive teacher, Elaine said:

I think so, but I'm mostly around people like me. Have I been exposed to other cultures? [Elaine pauses to think.] For a minute I taught in a summer camp with rich Jewish families, and I didn't even finish the summer. I just didn't thrive in that setting. Most of the time I'm teaching people that look like me, people with the same experiences; maybe not all middle-class, but all Black. So, I haven't had enough experience [with other cultures] to say that I know how to be culturally responsive with other people.

Hence, Elaine decided to participate in the study to possibly engage in reflective activities that would allow her to identify and address her biases and determine where she needed to improve as a teacher of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Brenda

Brenda's Background and Beliefs. Brenda identified as a middle-class, White female with Scottish and Native American roots. She grew up in what she described as "a middle to almost lower class" family of five children in a small town located in the southeastern region of the United States. At the time of the study, Brenda had been teaching for nearly 3 decades across various states and had been teaching in the selected school for 8 years. For the majority of her career, with the exception of 3 years, she served in Title I elementary schools with high percentages of African American and Hispanic students. Her 3 years outside of the Title I setting were the most challenging as she could not relate to the elitist culture that existed amongst the teachers, students, and families in an elementary school situated in a midwestern state serving predominately White students from upper-class families. This experience amplified her awareness of how cultural incongruences between students and teachers impact teaching and learning as nearly 25% of the students were voluntary Black transfer students

from a neighboring poverty-stricken, inner-city school. During this experience, Brenda was confronted with racial, social, and cultural tensions that were not condoned in her childhood home. As she explained:

My parents didn't act like other people did in our town. They accepted people. Maybe that's why I didn't see it before...I never saw my mother or father treat anyone differently because of money, race, job, or gender. [So], I feel like I'm accepting, loving, and caring. And my friends of different cultures would say that I am.

Brenda was raised to treat everyone with dignity and respect regardless of their differences. As a teacher, she prided herself on establishing relationships with and providing fair and equitable learning experiences for students of all backgrounds.

Brenda also mentioned that as a child she was "the hard to teach kid" because she was chatty and stubborn, especially if she did not understand the material. She could only recall one teacher who truly saw her and helped her to grow as a student. This is something that guided her as a teacher. Brenda stated she became an educator because she "wanted to be that teacher to help all kids." She elaborated:

I have to say my number one goal is relationships because I think that's probably why I didn't open up [as a child]. No one ever took the time to build that relationship with me, and I was always fighting them. My other goal is to always learn how to help those children that struggle by observing them, taking notes, and always making sure that I know them and know what triggers them – what makes them tick, what helps, and what doesn't help. I mean after that relationship is established that encompasses everything else.

In general, she deemed relationship building as the key component to helping students learn.

Brenda's Prior Knowledge. Brenda noted that she had not completed any pre-service or in-service teacher development training regarding multicultural education or culturally responsive teaching in the past. However, she mentioned how the work of Ruby Payne was studied by teachers as an all-staff required professional development in one of her previous schools to develop a better understanding of how to teach children of poverty. Therefore, when asked to define culturally responsive teaching, Brenda said:

I've heard that term thrown around a lot lately with teachers that are younger than me because I guess it's being taught in college more. I've never had experience or professional development with it, I will tell you that. So, with the little I know, hmmm, my logical thinking with it would be knowing where your children come from, knowing what's important to them, and incorporating that into your teaching. I don't know that I know all the ways to make that happen. I'd probably do an okay job with the literature piece, but I don't know how that would look in the other parts of my day for primary-grade students.

After providing her definition of culturally responsive teaching, Brenda described herself as progressing with the concept. She supported this claim by stating, "I know that I do make kids feel comfortable, but I know there's more out there to learn and that's why I'm progressing." Considering such, Brenda agreed to participate in this study with the hope of developing a better understanding of culturally responsive teaching and how to get her students to feel as comfortable as possible to learn as much as they can.

Lynne

Lynne's Background and Beliefs. Lynne identified as a working middle-class, female of Caucasian and Asian descent who grew up in a military family that moved a lot during her

childhood. She was a fifth-year educator at the time of study who was pursuing her “true passion” of teaching as a second career. She had been a primary teacher at the research site since starting her dream career. While sharing her experience as a teacher in the suburban elementary school with a Title I program, Lynne exclaimed, “I love where I teach!” She further expressed how the positive environment, supportive colleagues, and eagerness of the students fueled her love for working in the school.

During the initial interview, Lynne was asked to reflect on how her childhood schooling experiences may have been influencing her practices as a teacher of culturally and linguistically diverse students. She expressed how there were times during her childhood when she felt like she “did not belong or was not accepted by a lot of people” simply for being a person of mixed race and culture. Lynne further recounted how cultural differences were not acknowledged during her childhood learning experiences by saying:

I never saw any books with Asian culture in [them] or even half-Asian culture. That was non-existent. There was nothing in between for mixed kids... No one ever took an extra step to acknowledge different cultures or anything like that. That wasn't a thing. To avoid being viewed as being different, Lynne also admitted to remaining “super quiet to not ever be noticed” in school as a child. However, with time she began to proudly accept and balance both sides of her racial and cultural identities. As a result of her childhood schooling experiences, Lynne never wanted her students to feel ashamed or neglected because of their racial or cultural identities. She supported this view by asserting, “I want [my students] to appreciate who they are. Every part of them! I want them to love everything about themselves and not want to be somebody else.” In addition to developing a sense of racial and cultural pride amongst her students, Lynne also shared her primary goal as a teacher was to make sure

her students are able to learn and to be the best that they could be in order to make something of themselves – “be something and know the world and understand what’s going on around them.”

Lynne’s Prior Knowledge. During the time of the study, Lynne was completing coursework to obtain a master’s degree in education. Although she had taken a graduate course focused on multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching, she was hoping to gain clarity on the concepts by participating in this study. In her definition of culturally responsive teaching, Lynne described the concept as:

...being attentive to each and every one of your student's needs and making sure that you are representing all the different students in your class. It's not just by race [and] culture. It's also by gender [and] social class; students with or without disabilities. It's just making sure everybody feels welcome, and not feeling like they weren't recognized or that they felt discriminated against. Also, that there is equality in the classroom and that everybody has basically the same as everyone else and no one feels singled out for what they do or don't have.

Based on her prior understandings, Lynne did not identify herself as a culturally responsive teacher but rather “as one in the works.” She explained her thoughts by stating, “I’m trying. I learn more and more about it each time I study it. So, I’m making gains, I think.” As an example of her application of culturally responsive teaching practices, Lynne shared how she always focused on pronouncing students’ names correctly, reading books about different cultures, and displaying posters about people and things that may be relevant to her students. By participating in the study, Lynne hoped to gain more knowledge about culturally

responsive teaching for the purpose of becoming a better teacher who possessed the ability to apply the concept “like second nature all the time.”

Michelle

Michelle’s Background and Beliefs. Michelle identified as an upper middle-class, Black female from the West Coast of the United States. She grew up in a working-class, single-parent household with two siblings that depended on the support of their grandmother who lived in the same neighborhood. She recalled her father using a different address to enroll her and her siblings in a “better” school district. However, Michelle noted that she did not relate to the teachers nor students whom she encountered each day in the “better” school. When asked how her schooling experiences had influenced her teaching practices, she stated,

I think I go out of my way to make sure that I’m doing all that I can to have my kids of color succeed, excel, shine, soar, fly, all of those things because I don’t feel like that was a priority with me as a student in the better school.

She continued by detailing her primary goal as a teacher by saying, “I want students to know that outside of their family, there’s another adult that cares about them and that wants to see them successful – whatever that looks like – and is going to try to pull that out of [them].”

After 8 years of teaching in her hometown, Michelle relocated to the southeastern region of the United States and accepted a primary teaching position at the research site approximately three years prior to the research study. She described the Title I suburban elementary school as being “more ethnically diverse” regarding students and teachers than her previous non-Title I elementary school in the western region of the United States. Michelle had previously taught in a school serving a large population of White students with a small percentage of minority students including individuals of Native American, Asian, Latin, and

African American descent while working alongside a “predominately White and female” teaching staff. She also acknowledged and appreciated her previous school district’s initiative towards ensuring equity for all students – something she noted as being absent and needed in her current school district.

Michelle’s Prior Knowledge. Having played a key role in the equity initiative in her previous district, Michelle explained how she served as an Equity Teacher Leader:

As the Equity Teacher Leader at my last school for 5 years, I met twice a month with the district-wide team to discuss equity in education and culturally responsive teaching. As a district team, we identified equity strategies that were going to be used by everybody in their classrooms and included in lesson plans. I brought information back to my school site and facilitated professional development with our staff.

Outside of the in-service equity training completed with her previous school district, Michelle vaguely remembered taking a multicultural education course while completing her teacher preparation program. When asked to define culturally responsive teaching, Michelle quickly responded by stating:

I think culturally responsive teaching is making sure that you are mindful of all the people in the room and what they need. And so that may be that I am looking at or looking for perspectives from all of my kids...everybody is having that opportunity to think and speak...letting kids know that there’s an accountability piece. We all have to be accountable and responsible for being a participant [in the learning process].

She further explained why she considered herself to be a culturally responsive teacher by declaring:

Yes, [I am a culturally responsive teacher] because I am intentional about how I am providing the educational experiences for my kids; and in that intention, I am making sure or trying to make sure that I am being mindful of where my kids come from, about what they bring to the table, where they might have some struggles, and how I can support them.

When asked what she hoped to gain from participating in the professional development designed for this study, Michelle mentioned how she felt like she already knew some things about culturally responsive teaching, but not everything. She continued by explaining how she hoped "to learn some new tricks and to collaborate with like-minded people who feel like [culturally responsive teaching is] important and to hopefully start a fire so that the district sees value in it and wants to put effort and energy behind it."

Sherry

Sherry's Background and Beliefs. Sherry identified as a middle-class, Black female from a Caribbean territory occupied by the United States. Sherry explained how she came from humble beginnings with high expectations regarding education, manners, and respect for others. She used phrases such as "very strict and "very structured" to depict the familial and educational settings of her childhood and further expressed how she incorporated similar features into her daily classroom routines and teaching practices. She stated that her primary goal as a teacher was to ensure her students were "world ready." Sherry explained:

When I teach, I am teaching because I want my kids to be lifelong learners, to be aware that the world owes you nothing, and you can be anything that you want to be or even greater...and in the world, you have to have manners. I'm there to teach them all

these academics, and I do it to the best of my ability, but I think you have to learn life skills first because I think that's been neglected.

Sherry deemed it her responsibility to ensure her students were academically and socially prepared for future endeavors in the world awaiting them.

At the time of the study, Sherry had been teaching as a second career for 16 years with most of her experience being in two suburban Title I elementary schools within the selected district for this study. She described both schools as serving mostly Black and Hispanic students with each school serving more of one group than the other. In the school mostly populated with Hispanic students, she identified language barriers as always being a challenge she was able to address. When Sherry compared the Black students at both schools she said, "It was different because the African American students at [one school] knew more than the African American kids at [the other school], which was interesting. They knew more because I think their parents' socioeconomic background was a little better." In addition to teaching in Title I schools within the suburban school district, Sherry had also taught internationally for 2 years. During her international teaching experience, she taught English to Middle Eastern boys in a primary school. From this experience, she learned, "If you immerse a person into a culture, into a language in a certain way, they actually learn it." She appeared to insinuate how differing cultures between teacher and students did not interfere with the teaching and learning process in this situation.

Sherry's Prior Knowledge. When asked about prior teacher development related to culture, Sherry indicated she had previously completed in-service professional development focused on teaching children in poverty. She had also taken a multicultural education graduate course from which she recalled "intense discussions as it pertained to race and how to address

students of different backgrounds.” However, she did not recount any conversation specific to culturally responsive teaching. When asked to define culturally responsive teaching, Sherry described the concept as “respecting one’s culture and respecting what could trigger certain things especially when it comes to politics and race issues. And just being mindful or conscious of others during conversations.” She further explained how she believed she was incorporating culturally responsive practices by encouraging students to use their voices while being respectful to others during student-driven conversations each morning before starting their structured day. She emphasized how she encouraged students to talk by saying, “You have a voice. I want to hear it. Don’t come in here thinking you’re going to be overpowered. You have thoughts to share, as well.” Moreover, Sherry associated culturally responsive teaching with taking time to facilitate discussions centered on “life lessons”. When asked if she would describe herself as a culturally responsive teacher, Sherry claimed:

I am, but I’m not where I would like to be because I need to learn more. I know about the African American community, but then there are some little gaps for me, but I’m learning. And then I know about the Hispanic community, but then I don’t know a lot. So, there’s still more to be learned.

Thus, Sherry volunteered to participate in this study to fill gaps in her understanding of different cultures and learn more about being a culturally responsive teacher.

Garrett

Garrett’s Background and Beliefs. Garrett was raised by working-class parents in a small rural town in the southeastern region of the United States just north of the area in which the research site was located. At the time of this study, he was one of three Black male teachers at the research site and had been teaching at the school since the beginning of his 10-

year career in education. While completing his undergraduate teacher preparation program, he considered becoming a secondary mathematics educator. After reflecting on his elementary school experience and realizing he did not encounter a Black male teacher until middle school, he decided to become an elementary school teacher. As a Black male teacher in a Title I elementary school, Garrett took pride in establishing relationships with male students, particularly Black male students, and serving as a role model for many of the students he encountered. He expressed the significance of this connection by explaining how "a lot of the students come from single-mother households, and so some of them might not always be able to see a male in a positive role." Garrett further explained the importance of being a Black role model in the elementary school setting by stating:

I feel like it is good for students to see an African American male because a lot of times when you ask kids what they want to be when they grow up, a male teacher is not on that list of things at all... They are so accustomed to idolizing rappers, football players, basketball players, you know, those kinds of things. But they get to see [me], an African American male teacher on their level, in a different spotlight of what they are accustomed to seeing on TV. And I think because I am so far away from the norm, that's why a lot of students end up flocking toward me and enjoy being around me.

To clarify his use of the phrase, "so far away from the norm," Garrett claimed:

I don't think I'm your stereotypical African American male. I feel as though I'm able to maneuver amongst many different cultures of people and nationalities, but at the same time, I'm comfortable in my own culture or being around my own race, as well.

In response to being questioned about his primary goal as a teacher Garrett stated, "My main goal is to reach every one of my students on a personal level and make that kind of

connection, whereas they enjoy coming to school. After that, I feel like I can then begin to educate them.”

Garrett’s Prior Knowledge. Garrett did not recall taking any multicultural education or culturally responsive teaching courses as a pre-service nor in-service teacher. Therefore, he was looking forward to participating in the study. When asked to give his definition of culturally responsive teaching, Garrett apprehensively described his thoughts by saying, “I think that means you are sensitive to everyone’s culture when you’re teaching things and when you’re working with kids. You don’t let their culture deter you from giving them what they need.” When asked if he would describe himself as a culturally responsive teacher, Garrett responded, “I think I’m a culturally responsive teacher. I don’t ever want to make any culture, race, or gender feel like they’re above or below someone else.” He further supported his thinking by explaining how he applied what he believed to be culturally responsive teaching practices by stating:

I give and show students examples of how we can all be different while respecting our differences. I make sure everyone is comfortable. For example, we have [English Language Learners] in our classroom who typically have a lag in communication because of language barriers. It may cause them to frighten up and not want to talk in the classroom, but I let everyone know that they’re no different than you. And I give adequate amounts of time for them to be able to do the work and flourish.

Since Garrett was unsure of his understanding of culturally responsive teaching, he decided to participate in this study to gain more insight into the concept and self-assess to determine if his ways of thinking and doing were appropriate for the culturally and linguistically diverse

students served in his classroom. If not, he was adamant about changing his perceptions and practices to better serve his students.

Gina

Gina's Background and Beliefs. Gina, who identified as a middle-class, African American female and single mother of four, was a native of a semi-rural area of the southeastern state in which the study was conducted. She began her teaching career as an intermediate grade teacher at the research site 3 years prior to this study. Within those 3 years, Gina noticed a gradual shift in the student demographics in the school which she described by saying:

I feel like the dynamic in a lot of the cultural backgrounds [of students] seem like they're shifting just within the few years that I've been here. There were a few more Caucasian students, a couple of years ago. Then it started shifting more to the minority. Most of my students now are Hispanic and African American.

However, she believed the shift had allowed more opportunity for her to relate to students, specifically regarding their family structures and her experience as a single mother. She supported this claim by emphasizing:

I share my story about being a single mom and a lot of my students can relate because they are coming from single [parent] backgrounds or they're being raised by grandparents. At least half, if not more, are in single-parent households this year. So, I felt like that's always a way for me to build my relationships with them.

Although sharing her story of single motherhood placed Gina in a vulnerable position, she used it build positive relationships with students and families experiencing similar situations.

When asked about her primary goal as a teacher, Gina expressed how she drew inspiration from her elementary teachers who maintained a calming and engaging classroom environment in which students were able to have fun with hands-on learning experiences. Continuing to reflect on her elementary school experience, she also recalled “there was no relationship between me and my teachers, but more of just making sure that I stayed engaged in the lesson”. Thus, in addition to maintaining a soothing and stimulating learning environment, Gina’s primary goal as a teacher was to form better relationships with her students than she had with her teachers as she firmly believed “kids aren’t going to learn if they’re not enjoying what they’re learning and there is no relationship [with the teacher].”

Gina’s Prior Knowledge. Gina indicated she had not taken any pre-service or in-service courses regarding multicultural education or culturally responsive teaching before the study. Thus, when asked to provide her definition of culturally responsive teaching during the initial interview, Gina hesitantly said, "I would think of it as making sure you're aware and making sure you're including everyone. So not just teaching one particular background or tradition, and maybe being open with what you teach and how you teach it." She continued by describing how she had applied what she considered culturally responsive teaching by "giving each student an opportunity to feel heard" during the winter holiday season. Gina explained:

Around our holiday break – I try and make sure I call it holiday break – we had a talk about Christmas, and I wanted to know if anyone celebrated anything other than Christmas. Some of them had never heard of other traditions and holidays, so I worked that into our reading rotations. We talked about some different traditions, compared them, and contrasted them...just making sure we were aware and making sure they could share their traditions.

When asked if she would describe herself as a culturally responsive teacher, Gina said:

Yes and no. I feel like I'm okay at addressing [culture] when it comes up, but I don't feel like I've done a good job of being proactive about it. It's not something that I would just start a conversation or assignment about. I definitely could grow in the area.

Therefore, Gina volunteered to participate in this study with the hope of developing a deeper understanding of culturally responsive teaching and how to incorporate it into her daily practices because she felt "limited" in her awareness of the concept and recognized there was always room for professional growth.

Overview of the Professional Development

Amid teaching face-to-face and virtual students simultaneously during a global pandemic, the teacher participants in this study volunteered to engage in a weekly series of professional development scheduled to occur during the last quarter of the school year. Due to COVID-19 guidelines and protocols, some necessary adjustments were made to the schedule and assigned tasks. Two weeks prior to the start date of the professional development series, the school district released a voluntary COVID-19 vaccination plan that interfered with the professional development schedule. Teachers had prepared to participate in the professional development on Wednesdays – their remote teaching and learning days designated for small group instruction and professional learning. However, the vaccination schedule pushed two of the remote days to Fridays. To avoid scheduling professional development on Fridays, the participants decided to keep the proposed professional development schedule. Maintaining the midweek schedule for professional learning caused teacher participants to attend two of the professional development sessions after facilitating a full day of teaching and learning in a hybrid learning environment. Although the participants expressed feelings of exhaustion on

these days, they persevered in staying focused and engaged in the transformative professional development sessions occurring on these days. In general, the participants maintained their commitment to the study while enduring anxiety related to one or more of the following: COVID-19, graduate studies, personal matters, accreditation, and/or the state's decision to proceed with administering the end of year assessments after teachers and students navigated ten months of interrupted teaching and learning in a hybrid setting.

Despite the unprecedented challenges presented mainly by the global pandemic, most of the participants attended each of the virtual professional learning sessions (94%) and most of the participants completed the reflective journal prompts assigned after each session (97%) as noted in Table 3. Due to unforeseen circumstances, two participants did not attend the last session. However, each reviewed the session materials asynchronously and engaged in direct or virtual conversations about the session with participants of their choice.

Table 3

Participation Data: Attendance, Journal Entries, and Surveys

	Session 1 (Participants out of 8)	Session 2 (Participants out of 8)	Session 3 (Participants out of 8)	Session 4 (Participants out of 8)	Participation Percentage (%)
Session Attendance	8	8	8	6*	94
Completed Journal Entries	8	8	8	7	97
Completed Surveys	6	6	6	5	72

Note. *This number includes synchronous participation only. Two of the participants completed this session asynchronously due to unforeseen circumstances.

Additionally, as shown in Table 3, a smaller percentage of the anonymous professional development surveys (72%) were completed by the participants after each session than the reflective journal entries (97%). According to Sherry, she and some of the other participants

did not complete the surveys at the end of each session as requested because they had other work-related or personal tasks to complete while attempting to "survive" an unparalleled year of teaching during a global pandemic. They were often exhausted and pressed for time to complete tasks extending beyond their daily duties as a teacher. Sherry continued by stating, "It would have been good to get the survey done right away, but I was always putting it off to do something else." She explained how the surveys required additional time for reflection during which she would have to refer to the presentation materials and the book. Thus, Sherry suggested the use of a less demanding survey with no more than three questions for future implementation of the professional development series.

In general, the culturally responsive professional development sessions were well attended by the participants, and each participant dedicated sufficient time and effort towards completing the reflective tasks as agreed upon before starting the study. The following section of this manuscript provides an overview of the participants' engagement in the series of professional development and findings associated with research questions (1) How, if at all, do teachers' perceptions regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students change after participating in a series of culturally responsive professional development? (1a) What factors influence teachers' perceptions about teaching and learning are related to culturally and linguistically diverse students? (2) How, if at all, do teachers' practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students change after participating in a series of culturally responsive professional development? The research findings are presented by summarizing the participants' preconceived and developed understanding of culture along with a detailed description of each session and any identified changes to the participants' perceptions or

practices as related to teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students in a suburban elementary school with a Title I program.

Session 1: Cultural Awareness

Session Description

During session one, the participants engaged in learning designed to evoke reflective discourse to increase their understanding of the three levels of culture (i.e., surface, shallow, and deep principles of culture) and cultural archetypes (i.e., individualism and collectivism). This session was also designed to maximize each participant's capacity to recognize and manage his or her social-emotional response to students' diverse cultural socializations. Session one consisted mostly of sharing research, illustrations, and protocols taken from Hammond's (2015) book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, followed by time to reflect and discuss the participants' emotional reactions to students' social and academic behaviors. Participants were introduced to the clearly defined descriptions of the terms *culture* and *race* as presented in chapter one of this composition and an explanation of how shared racial experiences between teachers and students do not equate to shared cultural experiences. Thus, teachers and students of the same race may abide by differing cultural norms and values. From that point, the participants began to engage in whole group discussions focused on identifying elements of their own cultures and acknowledging how student behaviors trigger emotionally charged responses influenced by their cultural frames of reference. The participants also took time to decipher the cultural similarities and differences between them and their students. Throughout the session, the conversation was dominated by Garrett and supported by a few comments from Sherry, Brenda, Elaine, and Morgan. The other three

participants – Gina, Lynne, and Michelle – remained quiet; however, they responded nonverbally with an occasional head nod of agreement.

Participants' Definition of Culture

Prior to session one, the participants were asked to define culture, describe their cultures, and compare their cultural experiences to their students. The participants were also given an opportunity to further expound on their thoughts regarding culture by submitting reflective journal responses after the first and last professional development sessions. An analysis of the participants' interview transcriptions, journal entries, and anonymous survey responses revealed most of the participants entered the professional development research project with a surface level understanding of culture, a narrow view of how their cultural frames of reference influence their thoughts and actions, and minimal consideration given to the similarities and differences between the cultural experiences of them and their students.

Figure 6 portrays how the participants used mostly surface level descriptors rather than shallow or deep level descriptors to define culture before session one. Surface culture is the observable forms of culture such as food, clothes, language, and holidays. Shallow culture encompasses unspoken rules and social norms. Defining principles of surface and shallow culture may change over time as shifts occur in an individual's social identity or as individuals of differing ethnic groups marry and/or have children (Hammond, 2015). Deep culture is the foundation of an individual's perception of self and the world. Deep culture fuels unconscious assumptions and beliefs that guide the brain in problem-solving, identifying threats, connecting with others, and decision making (Hammond, 2015). Understanding the levels of culture and how deep culture guides the brain during teaching and learning is vital to the application of culturally responsive teaching practices.

Figure 6

Descriptors Used by Participants to Define Culture Prior to the Professional Development

Descriptors Used by Participants to Define Culture aligned to the Levels of Culture						
Surface Culture <i>observable and concrete elements</i>				Shallow Culture <i>unspoken rules; social norms</i>		Deep Culture <i>unconscious assumptions</i>
"family dinners"	"clothing"	"customs and traditions"	"what makes up a person - their food, rituals, language, formal or ethnic dress"	"how you were raised"	"routines and rituals that people follow"	"what people feel is right"
"family reunions, birthday parties, etc."	"traditions or teachings"	"your language, your celebrations and your foods"	"hair"	"way of life"	"values"	"belief systems you were born into"
"music"	"I kind of see it as traditions."			"what things are important to you"		

In addition to the descriptors noted in Figure 6, Morgan, Sherry, and Garrett specifically acknowledged how culture may or may not be influenced by race. Without providing details, Morgan stated, "[Culture] can include some racial things." Sherry was more specific with explaining her perceived relationship between race and culture. Sherry asserted:

African Americans have a culture...Hispanics have a culture... I feel that people from defined cultures have culture because of the racial inequalities faced by their ancestors as well as ways of life that had to be adapted to survive or to make the best of situations one had no control of.

Opposingly, Garrett claimed, "I'm a firm believer that you can't say [we're the same race], so we have the same culture. No, because if I didn't grow up experiencing the same things you experienced...we may not have the same culture." As aligned to the notion of Howard et al. (2017), Garrett strongly believed the lack of cultural incongruence amongst students and teachers extended beyond that of the White teacher-student of color relationship as teachers and students

of the same racial group such as Black teacher-Black student relationships may have different cultural experiences. Moreover, cultural incongruences often result in a teacher's adoption of deficit perceptions and practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students regardless of shared racial identities and experiences.

After engaging in conversations about culture and awareness in session one, the participants shared their reflective thoughts by responding to the anonymous survey. One participant wrote, "When I saw the definition of culture, it made me realize I'm very surface in my understanding." Another participant responded, "Much of what I thought about culture was actually surface or shallow. I need to do better to educate myself on what deep culture is and what it looks like." A third participant admitted, "What I considered to be culture dove deeper than the ostensible language, food, music, clothing, etc. There's much to learn." The participants' responses confirmed the need for expanding their surface level understandings of culture and its influence on one's thoughts and actions.

Additionally, the participants were given a journal prompt asking them to reflect on the collages they were encouraged to create after session one to illustrate their cultural backgrounds and cultural frames of reference (see Appendix L). When asked to describe how, if at all, would they make any changes to their collages, four out of the six participants who engaged in the reflective task expressed a desire to revise their collages based on newfound understandings regarding the different levels of culture. Garrett wrote, "A lot of my images focus on surface level cultures. While these things are a large part of me, they don't go down to the bone of culture. I should add more images that embody [the deep] aspect of my culture." Lynne described the need for "going deeper and showing some of [her] values and beliefs" in what she had planned to compile. Likewise, Elaine explained how she needed to

revise her collage by adding more images and descriptions to illustrate her beliefs rather than simply including foods, books, and other things she liked to do with her family. To show her understanding of culture, Gina emphasized how she desired to add pictures to represent a wider range of cultures. She further shared her thoughts by writing, "I have one picture of two different races holding hands, but I've learned that culture isn't necessarily attached to someone's race, but rather their own experiences in life."

On the other hand, Michelle and Brenda indicated how they would not make any changes to their collages as they created illustrations to accurately portray some of their surface, shallow, and deep levels of culture. Brenda further expressed how her collage would stay the same and how reflecting on her culture by creating a collage had helped her to develop a better understanding of the importance of acknowledging her own culture and how it influences her interactions with students. Likewise, Michelle wrote:

[My collage] represents my culture and cultural experiences. It reflects some of the values instilled in me by my family dynamics and cultural upbringings including the importance of education, being proud of who I am and where I come from, coping skills, and adversity. And I think that some of my cultural experiences are similar to my students (see Appendix L).

Creating collages to represent their cultural frames of reference aided the participants in developing a deeper understanding of culture and critically examining the similarities and differences between their cultures and their students' cultures.

Participants' Perceptions

When the participants were questioned about how their cultural experiences compared to their students' culture, most of them took a long pause before responding or expressed how

the probe challenged their thinking. Some responses from the participants included “I’ve never thought about that.”, “I don’t know. That’s a really good question.”, and “Wow, that’s a deep one.” As aligned to the research, the participants’ delayed responses to this question exposed their lack of engagement in culture-focused pre-service and in-service teacher development programs designed to encourage reflection on their identities as well as the intersection of race, culture, and pedagogy (Gay et al., 2000; Gordon et al., 2020; Griffin et al. 2016; Milner, 2003; Siwatu et al., 2011). Yet, asking the participants to identify and compare their cultural frames of references to that of their students directed them towards a place of critical reflection and transformation (Mezirow, 1994). After taking some time to formulate a response to the question, most of the participants described similarities and differences based on surface level principles such as racial or ethnic experiences, holidays, and socioeconomic status. Minimum regard was directed towards similarities and differences related to the shallow and deep aspects of culture such as expectations, mindsets, values, honesty, behavioral expectations, family structures, or faith.

After engaging in critical reflection and rational discourse regarding existing cultural similarities and differences between the teachers and their students, the participants began to recognize how the existing cultural incongruences between their students and them stimulated emotionally charged triggers when the students displayed social and academic behaviors opposite to their deeply rooted belief systems. The participants also realized when their brain was triggered, they would tend to become emotionally reactive rather than culturally responsive as described by Hammond (2015). As the participants began to examine their triggers during session one, an eye-opening conversation occurred focusing on student

behaviors the participants had identified as disrespectful. Some of the participants continued to reflect on the topic of triggers by sharing thoughts in their reflective journals.

During a conversation about their triggers, Sherry explained, “I grew up in a culture where manners are a must. Adults speak and children listen.” She further shared how she did not believe manners were considered “a priority” for her students and their families as some students “treat and speak to their parents as if they are their equals”. Similarly, Garrett stated, “It took me some time to get accustomed to students responding to me with ‘what’ or ‘yeah’. My culture has always been to respond with a ‘yes ma’am’ or ‘yes sir’ when addressing adults.” Likewise, Gina was raised to acknowledge adults in the same manner; therefore, she expected such from students. On the other hand, Michelle admitted to quickly adapting the “southern culture” of using handles to show respect after relocating to the area from a western state. To avoid being perceived as disrespected, she addressed colleagues by the use of “ma’am” and “sir” although these “respectful” handles were not a part of her cultural norms she explained:

While my family taught me to be respectful to my elders, it was not seen as being disrespectful to call adult family members or friends of the family by their first names. As children, we answered adults with a ‘yes’ or sometimes ‘huh’. ‘Sir’ nor ‘ma’am’ was not required of me, so I don’t expect to hear it from my students.

As the participants continued to engage in rational discourse regarding “disrespectful” behaviors, they began to name and acknowledge how they had come to perceive and label behaviors in such a way. In doing so, they began to discover how their personal biases and assumptions regarding the culturally and linguistically diverse students in their classrooms were linked to their upbringings and cultural frames of reference.

According to Hammond (2015), when student behaviors challenge teachers' cultural-based belief systems, teachers become emotionally unstable and susceptible to an amygdala hijack – the brain's way of triggering a fight or flight response. Thus, the participants acknowledged their emotional overreactions to and irrational assumptions about students' behaviors as their triggered brains' unstable response to unchecked biases and presumed threats. A summary of the participants' reflective thoughts detailing self-identified triggers along with the causes and assumptions associated with each are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Summary of Participants' Triggers, Causes, and Assumptions

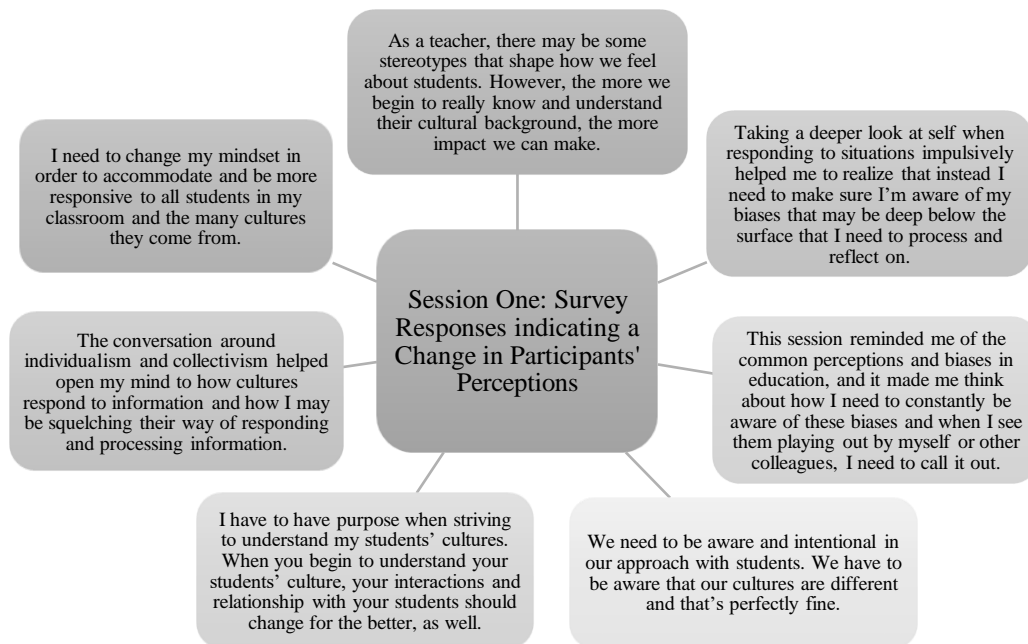
Participant	Triggers	Causes/Assumptions
Morgan	Students not paying attention or not willing to try	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I grew up hearing when the teacher talks, you listen. • I knew my parents expected good behavior and grades. • I think parents want the same for their students. • I assume students are spoiled and allowed to do whatever they want at home. • I also assume that I am the first teacher that has challenged them or attempted to make them do challenging work. • I refuse to let them sit and do nothing.
Elaine	Students talking back or rolling eyes Students not accepting my help with assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was taught to show respect for adults in my culture. • I, the adult, am the authority figure. • I, as the adult, am not used to being challenged. • I assume students are deliberately being disrespectful when they snap back or challenge a directive of mine. • I assume students do not care about schoolwork or getting good grades. • I, ultimately, feel rejected when students do not accept help
Brenda	Students not taking care of supplies that have been purchased for them to be successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel like this trigger is influenced by childhood poverty. • I was taught to take care of things. • I assume students do not care. • I assume that no one has taught students to care.
Lynne	Students who do not have their supplies or materials ready for school and truancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was raised to value education. • I assume parents do not value education. • I assume parents do not put the needs of their child above all things.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I now recognize and understand that I need to work more with the parents to find out how I can support them.
Michelle	Students having side conversations while I am teaching or talking over each other or me during classroom discussions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was taught by my family to listen to the teacher, follow directions, and do your work – you go to school to learn. • I assume that students think their side conversations are more important than the information I am trying to teach. • I assume students think what they have to say is more important than what others have to say. • I assume students think they do not need to pay attention during instruction.
Sherry	Students not making manners a priority. Students' lack of studying.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was taught to always address people with “Good morning.”, “Good afternoon.”, or “Good night”. • I automatically assume students are being rude and disrespectful when they do not use manners or greet others. • I was raised to believe students should hold their education at the highest regard since it may be the key to getting out of poverty or a legacy of illiteracy. • I assume some students do not value their education. • I assume students do not want to do better for themselves (ex. get out of poverty)
Garrett	Students responding to me with “what”. Students using the term “boy” when addressing a male student or teacher, specifically an African American male.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was raised to understand it as being extremely disrespectful to say “what” to an adult. • I have slowly come to understand that every child is not raised the same. • I now understand that it may be acceptable for a student to say “what” to an adult in his/her household. • I was taught that the use of “boy” was a sign of disrespect and degrading. • I now understand that people call each other “boy” as a term of endearment. For example, a student may say [to a peer], “Good job on that math problem, boy!” • I have come to understand that the term may not mean the same thing to them culturally as it does to me.
Gina	Students talking to others or shouting out during a lesson.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I grew up understanding that it was always disrespectful for students to speak in the classroom without being called on. • I jumped to conclusions when students were talking and assumed conversations were off task. • I now wonder if they have something interesting to add to the lesson or a thought that others may have, too.

After session one, the participants responded to the reflective survey by describing how the professional development informed their perceptions about the triggering behaviors displayed by culturally and linguistically diverse students and how it related to their understanding of self. Figure 7 displays the survey responses indicating changes to the participants' perceptions regarding interactions with students of differing cultures.

Figure 7

Session One Survey Responses Indicating Change in Perceptions



As related to changes in perceptions focusing on the hot topic of triggering behaviors, one participant responded to the anonymous reflective survey by writing:

The conversation about triggers helped me to recognize what my triggers are and where they might be rooted. I appreciated hearing about the triggers of others and the context around them. It made me think of what I am carrying around based on my own culture and upbringing, and potentially projecting onto my students.

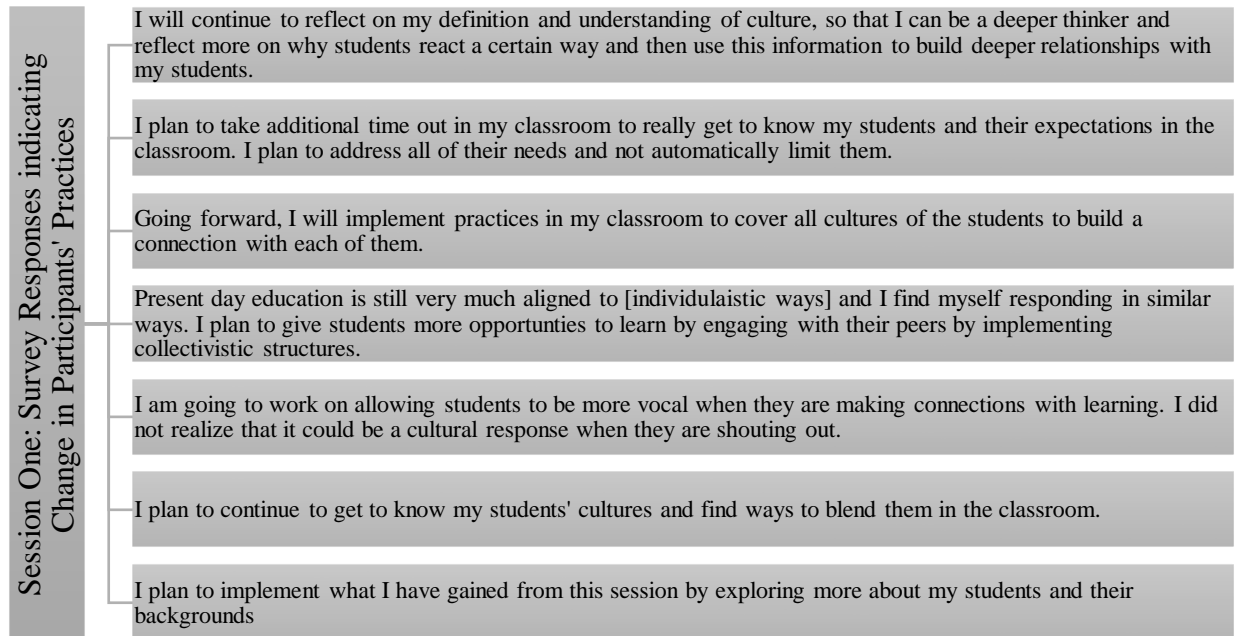
Another participant responded to the survey by emphasizing:

This session helped me better understand that I am viewing the world through my own lens based on my culture – what I believe is right and wrong, appropriate or inappropriate, respectful or disrespectful, etc. The conversation allowed me to think more about the culture of my students and how, in some ways, their culture may be different than my own. But more importantly, their culture isn't wrong because it is different than mine, and I shouldn't make them feel that way.

After taking time to identify their cultural frames of reference and name their triggers, the participants began to make conscious efforts towards changing their perceptions and practices.

Participants' Practices

Session one focused immensely on self-awareness regarding the participants' cultural frames of reference and acknowledging how personal bias influences one's thoughts and actions in the classroom. Thus, the session seemed to have a greater influence on changing the teacher participants' perceptions rather than their practices. However, an analysis of the survey responses did reveal some of the participants' desires to increase their use of self-reflective practices for the purpose of developing a deeper understanding of their own culture as compared to students' cultures. Participants also noted interest in moving beyond surface-level understandings of students' cultures and the application of culturally appropriate practices in the classroom. Figure 8 displays some of the participants' proposed changes to their practices submitted via the anonymous survey administered after session one of the culturally responsive professional development.

Figure 8*Session One Survey Responses Indicating Change in Practices***Session 2: Information Processing***Session Description*

According to Hammond (2015), culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogical approach firmly rooted in learning theory and cognitive science. Therefore, session two focused on developing the participants' technical knowledge concerning the relationship between neuroscience (functioning of the brain) and culture. A portion of the session was presented in a lecture-style format as the participants were introduced to the functions of the brain and a research-based set of *Brain Rules* detailing how deep cultural values program the brain on how to interpret the world, minimize social threats, maximize opportunities to connect with others, and process information (Hammond, 2015). The participants were also given time to review and reflect on their application of the three stages of information processing – input, elaboration, and application along with instructional practices suggested to

foster information processing and build the intellectual capacity of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Hammond, 2015). The participants also viewed and discussed a model classroom video featuring an elementary school teacher as she applied culturally responsive information processing techniques in her classroom. The video reinforced the relevance of applying culturally responsive practices aligned to the learning traditions of collectivist and oral cultures where knowledge is taught and processed through storytelling, movement, song, repetition, rituals, and dialogic talk (Hammond, 2015). Although participants described this session as “heavy, but great information” or “a lot to take in,” most recognized the relevance of exploring the relationship between culture and the brain, and some expressed a desire to dedicate more time towards studying and reflecting on the topic.

Participants’ Perceptions

Before session two, none of the participants possessed a clear understanding of the relationship between culture and neuroscience as indicated by a review of the data. When asked how the variance in culture, race, ethnicity, gender, and social class amongst their students influenced teaching and learning, two of the participants (Lynne, and Brenda) provided responses that could be interpreted as culture-blind or color-blind ideologies. As noted in the literature, when teachers possess a limited understanding of culture and race they often adopt culture-blind or color-blind teaching ideologies that may profoundly affect marginalized students as teachers subscribing to such tend to undervalue the need for acknowledging and utilizing students’ cultural and racial differences to enhance teaching and learning (Griffin et al., 2016; Maye & Day, 2012). For instance, Lynne stated:

They know we're different colors, but it doesn't matter. We're not at a point with them where they're seeing [differences in race, culture, and language] because they're little.

They don't understand, I think...I just want them to be able to appreciate who they are. Likewise, Brenda emphasized, "The biggest thing is helping students understand that all of us have differences, but we're the same and we have to understand our differences to be able to be the same, get along, and be a family." However, Brenda also noted how teaching diverse learners should be:

all about the child...bringing in their cultures with books and providing opportunities for them be able to see themselves...making sure they feel like a part of this family (classroom community) no matter what...seeing them by sitting back and watching and observing them as learners and finding out if it's a cultural difference that's getting in the way of teaching and learning.

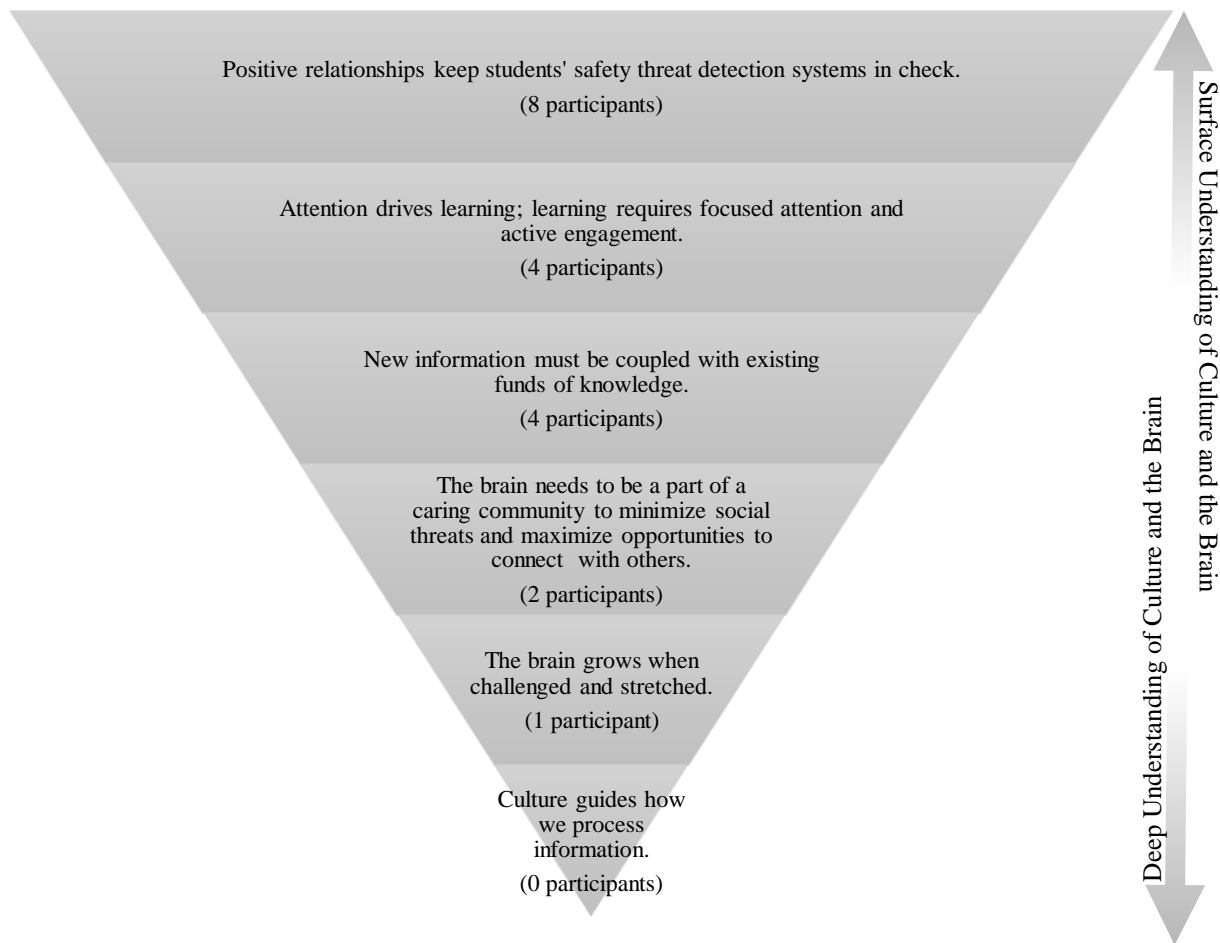
Opposite the cultural-blind perspective, one participant responded to the anonymous survey noting, "I now see that I have to reach every student on their cultural level. I have to make sure the information I deliver doesn't interfere with the students' need for safety and happiness and adds to their feelings of belongingness." This participant understood the need for honoring and valuing cultural differences in the classroom for the purpose of creating culturally-conducive and safe learning environments for all students.

Figure 9 highlights the participants' self-reported perceptions of information processing as related to Hammond's (2015) *Brain Rules*. Some of the participants identified more than one brain rule as being significant to the teaching and learning processes specific to culturally and linguistically diverse students. All of the participants acknowledged the relevance of the student-teacher relationship in regard to fostering information processing;

conversely, none of the participants recognized the influence of culture and how it guides the brain’s ability to process information. According to Hammond (2015), positive relationships keep our safety threat detection system in check, thereby minimizing social threats and increasing the brain’s ability to process information. As expressed by one of the participants, “Building positive and respectful relationships with students has been my key to effective and efficient learning.” Another participant admitted, “Developing relationships with students is my favorite part of teaching, but I have discovered some of my attitudes or microaggressions towards kids have been a hinderance [or threat].”

Figure 9

Participants’ Perceptions of Teaching and Learning as Aligned to Hammond’s Brain Rules



Participants' Practices

Based on the participants' initial self-reports about their use of students' cultural backgrounds to guide instructional practices and promote information processing, most of the participants did not provide examples related to the application of culturally responsive pedagogy. Culturally responsive pedagogy has been described in the literature as the intentional use of instructional techniques and classroom structures aligned to students' cultural ways of thinking and doing (Gay, 2010; Hammond, 2015). Rather, the participants described the application of instructional approaches closely aligned to culturally relevant pedagogy as defined by Ladson-Billings (2000). The following instructional practices were common amongst the participants when they described their use of culture to foster information processing:

- The use of familiar names and places in math word problems
- The use of social studies lessons to teach about different cultures (i.e., holidays)
- The use of student voices and family pictures to share about their families' traditions
- The use of storybooks portraying characters or authors representing a variety of different people and ethnic groups

However, Elaine shared her practices from more of a culturally responsive standpoint by explaining how she allowed students to have choices regarding how to engage in learning and show their understanding of concepts. For instance, she described how students could choose to work independently or collaboratively to complete a task. Elaine also explained how she allowed opportunities for students to create a dance, song, or drawing to show what they had learned rather than always asking them to complete a traditional written assessment. She

further shared how she gave individualized feedback to provide students with positive remarks to guide the work and next steps for attaining their goals.

As the participants delved into the courageous conversations, suggested readings, and instructional videos, and reflective tasks to explore the different techniques suggested to foster information processing, they began to notice similarities between the proposed culturally responsive teaching practices and their practices. The participants realized the instructional practices suggested to increase information processing and intellectual capacity of culturally and linguistically diverse students were based on pedagogical approaches extending beyond the implementation of basic rote exercises and memorization drills. Most of the practices closely aligned to what they were already doing on a daily basis. Thus, instead of completely changing their practices, most of the participants identified areas to improve along with culturally responsive practices to add to the daily instructional practices they were already implementing. Noting such, Michelle reflected in her journal by writing:

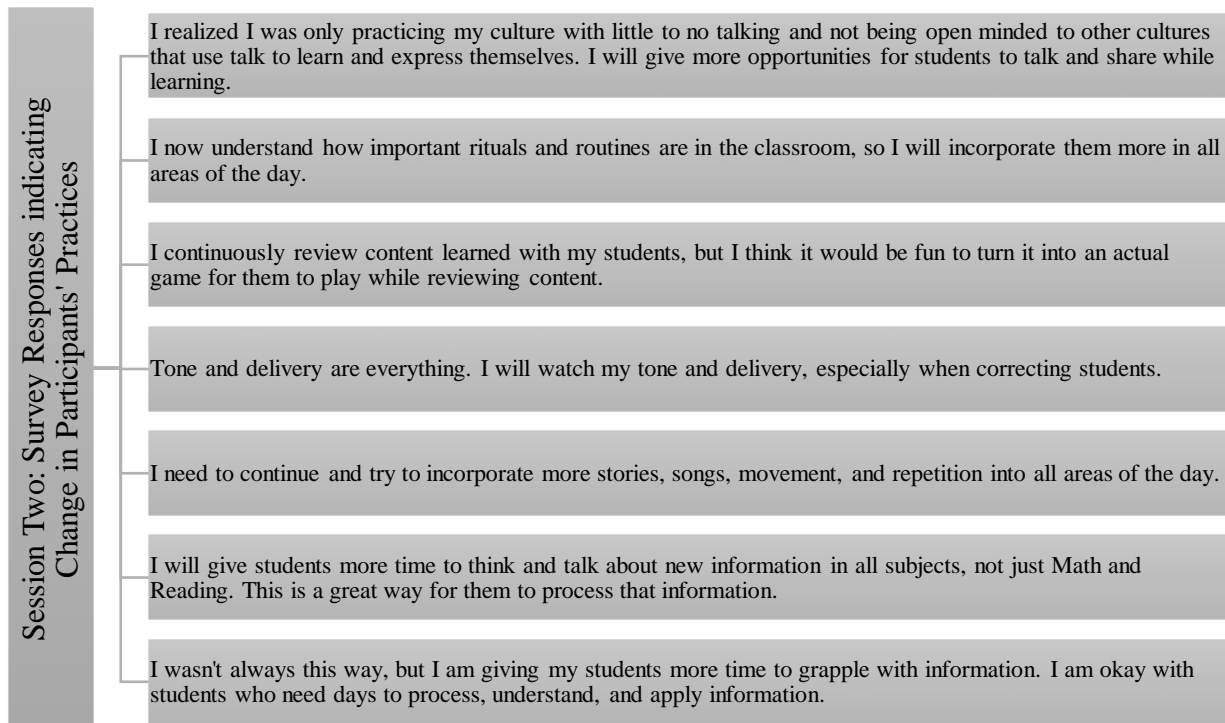
I incorporate information processing by using call and response, asking open-ended questions, and allowing for think time, turn and talk, share what your partner said, etc. We also make connections between what we are currently learning with information we are already familiar with. Although I continuously review content learned with my students, I think it would be [beneficial] to turn it into an actual game for them to play.

Lynne noted how she was already promoting information processing by using “attention grabbers, hooks, phenomenon, turn and talks, think-pair-share, and speed dating”. However, she acknowledged how she could improve her practices by providing more time for students to “chew” on information before asking them to apply it – referring to the ignite, chunk, chew, and review stages of information processing discussed during the professional development

session (Hammond, 2015). Likewise, most of the participants claimed to have already been implementing the techniques; however, each recognized the need for making some improvements to their practices. For instance, Elaine explained how she goes through the information processing protocol by using music or books to ignite interest and body movements, math manipulatives, songs, and chants to practice and review. However, as a support teacher with limited instructional time for her small group instruction, she began to wonder if her lessons were too brief to provide the “chew” time needed for the brain to transfer new information to long-term memory. Figure 10 presents some of the participants’ self-identified areas of growth and proposed changes to their teaching practices as related to implementing culturally responsive practices suggested to promote information processing amongst culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Figure 10

Session Two Survey Responses Indicating Change in Practices



Session 3: Learning Partnerships and Expectations

Session Description

During session three the participants engaged in rational discourse and critical reflection focused on the relevance of establishing learning partnerships with students to build mutual trust and respect. The participants were encouraged to reimagine the student-teacher relationship as a partnership in which the teacher builds a culture of push and care to assist dependent learners with developing independence and academic identity, thereby deterring learned helplessness (Hammond, 2015). The participants used Hammond's (2015) *Warm Demander Chart* to reflect on their disposition as related to offering the personal warmth and active demandingness purported to increase academic engagement and effort of culturally and linguistically diverse students (see Appendix B). Moreover, the participants explored the significance of holding all students to high standards while offering them intellectually challenging learning experiences and wise feedback.

Participants' Perceptions

According to Hammond (2015), the achievement gap between Black and Latinx and White students has continued to increase because of teachers' deficient perceptions and practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students. As a result, teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse students tend to underestimate the intellectual capacity of marginalized students, postpone challenging work by focusing on the basics, and deprive students of opportunities to engage in meaningful learning that requires the application of higher-order thinking skills (Hammond, 2015). Thus, teachers often unconsciously reinforce learned helplessness – dependent learners' lack of academic mindset – by expressing

sympathy over low performance, extending praise for the completion of simple tasks, or offering unsolicited help (Hammond, 2015).

Similar ways of thinking and doing as detailed above were noted by the participants as prevalent ways of thinking and doing amongst some of them as well as other teachers within the research site. Morgan stated:

Because we're a Title I school some teachers make assumptions about what [students] can and cannot do. And that's troubling for me...In the last two years, we've gotten a larger [English Language Learner (ELL)] population, and there's this assumption that ELL students don't know anything, or they don't have any background to do things exactly the way that we have instructed them to do. I think some of it has been because instructionally we're not reaching them. Some of our staff keep their mindset of low expectations for students because students are [culturally and linguistically diverse] and we're Title I.

Michelle corroborated Morgan's statement by emphasizing:

Although I got into teaching with the mindset of all of my kids can learn, all of my kids can understand the concepts that I'm teaching, and all of my kids have the capability to be good at what we're doing; some of my colleagues, past and present, don't have that same mindset.

Moreover, when asked to describe the academic mindset of students in their classrooms, a few of the participants expressed sentiments of what they perceived as students' lack of interest and motivation. Gina stated, "Some students [in my class] are not really motivated to do more or go above and beyond." Elaine responded, "I think half of the students come to school because that's what is expected of them, but education is not necessarily an important thing in

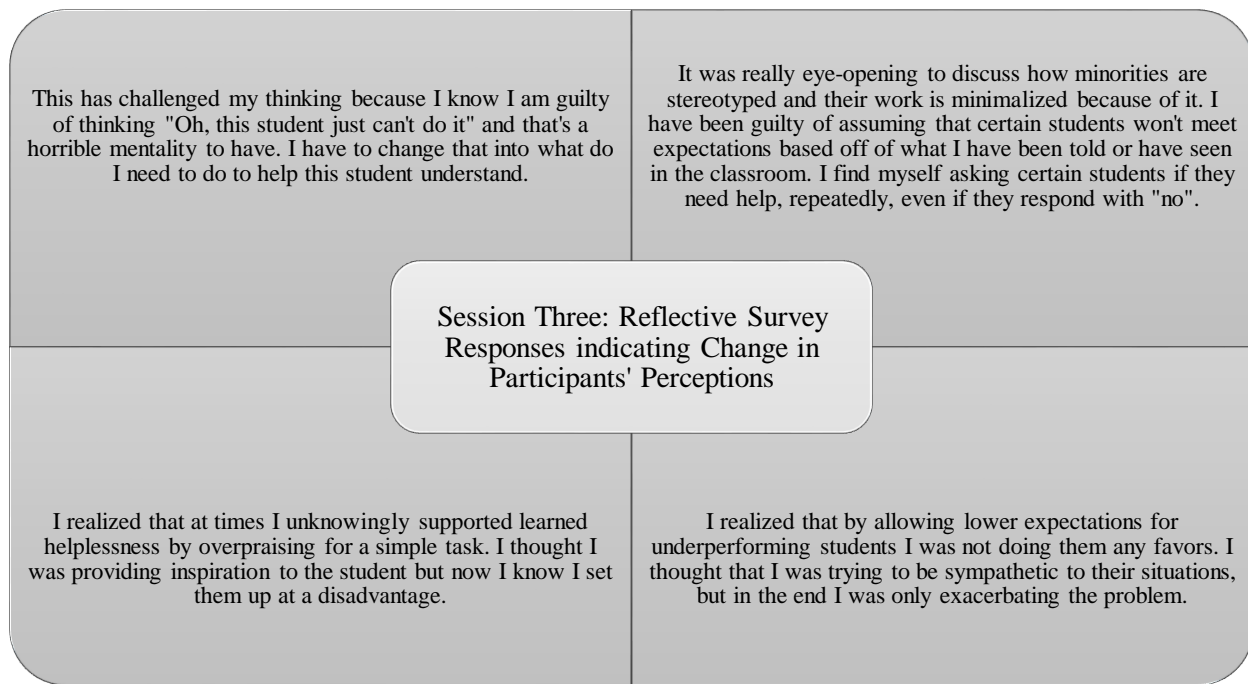
their house.” Sherry emphasized, “Some of the students lack motivation. And if they have some motivation, they have gaps.” However, an analysis of the participants’ reflective journals revealed existing awareness regarding the connection between student-teacher relationships, expectations for learning, and academic mindsets. Sherry wrote, “It has been my experience that building positive and respectful relationships have been my key to effective and efficient learning.” Likewise, Michelle shared, “Students respond to instruction better when they feel that they have a teacher who genuinely cares about them. Making efforts to learn about my students demonstrates that they matter to me.”

Each participant shared reflections in their journal regarding the importance of building positive student-teacher relationships for the sake of creating a welcoming and safe environment for learning. Yet, none of the participants referenced the value of creating a partnership founded on the notions of rapport and alliance to develop students' cognitive insight and academic mindset as suggested by Hammond (2015). According to Hammond (2015), culturally responsive teachers serve as warm-demanding allies who apply an appropriate amount of push and care to provoke students to stretch beyond what is perceived by them or others as possible. After engaging in the reflective activities assigned for this session, all of the participants self-identified mostly as a warm demander with two admitting to also taking on the role of a sentimentalist at times – one who over scaffolds, sympathizes, and contributes to learned helplessness. An analysis of the survey responses for this session revealed how the participants had previously contributed to learned helplessness and desired to change their ways of thinking and doing as related to making assumptions about the academic mindset and abilities of the culturally and linguistically diverse students served in

their classrooms. Figure 11 displays changes in some of the participants' perceptions regarding learning partnerships, expectations, and academic mindset.

Figure 11

Session Three Survey Responses Indicating a Change in Perceptions



Participants' Practices

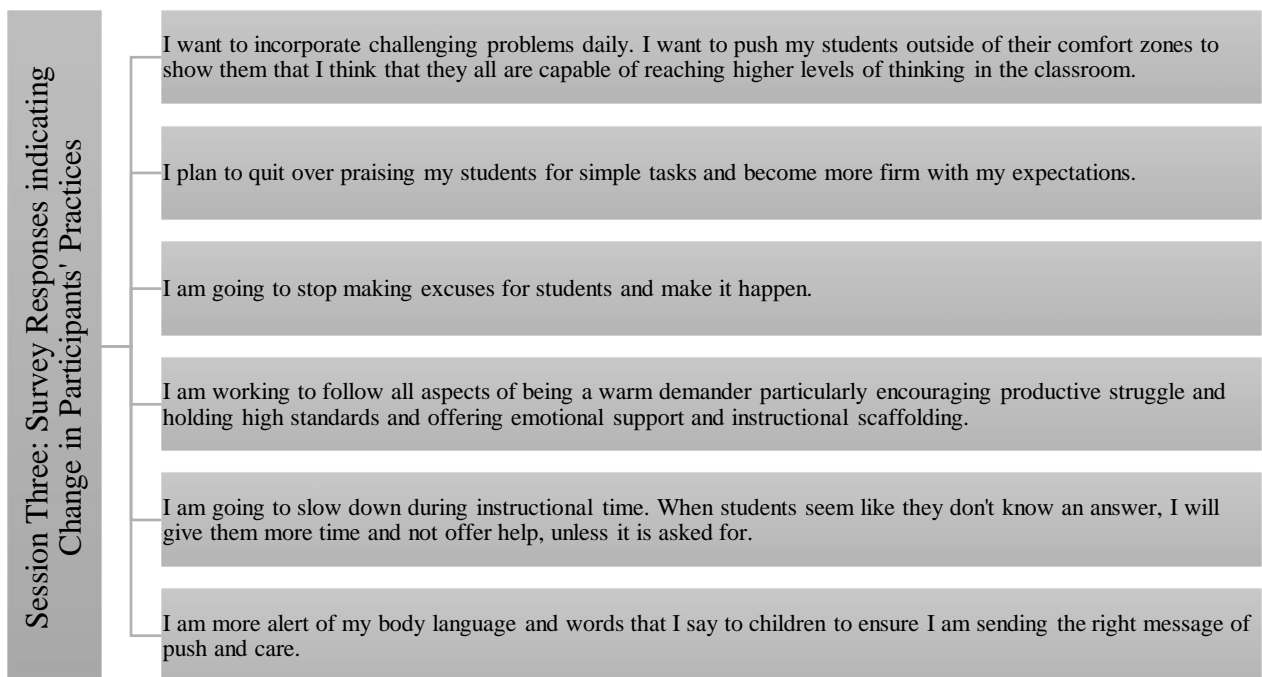
As self-reported warm demanders, each participant identified a need to fully establish, apply, and maintain the push and care suggested as the foundation of the student-teacher learning partnership. As an ally in the partnership, the participants also recognized the need to change their practices as related to exposing all students to challenging tasks rather than limiting opportunities based on assumptions about what certain students are capable or incapable of doing. Sherry explained, "I have learned that it is okay to challenge a student regardless of their background." Likewise, Gina emphasized, "I have learned not to minimize work based on perceptions about their backgrounds...I feel like I haven't been challenging students because I have been a little too compassionate." Elaine admitted through reflection

she had come to understand all students are capable of completing challenging work; however, she stated, “I just come from, and I am still working from the school of thought that if they can’t get this, why would I present that? So, that’s a challenge I’m still dealing with.”

Figure 12 displays the participants’ proposed changes in practice as related to the role of being an ally in the learning partnership.

Figure 12

Session Three Survey Responses Indicating a Change in Practices



Session 4: Community of Learners and Structures

Session Description

During session four the participants engaged in reflective conversations, viewed model classroom videos, and read informational text to develop a deeper understanding of how to create a socially and intellectually safe learning environment for culturally and linguistically diverse students. According to Hammond (2015), a culturally responsive classroom environment goes beyond decorating the classroom with posters and cultural artifacts that

highlight various ethnic groups and social movements. Thus, the participants examined and discussed the influence of using cultural practices and universal elements, specifically as related to language and talk, to establish classroom structures purported to foster belongingness, independent learning, student voice, and academic identity.

Participants' Perceptions

Prior to this session, many of the participants acknowledged the benefit of establishing classroom rituals and routines to manage student behaviors. However, none of the participants knowingly connected their choice of classroom structures and instructional techniques to the cultural ways of their students. When asked to reflect on their classroom rituals and routines, all of the participants explained how they used morning meetings to build student-student and student-teacher relationships and provide opportunities for students to talk freely about non-academic topics before starting their highly structured days of learning. A few of the participants shared how they incorporated music, games, and dance into their lessons to keep students engaged in learning or focused on completing tasks. For instance, Lynne and Garrett explained how they typically played instrumental music to create a calming atmosphere while students were working silently on independent tasks. Brenda and Elaine described how they implemented the use of games, dances, songs, and call and response aligned to academic content to maximize instructional time during brain breaks and transitions. Moreover, some of the participants (Brenda, Lynne, and Michelle) admitted to maintaining a quiet classroom with limited opportunities for student voice and agency. Other participants (Morgan, Sherry, Garrett, Elaine, and Gina) preferred to maintain active classrooms in which students were often given choices to engage independently or collaboratively in the learning process.

Differing views about classroom structures guided the participants in critical reflection and rational discourse focused mostly on instructional talk structures as the participants' perceptions and practices relating to such were either challenged or confirmed. The participants began to acknowledge that the majority of the students served in the school were most likely from collectivist and oral cultures based on the social behaviors displayed during morning meetings and instructional time such as calling out answers to questions without raising their hands, jumping into conversations while someone else was speaking, and using animated movement and expressions when engaged in dialogue with others. In accordance with the transformation that occurred in prior sessions regarding the influence of culture, the participants identified students' social behaviors of the sort as cultural rather than disrespectful. They also recognized the need for considering students' cultural norms when establishing a shared culture in the classroom and reasonable social and academic expectations. For instance, Morgan admitted how she began her teaching career believing in the need for maintaining a quiet and orderly classroom while requiring students to engage in strict academic talk structures. However, she had since changed her view and started to intentionally focus on using various engagement strategies and talk protocols in her classroom to provide students with opportunities to interact in natural ways when situationally appropriate. Yet, she still possessed some uncertainty about whether or not the implemented structures aligned to the cultural orientations of her students. In her reflective journal she wrote, "I'm not sure if [the structures] are aligned with the cultural practices of the students, but I try to understand their perspectives, and I definitely give them perspective along with an explanation for why we do things [a certain way]."

Participants' Practices

In collectivist cultures, as noted by Hammond (2015), the primary way to name and notice while learning is through the use of a variety of talk structures to include academic and social talk structures (see Figure 5). Acknowledging such, Sherry emphasized, "I am from a collectivist culture. Everyone works to motivate, encourage, inspire, and help each other." She further explained how she believed students should be given opportunities to collaboratively grapple with different tasks to learn from one another. Sherry continued to describe how she had shifted away from her cultural norms of maintaining a highly structured classroom and grown accustomed to providing opportunities for students to engage in conversations without raising their hands to speak. She believed what seem disorganized and chaotic to some teachers was often needed to foster engagement and learning. Based on her response, it appeared as though Sherry understood and accepted the culturally influenced social behaviors of her students and their impulsive instinct to share thoughts and comments in the moment. She later admitted how she finds highly structured ways of engaging students in learning as uninteresting. Equally, Gina explained, "I feel as if every student should be outspoken and actively participate in classroom lessons each day, either via raising of a hand or just simply calling out. I will allow calling out loud as long as the student isn't interrupting the sharing of another student." Likewise, Elaine reflected on talk structures in her journal by writing:

I frequently allow students to simply talk [while learning]. When it gets too chaotic, I usually calm them down by requiring them to raise their hands and wait to be called upon. Before delving into the suggested reading [for this session], I would've said that I used academic talk structures the most. But I read that quick turn-and-talks are too

short to get students to exchange ideas...I can acknowledge that more in-depth dialogue using social structures should be offered in my classroom.

Michelle and Lynne shared the sentiments of Elaine regarding their use of academic talk structures and the need to include more of the social talk structures into their daily routines to better meet the information processing needs of their culturally and linguistically diverse students. As explained by Michelle in her reflective journal:

The majority of the talk structures in my classroom are academic. Students are asked to raise their hands to share an idea or add to a whole-class conversation. They have been discouraged to just jump in and start talking...I am recognizing this approach is not as beneficial to my students and I need to be more intentional about making social talk structures a regular way of communicating in my classroom. I can tell that many of my students naturally want to communicate in this way, likely because it is representative of their own cultural practices, but I have prevented it because it seems like it might be too chaotic. I realize that I need to step out of my own comfort zone to benefit my students' needs.

Through critical reflection and rational discourse, the participants recognized the need for including more opportunities for students to engage in talk structures aligned to their cultural ways of communicating, learning, and doing.

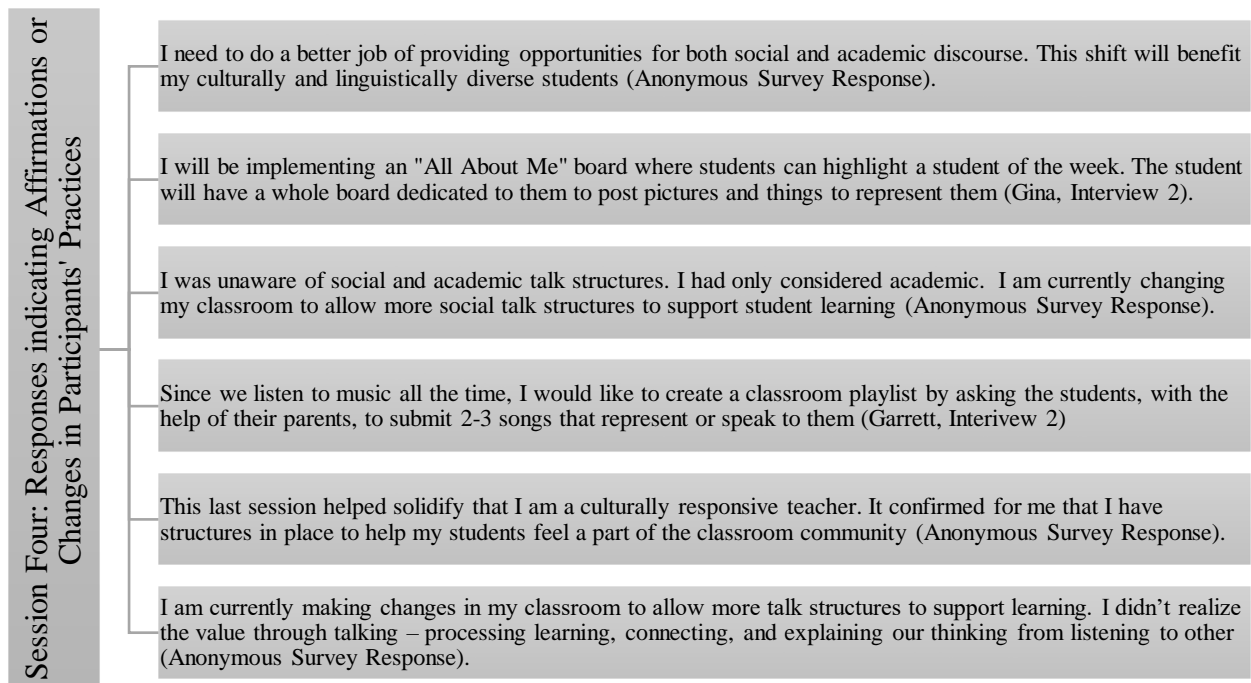
In addition to recognizing the value of incorporating varied talk structures into daily classroom interactions, Garrett and Elaine were the only participants to acknowledge the need for embracing students' home language by allowing opportunities for codeswitching without scrutinizing students' nonstandard use of the English language. They recognized how the exclusive use of standard English devalued students' cultural identities, strengths, and

knowledge needed to acquire new skills and understandings applicable to various situations, contexts, and relationships (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015). Garrett emphasized, "I feel like a blend of professional talk and home talk in the classroom is necessary. It is important for us to remind our students that their home language and culture are important." Elaine mentioned the benefit of using "a little slang" to not only connect with students but to also connect prior knowledge to new content. Garrett and Elaine both expressed how they and their students frequently code-switched between standard English and nonstandard English when situationally appropriate. Garrett further explained, "I try to blend the two together at times to make it easier for students to understand and relate to the information that is being presented...It also helps students to see that we are similarly connected with our talk structures, language, and culture."

After reflecting on the content discussed in session four, participants either affirmed their use of culturally responsive teaching practices or acknowledged the need to refine their instructional practices. All participants planned to apply newfound understandings to honor the significance of language and talk structures in classrooms filled with students of verbal and collectivist cultures. Figure 13 presents the participants' affirmations and proposed changes to practices as related to creating a community of learners through the application of culturally responsive classroom structures and instructional practices.

Figure 13

Session Four Survey or Interview Responses Indicating Affirmations or Changes in Practice



Participants' Post-Professional Development Reflections

According to Mezirow (1994, 1997), critical reflection and rational discourse are key components of the transformative learning theory. After reading literature, viewing videos, engaging in courageous conversation, and completing reflective tasks throughout the series of transformative professional development, the teacher participants were able to identify and acknowledge how their beliefs and experiences shape their thoughts and actions regarding the culturally and linguistically diverse students served in their classrooms. One participant anonymously replied to the survey by writing:

I am so reflective now. I don't want to be the reason students feel inferior. I am also more alert to things mentioned in the book that I see all of us educators doing. For example, when a student dances because he got an answer right...we push down that

excitement by pretty much saying that's too much. This can tell students that their excitement about learning is nothing to be celebrated.

Another participant responded to the survey by stating:

I am continuing to work on being a culturally responsive teacher. It is not a destination, but an ongoing journey that must be worked at every day. The more I understand myself, the way I process information, the triggers I have, etc., the better prepared I am to meet my students where they are.

A third participant responded to the survey by expressing:

Throughout the whole course, I have been able to see things within myself that I'm excited to say align with culturally responsive teaching. Now it's time to tap into those things that do not align and remove them from my practices.

The participants continued to share their reflective thoughts by describing how the culturally responsive professional development had been “eye-opening,” “relevant,” and “beneficial” regarding their immediate needs as teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

The participants also emphasized their desires to further cultivate their level of cultural responsiveness by continuing to engage in reflection, conversation, and application.

Each participant was also interviewed individually during the week following the series of culturally responsive professional development. The interviews were conducted to gather more information regarding changes, if any, to the participants' perceptions and practices as related to teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students in a suburban school with a Title I program. Each participant expressed sentiments of fulfillment and transformation as they described the newfound understandings gleaned from the learning experience along with their next steps for shifting and/or sustaining culturally responsive ways of thinking and doing in the

classroom. The following summarizes each participant's closing reflections captured during the post-professional development interview.

Morgan's Reflections

Morgan reflected on the professional development experience from the viewpoint of a teacher leader. As a teacher leader, she maintained her initial report of being "mostly" a culturally responsive teacher. Yet, she admitted to not always being able to identify as such. She also confessed to originally associating culturally responsive teaching with race and ethnicity only. By engaging in the series of professional development, Morgan discovered her surface-level understanding of culture and how culture influences teachers' social and academic expectations of students. Morgan stated, "I am really thinking now about how everybody defines their culture completely different, whether they are the same race or not. It's about their backgrounds and funds of knowledge. It could look different, or it could look the same." She further explained how she had come to understand through the reflective nature of this study how differences in cultural ways of thinking and doing have influenced her thoughts and actions, particularly when responding to students' off-task behaviors. She claimed:

I can get frustrated, and my responses can show that. I am learning to be slower to respond or to make assumptions about what behaviors I see and try not to let it be an indicator of what I think students are doing and can do...I'm learning to take each situation as it is and try to figure out what's going on...I may need to look internally or reflect more on my interactions with certain students to build better learning partnerships...I think [the professional development] was good for me to get a reminder and better understanding of culturally responsive teaching.

As one of the instructional coaches at the suburban Title I elementary school, Morgan detailed how she desired to engage all teachers in the school in a book study using *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* by Zaretta Hammond along with some of the reflective tasks implemented during this study. She wanted to focus on developing teachers' understanding of culture and how it influences teaching and learning. Morgan stated, "when some people hear culture for some reason they go to race and ethnicity...it's just so much more than that." She was also concerned about some teachers' frequent adoption of deficit assumptions suggesting culturally and linguistically diverse students in the school were incapable of completing challenging tasks. With her newly acquired knowledge and confidence gained from participating in this study, Morgan felt prepared to advocate for culturally and linguistically diverse students as related to equitable access to academically challenging tasks. She supported her claim by stating:

I'm a lot quicker to volunteer, to model, to show [teachers] that their assumptions are not true. To show them that the same kids that wouldn't do anything for them or that they thought couldn't do anything are going to do the best that they can for me.

Therefore, she planned to begin the process of cultivating culturally responsive teachers in the school through ongoing support, reflection, conversation, observations, and peer feedback.

Elaine's Reflections

Elaine started the post-interview by expressing how she had become more reflective because of participating in the culturally responsive professional development. She declared, "There was not a session that I didn't think. It was personally rewarding as far as learning." Per Elaine, engaging in the reflective tasks revealed the importance of being honest enough with herself to acknowledge what she already believed and applied in the classroom as well as what

she needed to do to improve. Referring to her prior knowledge, Elaine said, “I knew that we brought our own belief systems into the classroom and that it affects the way we teach, but I didn’t know that it could have as big of an impact [on students and the learning process].”

By engaging in critical reflection, rational discourse, and the suggested readings, Elaine was able to determine why students responded in what she had considered “disrespectful” or “unruly” ways to certain requests made by teachers. Based on her newfound understandings, Elaine explained how she had come to view asking students to sit in silence during lunch, telling students to refrain from talking at the end of a highly-structured day, or forcing students to work independently on all learning tasks as unnatural for the culturally and linguistically diverse students – mostly Black and Latinx students – being served in the suburban Title I elementary school. Not only had she come to consider the aforementioned as insensitive to students’ cultural needs, but more so about teachers “having the power” to tell students what to do based on personal perceptions of what is acceptable behavior as viewed through their own cultural lens. Elaine recognized many of the students served in the school were from cultural backgrounds of which communal learning and collectivist ways of doing were the norm. As collectivists, the students viewed social and collaborative conversations as acceptable ways of building relationships, gleaning understandings, and supporting the academic development of their peers. Elaine admitted to making “unnatural” requests of students in her classroom and acknowledged how awareness of her “insensitive” actions was the first step to making improvements to her practices.

In addition, Elaine disclosed how she planned to discontinue the use of rote and low-level academic tasks. Although she claimed to possess a warm-demanding mindset from which she extended push and care to all students, she confessed to “watering down” tasks and engaging

students in rote activities. She further acknowledged how the selection of teaching and learning activities had been based on her deficit perceptions about students' academic mindset and assumptions about students' inability to complete perplexing tasks. By participating in this study, Elaine recognized, "Some students probably weren't motivated to learn [in my class] because I was not presenting them with harder and more challenging tasks. If I present the right level of challenge (within their zone of proximal development), it can motivate them." She also acknowledged her need to be more intentional with connecting new learning to students' funds of knowledge and previously taught skills to stimulate the brain to process and store information efficiently. When asked about her next steps in the culturally responsive teaching journey, Elaine summarized her plan by stating, "I just want to make sure that I'm doing my homework...not just taking it and then going on with the same...to be more reflective of the information that was given and applying it."

Brenda's Reflections

After participating in this study, Brenda believed she had developed a deeper understanding of culturally responsive teaching and yearned to learn more about the relationship between culture and the brain. Although Brenda self-identified mostly as a warm-demanding, culturally responsive teacher, she admitted to "not being perfect and having room to grow." Moreover, she claimed the design of the professional development challenged her thinking and provided multiple opportunities for her to critically reflect and "pick [herself] apart" to analyze why she was unable to establish strong partnerships with some of her students. Even though she prided herself on building relationships with students and their families, she recognized how her childhood upbringing had been triggering her brain to react rather than respond to certain behaviors exhibited by students; thereby, stifling the student-teacher relationships. She

emphasized how the culturally formulated image of “respectful” was so ingrained in her as a child that anything differing from her deeply rooted model of respect had been identified by her as disrespectful behavior prior to this study. She further explained her transformation of perceptions by stating:

I now realize what part of my culture was triggering my brain and recognize I was reacting to student behaviors instead of responding in ways to build trusting relationships. I know that sometimes if the triggers are happening, the brain might be going into panic mode – that fight or flight. So, I am not going to get as much out of them...Maybe my relationship with them isn't as strong as I thought.

As she began to think about how she would implement what she had come to understand about culturally responsive teaching, Brenda explained how she planned to continue building relationships with students while placing more emphasis on developing a better understanding of their cultural experiences and how they may differ from her own. She also vowed to stop making assumptions about students by instead engaging in mindful self-reflection to determine what is going on within the student-teacher relationship and how to better build that into a partnership. Brenda further expressed her desire to be intentional in her application of practices suggested to promote a welcoming and safe community of learners amongst whom she would continue to apply ample amounts of push and care for the purpose of “not letting anyone get by without giving his or her best.”

Lynne's Reflections

During the post-professional development interview, Lynne expressed how the learning experience challenged her personally and professionally. Although she had recently completed graduate coursework related to culturally responsive teaching, she had not engaged in tasks

requiring her to reflect on what may be driving her thoughts and actions regarding the culturally and linguistically diverse students served in her classroom. Lynne shared, “This [professional development] was on a much deeper level and it has been tough for me...What I did know as culturally responsive teaching is on a shallow, superficial top layer.” Lynne continued by explaining how she had developed a deeper understanding of culture and how it influences what takes place amongst a community of learners. She realized culture extends beyond gender, race, and ethnicity. Thus, she was slightly disappointed in herself for not considering the depth of culture and how it evolves based on a person’s upbringing as well as how culture shapes ways of being, thinking, and doing as related to what one perceives as good or bad. For her, this was one of the biggest challenges she faced during the professional development experience as she was probed to engage in critical reflection and rational discourse to examine how her students’ cultural ways of communicating differed from her own. As a result, she emphasized:

I don’t perceive [students] as disrespectful anymore for talking out of turn. I’ve been giving them more time to express themselves by talking. I’ve been more relaxed about students who do have that tendency to shout out, and I’ve refrained from saying, please don’t be disrespectful. Rather, I follow up constantly with ‘As your reminder, our class rules are ...’ so that way they don’t feel personally attacked for something that may be normal in their culture.

Lynne further acknowledged her need to be more sensitive and open to other cultures. This included recognizing the benefit of stepping outside of her comfort zone to include culturally appropriate practices into her daily routines, such as, allowing for a variety of talk structures.

As a self-reported sentimentalist possessing high behavioral and academic expectations for her students, Lynne also recognized her need to apply more of a warm-demanding demeanor

to prevent the cultivation of learned helplessness amongst her most vulnerable students – culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities and English Language Learners. Through the process of reflection, Lynne realized she was making decent strides towards becoming a culturally responsive teacher as she asserted “I am still learning more and more.” For her next steps, Lynne planned to “let go” of practices closely aligned to her own culture rather than her students’ and to “plug and work at [culturally responsive teaching] to make sure it comes a little bit more natural.”

Michelle’s Reflections

Michelle entered the study with prior training and teacher leadership experience regarding equity in education and culturally responsive teaching. However, “as a direct result of participating in this project,” Michelle emphasized, “I noticed some things I was doing in my instructional practices that I kind of lost sight of.” Michelle further explained how engaging in the professional development designed for this study forced her to reflect on how her cultural ways of thinking and doing impact her ability to establish effective learning partnerships, apply the right amount of warmth and demand, and keep her behavioral and emotional triggers in check. She proceeded to explain how the reflective conversations about cultural differences challenged her way of perceiving students with cultural experiences varying from her own. Michelle stated, “I have made certain assumptions about how students behave, interact, and flow through the classroom space because of their display of ways that naturally flow within in their culture and background.” She further admitted to naming students’ verbal ways of engaging in lessons or discussions – shouting out, interrupting, animated movements – as rude or disrespectful. Having recognized the need to change her way of thinking and doing, Michelle shared how she had begun to focus on changing her language to acknowledge the different talk

structures existing amongst cultures. Michelle explained, "I'm trying to be mindful of my language because when I tell a student you're being rude, and that's the way they engage or communicate at home, then I'm telling them your family's way of communicating is rude and disrespectful."

Michelle described her journey to maintaining her self-proclaimed status as a culturally responsive teacher as an everyday work in progress. Therefore, to re-establish and refine her culturally responsive practices, Michelle planned to work on being more reflective. She stated:

If we want to provide the best learning experience for our students, we continually have to revisit, revise, and think about how did things work out [in the classroom]...I think that's part of being a culturally responsive teacher; to constantly reflect, to constantly think about your teaching practices, and ask what you're doing, what you're not doing, who you're reaching, who you're not reaching, who are you being mindful of, and who you're not being mindful of.

Michelle also mentioned how she planned to become more vocal about implementing culturally responsive teaching within the school by being intentional when collaborating and sharing ideas with other teachers.

Sherry's Reflections

During the post-interview, Sherry revealed minimal changes to her perceptions and practices regarding her work with culturally and linguistically diverse students as she confidentially stated, "I was already doing a lot of the things we discussed." She professed to be a warm-demanding culturally responsive teacher who pushed all students to "rise to the occasion" as related to completing academically challenging tasks. She prided herself on developing strong relationships with students while respecting their cultures in the process.

However, she did express how participating in the culturally responsive professional development probed her to think deeply about the differences between her culture and her students' cultures. She admitted to being judgmental of students when they did not display "acceptable" manners or did not appear to value education in ways aligned to her cultural upbringing. She supported this claim by stating, "[The professional development] allowed me to actually take a step back and compare cultures and see the ways we're different. I'm Black, and most of my students are Black, but they come from a different culture." She further explained how she had come to understand the possible harm in trying to force her cultural norms and what she deemed as acceptable social and academic behaviors onto her students. Thus, to refine her practices as a culturally responsive teacher, Sherry shared how she would work towards learning more about her students' cultures and embracing their ways of thinking and doing to diminish any barriers that may impede student-teacher partnerships and information processing in her classroom. She further vowed to foster a stronger community of learners by providing more opportunities for students to share their voices, knowledge, and perspectives to create a more inclusive class culture.

Garrett's Reflections

Garrett expressed how engaging in the professional development sessions probed him to be more reflective about his perceptions and practices; thereby, drawing attention to what he was doing well in the classroom and what he could improve. In his eyes, his strengths as a culturally responsive teacher outweighed his areas of growth. Thus, Garrett professed, "I think I am a culturally responsive teacher. I'm going to keep doing what I'm already doing, but I do feel like I do need to get to know my students on a deeper level." He continued to explain how he had only considered surface-level cultural differences when comparing his culture to his students' cultures

as assigned during the first professional development session. However, participating in this study had encouraged him to think beyond the basic level of culture, relationships, and expectations. Garrett emphasized, “I plan to be more open with getting to know and understand my own culture because until you can own and understand your own culture 100%, it’s going to be kind of hard for you to understand other people’s culture.” Considering how to apply his newfound understanding of culture to the process of establishing better partnerships with students, Garrett declared:

Owning and understanding your own culture and someone else’s culture is beneficial to any sort of relationship...If I’m going to be your ally, I have to know exactly what it is that you need culturally, socially, emotionally, and academically. Once students know that you as a teacher are invested in them...you truly care about them, then I feel like that makes them want to learn.

Garrett further shared how his teaching philosophy had always been strongly rooted in believing that “no matter what culture you come from you can learn especially if pushed to work within your zone of proximal development.” However, he recognized through reflection that he was falling short on his beliefs by fostering learned helplessness through the use of “watered down” tasks with some students. Therefore, he committed to challenging students by engaging them in tasks requiring higher-order and critical thinking skills. He also planned to manage his responses to triggering behaviors by acknowledging when “the way he was brought up” does not align with his students' ways of communicating with adults (i.e., “yes, sir” versus “yes” and “eye contact” versus “no eye contact”). In general, Garrett walked away from the series of professional development with a deeper understanding of how culture influences what takes place in the

classroom and a sense of pride knowing he possesses the characteristics of a culturally responsive teacher.

Gina's Reflections

When asked to share her final thoughts regarding her engagement in the culturally responsive professional development, Gina exclaimed, "I'm definitely looking forward to growing and implementing some of the things that I saw and discussed!" She believed the reflective sessions helped her to identify how she was already applying culturally responsive teaching and how she could adjust her perceptions and practices to grow as related to the concept. As a self-proclaimed sentimentalist on the verge of becoming a warm demander, Gina described herself as "being a little too sympathetic and not understanding of the need to still challenge students regardless of their backgrounds." She admitted to minimizing assignments based on her perceptions of what students would or would not be able to handle. Therefore, she planned to set higher expectations for all students for the following school year. Gina explained by stating, "I'm not limiting my students [next year]. If I approach them as higher-order thinkers, then they are going to respond in that manner." Therefore, she planned to validate and challenge all of her future students by assigning perplex and relevant tasks while setting realistic and individualized goals.

Moreover, through reflection, Gina recognized her lack of establishing a community of learners along with student voice and agency amongst the culturally and linguistically diverse students served in her classroom. Thus, she had begun to make plans for starting the next school year differently. Rather than introducing herself and stating the class rules, she was preparing to apply a student-centered approach. By doing so, she anticipated the fostering of a learning environment and class culture cultivated through student-created rules and expectations

influenced by their various cultural frames of reference. Gina hoped to establish a culturally responsive classroom environment in which all students would be able to possess a sense of belongingness and academic identity. To capture the essence of her next steps Gina wrote the poem featured in Figure 14.

Figure 14

Poem Written by Gina to Present Post Professional Development Reflections

<p style="text-align: center;">Stop Limitations</p> <p style="text-align: center;">by Gina</p> <p>No more imitations.</p> <p>The sky is the limit when you cultivate motivation.</p> <p>What do you see when your eyes look at them?</p> <p>Are they just another student or a rare gem?</p> <p>There's more to life than just teaching drills.</p> <p>It's time to recognize their abilities, perceptions, and skills.</p>
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Synopsis of the Findings as Aligned to the Research Questions

Research Question 1: Analysis of the Participants' Perceptions

This section of the manuscript provides a thematic summary of the findings as aligned to research question one: (1) How, if at all, do teacher perceptions of culturally and linguistically diverse students change after participating in a structured series of culturally responsive professional development? (1b) What factors influence teachers' perceptions about

teaching and learning as related to culturally and linguistically diverse students? The findings were revealed by analyzing interview transcriptions, survey responses, journal entries, and field notes.

As noted by each participant, personal belief systems stemming from their cultural upbringings and childhood educational experiences were the main factors contributing to their deficit perceptions of culturally and linguistically diverse students. The participants recognized how their deficit views, subpar expectations, and emotionally triggered responses towards students were a result of their unchecked biases and assumptions regarding students' social behaviors, academic mindsets, and scholastic abilities. Not only did the teachers acknowledge how their deficit beliefs and attitudes adversely impacted their actions, but also how their ways of thinking impacted students' behavior and achievement (Mellom et al., 2017). Therefore, to establish or refine one's way of thinking as aligned to that of a culturally responsive teacher, participants expressed the need for transforming their deficit perceptions of culturally and linguistically diverse students, specifically as related to "disrespectful" behaviors and intellectual capacity, by examining their own cultural frames of reference as compared to their students. The following details noted transformations in the participants' perceptions.

Surface Level to Deep Level of Cultural Awareness

As revealed before, during, and after session one of the series of professional development, most of the participants described culture from a surface-level perception. Many of them used their understanding of differing holidays, foods, and clothing in an attempt to make teaching and learning relevant to students (see Figure 6). The participants neglected to consider how deeply-rooted beliefs systems held by them and their students

influenced daily interactions in the classroom along with how culture guides the way information is processed as listed in Hammond's (2015) *Brain Rules*. Thus, students' ways of thinking and doing that challenged the participants' cultural norms were viewed by the participants as inappropriate or disrespectful. However, through critical reflection and rational discourse, the participants identified the need from widening their apertures, or cultural lens, to develop a deeper understanding of the varying belief systems possessed by students in their classrooms as culturally responsive teaching focuses on deeply-rooted elements of culture rather than the visible elements. Therefore, rather than taking a tourist approach to understanding the influence of culture, the participants recognized the need for developing an in-depth understanding of the cultural differences and similarities between them and their students when constructing perceptions of the culturally and linguistically diverse students served in their classrooms and implementing culturally responsive instructional practices.

Reactive to Responsive Ways of Processing Triggers

While reflecting on their perceptions of students' social and academic behaviors, the participants examined the triggers responsible for their emotionally charged reactions and assumptions regarding the culturally and linguistically diverse students served in their classrooms (see Table 4). The critical process of reflective dialogue and reflective journaling forced the participants to lean into the discomfort of identifying, naming, and unpacking their own biases. By doing so, the participants recognized how constantly interpreting students' actions solely through their own cultural lens was leading to misinterpretations of students' actions and intentions as well as deficit ways of thinking and doing (Hammond, 2015). As revealed by the participants, they had perceived students' cultural ways of communicating, such as shouting out or the limited use of the terms, *ma'am* and *sir*, as disrespectful. Thus, the

participants acknowledged the need for changing their deficit perceptions by continuing to engage in reflective protocols designed to assist them with recognizing their triggers and managing their emotions. Moreover, self-management of triggers and emotional reactions was deemed by the participants as vital to transforming their responses to students' social and academic behaviors that may challenge their own cultural ways of thinking and doing. By continuing to engage in self-regulating practices, the participants desired to establish and maintain socially and intellectually safe learning environments for their students.

Jeopardizing to Empowering Ways of Thinking about Students

As noted in the literature, when teachers possess skewed perceptions regarding what students can and cannot do, they tend to adopt subpar expectations rather than reflect on ways to change the narrative (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015; Mellom et al., 2018, Milner, 2017; Young, 2010). Considering such, some of the participants admitted to possessing deficit perceptions causing them to apply a passive and sentimental approach to teaching and learning rather than what Hammond (2015) calls a warm demanding approach. In doing so, these participants admitted to underestimating, postponing, or depriving marginalized students of challenging tasks or offering excessive support and scaffolds; thereby, contributing to what may have appeared as students' lack of motivation. As shown in Figure 11, some of the participants identified how their deficit perceptions of students' scholastic ability and academic mindset were contributing to their unconscious reinforcement of learned helplessness – a student's belief that they have no control over his ability to improve or learn (Hammond, 2015). Rather than assuming students are incapable of completing challenging tasks and placing them in a situation that promotes learned helplessness and internalized oppression, each participant acknowledged the need for shifting their perceptions towards

envisioning the influence of validating and empowering culturally and linguistically diverse students by applying the demand, care, and challenge needed to foster a shared sense of academic hopefulness.

Individualistic to Collectivistic Thoughts about Teaching and Learning

Each of the participants described childhood schooling experiences aligned with the dominant individualistic structures of Eurocentric cultures. Thus, using their cultural frames of reference as a guide, most of the participants shared how they were implementing similar structures in their classrooms by requiring students to complete learning tasks independently, engage in highly-structured talk protocols during instruction, and use formal ways of addressing adults and communicating with peers. Before the participants were introduced to how the brain is wired to operate best in communal learning environments, they viewed the highly structured and individualistic classroom environment as best for ensuring equity, respect, and learning for all. However, after developing an understanding of how culture guides the brain and acknowledging that most of the students in their classrooms were from collectivist cultures, the participants began to shift their perceptions. The participants' ideas about how a culturally responsive classroom should look and sound along with ways to maximize opportunities for the brain to connect with others and new information was transformed (Hammond, 2015). Rather than perceiving a quiet classroom with students working independently most of the time as a highly productive learning environment, the participants began to recognize the need for fostering students' alertness and achievement by increasing the implementation of collaborative tasks and social talk structures. In general, what some participants had initially perceived as chaotic classrooms with "disrespectful"

students were ultimately viewed as engaging classrooms in which teachers may have been providing opportunities for students to learn in culturally responsive ways.

Research Questions 2: Analysis of the Participants' Practices

In this section of the manuscript, findings are thematically summarized as aligned to research question two: (2) How, if at all, do teacher practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse student populations change after participating in a structured series of culturally responsive professional development? Based on an analysis of the participants' responses to interview questions, journal prompts, and survey probes along with a review of the field notes, it was determined most of the participants desired to change or refine some aspects of their teaching practices to create or enhance a culturally responsive learning environment. The following describes the reoccurring themes regarding self-identified or projected changes in the participants' practices.

Minimize Social Threats, Maximize Opportunities to Connect

As listed in Hammond's (2015) *Brain Rules*, the brain needs to be a part of a caring community to minimize school threats and maximize opportunities to connect with others. To connect with culturally and linguistically diverse students in culturally responsive ways, the participants acknowledged the need for developing a deeper understanding of their own culture and their students' cultures. By taking time to broaden their cultural lens, the participants hoped to identify more of their deeply-rooted beliefs systems responsible for triggering emotional reactions to students' differing social and academic behaviors.

Understanding how the brain constantly scans for social threats and reacts to intimidating situations, some of the participants acknowledged the need for practicing self-management of emotions by applying reflective protocols such as the Mindful Reflection Protocol and the

Stop, Observe, Detach, Awaken (SODA) Strategy, to assist with identifying, naming, and appropriately responding to immediate triggers (Hammond, 2015). Ultimately, by continuing to engage in reflection to understand cultural differences and address emotional triggers, the participants desired to develop the ability to anticipate and avoid situations that may trigger them or their students and possibly prevent students' brains from reaching the relaxed state of alertness needed for learning (see Table 4).

Support Learning in Culturally Appropriate Ways

Before engaging in the session focused on information processing, none of the participants were able to explain how they used knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds beyond that of surface-level understandings to enhance teaching and learning nor were they able to resonate with how culture guides the brain in processing information (see Figure 9). However, after delving into the session resources, rational discourse, and reflective tasks, the participants realized most of their teaching practices were closely aligned to the teaching moves to promote information processing amongst culturally and linguistically diverse students. Although most of the participants reported the use of research-based practices to ignite students' attention, chunk new and couple new content, allow time for students to chew or process new information, and provide opportunities for applying newfound skills and knowledge, some of the participants acknowledged the need for refining their approach by extending the time allotted for students to chew and review during the learning process. Moreover, most of the participants claimed to use culturally-oriented techniques such as call and response, music, dance, and gamified activities to engage all students in the learning experience. Yet, the participants noted the need for implementing culturally responsive techniques more frequently and consistently.

As displayed in Figure 10, some of the participants admitted to providing limited opportunities for students to use “talk to learn” in naturalistic ways as they had perceived shouting out answers, interrupting others, and overly animated ways of communicating as chaotic or disrespectful to others. Hence, most of the routines and rituals in these participants' classrooms were based on individualistic principles rather than collectivistic ideologies. Recognizing the communal learning needs of their students, each participant decided to initiate or increase the use of academic and social talk structures to foster student alertness in the learning process and promote connectedness and safety amongst a community of diverse learners (see Figure 13).

Challenge All Students with Demanding Tasks

Not only does the brain thrive when cultural ways of processing information are incorporated into the learning experience, but also when the brain is challenged and stretched (Hammond, 2015). However, as aligned to the literature, most of the participants admitted to underestimating the intellectual ability of culturally and linguistically diverse students, thereby, postponing or depriving marginalized students of demanding academic tasks. Rather than pushing students to apply higher-order thinking skills to complete challenging tasks, some of the participants admitted to displaying acts of sympathy by assigning "watered down" assignments, offering praise for completing basic tasks, and providing excessive scaffolds or unsolicited help to culturally and linguistically diverse students. Noticing how they were reinforcing learned helplessness; the participants decided to change their practices by initiating or increasing the use of demanding tasks within every student's zone of proximal development for the purpose of challenging and stretching all students to increase their intellectual capacity and academic identity (see Figure 11 and Figure 12).

Transform Relationships into Learning Partnerships

As purported by Hammond (2015), positive relationships keep the brain's safety threat detection systems in check. Accordingly, each participant seemed to understand the importance of relationships as related to teaching and learning and expressed how they firmly believed in implementing practices to establish relationships with students. Yet, none of the participants considered the relationship as a partnership or alliance. In pursuit of identifying as a warm demanding, culturally responsive teacher, each participant recognized the need for supporting the academic development of culturally and linguistically diverse students by forging learning partnerships that extend beyond surface-level relationships. In doing so, the participants noted a desire to refine their practices by offering students a sufficient balance of emotional comfort and academic demand along with constructing tools and implementing the techniques suggested to develop empowered and independent learners, such as relational pacts, challenging tasks, and quality feedback. The participants believed that by transforming their relationships with students into learning partnerships in which they extended more push and care, the students would become more engaged in the learning process, thereby, increasing students' alertness, motivation, and achievement.

Research Question 3: Analysis of the Professional Development Components

To answer the third research question, the participants' post-professional development interview transcriptions and anonymous professional development survey responses were analyzed to answer research question three: (3) Which components, if any, of the culturally responsive professional development were deemed most beneficial to cultivating culturally responsive teachers? (3a) Which components, if any, of the culturally responsive professional development were deemed least beneficial to cultivating culturally responsive teachers?

Findings regarding the professional development components are discussed in this section from most to least beneficial as identified by the participants. Figure 15 displays a word cloud emphasizing the overall reported benefit of each component of the professional development related to the participants' growth as culturally responsive teachers. As indicated in Figure 15, the reflective nature of this series of professional development offered the greatest benefit; thus, revealing the validity of the intended structure of the professional development as each participant was expected to critically reflect on his or her perceptions and practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students in a manner designed to provoke awareness, transformation, and action (Mezirow 1994, 1997).

Figure 15

Word Cloud Emphasizing Benefit of Each Professional Development Component



Reflective Discussions

During each professional development session, the participants were given opportunities to engage in rational discourse to grapple with newfound information that may have challenged or affirmed their existing ways of thinking and doing. As noted in the anonymous survey responses, one of the participants expressed how the reflective discussion

was one of the most beneficial components of the professional development by typing, "I appreciate the ability to listen and talk to others in a safe environment. It helps us understand ourselves and each other which will help our students moving forward." Another participant replied to the survey question by entering, "I am loving the discussions!" The participants appreciated the safe space that was established for reflective discussion, and they deemed the discussions beneficial to their development.

During the final interview, participants were asked to describe the components of the culturally responsive professional development that were most or least beneficial to their development as a teacher of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Each participant identified the reflective whole group discussions as being the most beneficial component of the professional development. According to Garrett:

The whole group [discussion] works the best because you're talking about students' cultures and you're taking this course with people from different cultures. And having those [people of] different cultures, which may not overlap that much, talk about different cultures kind of opens your eyes to some things and helps you to understand other people's perspectives.

Likewise, Brenda expressed how the whole group discussions allowed her to engage in conversations with other people and see things from their perspectives. Sherry emphasized how participating in the whole group discussions provided an opportunity to talk with other people and hear other people's points of view which could in turn cause one to question her way of thinking and influence her to change. Morgan claimed, "It was just good to hear other people's stories to know that you weren't alone in this journey." As noted in the literature,

what teachers bring to the process of learning affects what they acquire from the professional development opportunity (Saydam, 2019).

Breakout Conversations

The participants were also given a chance to engage in reflective small group conversations by using the breakout room feature of Microsoft Teams. Reflective probes designed to spark rational discourse about the participants' perceptions and practices were presented as conversation starters. The breakout sessions were described as a component that promoted deeper reflection and conversations. This may have been influenced by the intentional structuring of partner groups as explained by Brenda:

Working with a partner – somebody I didn't know even though at my school – and getting to know that person, their perspective, their culture, how they are perceiving things, and then how I perceive things really helped me to develop more of a solid understanding of [my reflective thoughts].

Sherry stated, "I think we got more from the breakout sessions because everybody had something to bring to the conversation. And each of us had different viewpoints." Likewise, Gina conveyed how she benefited from being able to collaborate with colleagues during the breakout conversations. She continued by explaining, "We were able to kind of hash out our feelings and ask questions about how to approach something in our classrooms." On the same note, Garrett shared his breakout conversation experience by describing the following interaction he had with one of his breakout partners:

We shared our ideas, and it was nice for somebody to come back and say, maybe it was because of this or that, maybe you could try this next time, or maybe it wasn't

really a trigger...there's a great possibility your students didn't really mean what they were saying. Maybe it was just because of your cultural differences.

According to Brenda, Sherry, Gina, and Garrett, the varied viewpoints, probing questions, and clarifying statements posed by their peers assisted them with delving deeper into the critical reflection needed to unpack their cultural-based biases and assumptions.

On the other hand, Elaine admitted while she appreciated hearing different opinions during the breakout conversations there was some discomfort when disagreements occurred between partners. Elaine described her feeling of discomfort by stating, "One-on-one is harder, especially if you disagree. Then it's like, you feel funny saying something. If one person shares and then your thoughts are totally different, it can stunt the conversation a little bit." Similarly, Morgan reported the breakout conversations were "okay". She explained, "I feel like each time I got to a breakout session, I didn't really get to talk, or the other person was on a tangent"; thereby, not allowing time to engage in a reflective conversation for the purpose of navigating each person's thoughts and actions.

Reflective Journal Entries and Tasks

Reflective journal prompts were assigned after each professional development session along with an optional reflective task. Although each journal entry was completed by the participants who attended each session, only two of the participants completed each of the optional reflective tasks. None of the participants mentioned the reflective journaling or optional tasks when responding to the survey. However, during the post-interview, five out of the eight participants identified reflective journaling as one of the most beneficial components of the culturally responsive professional development. Lynne, Sherry, and Brenda were the only participants opposed to reflective journaling. Although they all acknowledged the

general benefit of reflective writing, each explained why it was not their preferred component for this study. Lynne stated "I know reflective writing is always beneficial, but I've already been doing that in [graduate] school and I'm burnt out with it. Otherwise, I probably would have been okay with it." Likewise, Sherry explained, "I was okay with writing because it made me get out of my comfort zone. We don't do this all the time. You know? But I felt like I was back in graduate class. I always like talking better." Similarly, Brenda expressed:

It's not that [reflective journaling] wasn't beneficial. It was just the part that was the biggest struggle. I over-analyze and it took me forever to do them. I'd much rather talk about [the journal prompt] and discuss it with someone after reading or listening to a presentation.

Thus, differentiated reflective activities should be considered to accommodate teacher participants who do not prefer or benefit from reflective writing tasks.

On the other hand, each of the five who identified reflective journaling as one of the most beneficial components of the culturally responsive professional development agreed about the extensive time it took to complete the reflective activity. Yet, each believed the task was necessary for analyzing one's way of thinking and doing. Table 5 shows interview responses of participants who deemed reflective journaling or the optional reflective tasks as beneficial to their development.

Table 5*Interview Quotes Detailing the Benefit of the Reflective Tasks*

Participant	Direct Quote: Benefit of Reflective Journaling and Tasks
Elaine	“The journals were good because you could be more truthful with yourself because it’s not as many eyes on it.”
Garrett	“The reflective journals gave me time to think about myself. It gave me time to process everything that was given in the lesson and how it relates to me.”
Morgan	“Doing the journal prompts definitely triggered my thinking – what’s going through my mind and getting it out.”
Michelle	“I would say I benefited most from the journal prompts because it required the reflective piece...thinking about: What am I doing? How did it work out? What could have been different?”
Gina	“Honestly, I think every [component] was insightful. The reflective tasks helped me to identify my cultural frames of reference.”

Instructional and Motivational Videos

One or two short videos were used during each of the professional development sessions to either provide opportunities for the participants to view a culturally responsive teacher in action, develop a better understanding of the content being presented, or foster self-reflection regarding perceptions and practices as related to teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. The video component of the professional development was mentioned as a beneficial component twice in the anonymous survey responses and by three of the participants (Morgan, Michelle, and Gina) during the post-interview. The video clips were noted in the survey as being helpful as they provided a visual model to assist participants with seeing how to incorporate different cultures and practices in the classroom. One participant provided specific feedback on the survey by emphasizing, "The videos showing the culturally responsive classroom and the [motivational testimonial] were helpful because

they gave me new ideas to consider about my classroom environment as well as how I should approach instruction and the importance of this work."

Morgan also identified the videos as one the most beneficial components and supported her claim by stating:

I thought the videos for each session were carefully selected and very good. They were about being open-minded, hearing other people share their stories, and getting to see classrooms in action. [The videos] definitely either confirmed this is something that I am doing or made me second guess my thought process and say, 'Maybe you need to look at things a little bit more positive and maybe not so negatively'.

Similarly, Gina expressed "love" for the videos by explaining how they helped her visualize what she should do or what her classroom should look like. She further described how the model classroom videos influenced her to make immediate changes in her classroom as she did not have any of the culturally responsive structures, resources, books, posters, or artifacts suggested for creating a conducive learning environment for culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Gina summarized her thoughts by saying, "The videos helped me understand what I needed in my classroom to create more of a culturally responsive learning environment." Moreover, Michelle claimed she found herself watching the model classroom videos with the thought of "What can I take from them to then implement [in my classroom]?" In addition to providing a visual model of a culturally responsive classroom in action and an opportunity to listen to the personal stories about culture, equity, and belongingness from other teachers, students, and stakeholders, the videos appeared to pique self-reflection that initiated change in the participants' perceptions and practices.

Suggested Readings

For each session, it was suggested for participants to read correlating chapters in the book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* by Zaretta Hammond. Throughout the presentation, there were pages of the book referenced for the participants to review during or after the session. When asked about the most and least beneficial components of the professional development, only four of the participants expressed their thoughts about the suggested reading component. Three out of the four participants identified the suggested reading as beneficial to their development whereas one of the four participants revealed an opposing viewpoint.

According to Brenda, Gina, and Lynne, the suggested reading assisted them with comprehending what was being presented during each professional learning session, guided them in analyzing their reflective thoughts throughout the learning process, and provided a point of reference when naming and addressing their newfound awareness of themselves as teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Brenda explained:

Reading was most beneficial to me because I am a very analytical person. I need more time to read to develop a better understanding. I think more time to do some reading reflections with breakout rooms and then coming back together to discuss would have been better for me, especially with the brain research [session].”

Gina referred to the suggested reading as “a good point of reference” that she used to check her understanding of culturally responsive teaching and assess her perceptions and practices as a teacher of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Similarly, Lynne stated:

What worked best for me was being able to see it in the text and talk about it at the same time. I was able to highlight things in the book and take notes as we went along.

That's the kind of learner I am. I like to see it, hear it, and read it to make sense of it.

In general, the suggested readings were beneficial to Brenda, Gina, and Lynne because the reading materials provided a means for them to process new information in way that aligned to their learning styles.

Opposingly, Garrett claimed the reading component was the least beneficial to his development simply due to his lack of interest in reading. Garrett described himself as an interactive learner who thrives best by engaging in rational and reflective conversations. It can be assumed the remaining four participants stayed neutral with their thoughts regarding the benefits, if any, of the suggested reading as the component was not mentioned when they responded to the survey nor the interview questions.

Allotted Time

The amount of time allotted for each of the four culturally responsive professional development sessions was one hour per week with an additional 15-30 minutes added by request of the participants. After the first session, one of the participants responded to the anonymous survey by entering, "An hour will not suffice." After extending the next two sessions an additional fifteen minutes and the last session by an additional thirty minutes with the verbal consent of the participants, time was still identified by the participants as one of the least beneficial components to their development. In response to the anonymous survey, one participant noted the following regarding concerns about the allotted time and structure of the professional development:

I do wish we would have had more time to talk and work with partners to help see others' perspectives. Four sessions were not enough time. I hope that if you continue to do trainings on this topic that you would maybe add an additional 2-3 sessions. Each participant claimed more time was needed to delve deeper into the content of each professional development session. In their survey responses and post-interviews, they repeatedly shared their suggestions for addressing their concerns about the allotted time.

Participants also expressed their opinions about the allotted time when interviewed after the last professional development session. Elaine shared how the time allotted for each session impeded the reflective conversations. She said, "I felt like we had more to say and think about each week. I think it should have been two hours [per session]. I think you can get more meat and potatoes out of the conversation if it's not rushed." Likewise, Morgan described how she wished there was more time for everybody to have the opportunity to share and consider the perspectives of others. She explained:

Each session probably needed to be about an hour and a half to two hours because this is some deep, good stuff that I think we all need time to chew on. I feel like even now I'm still trying to process everything we learned. We definitely needed more time and probably more sessions.

Similarly, Gina stated, "I'd definitely say more time is needed. I felt like as soon as I kind of started getting more comfortable with describing [culturally responsive teaching] and recognizing it in the classroom, [the professional development series] was over." She further explained how at least two or three more sessions would be more beneficial to her development. Moreover, Michelle claimed, "I don't think all that needs to be covered can be covered in four sessions even with adding time to the sessions. I just don't think it's enough

time.” Michelle further argued how she and other colleagues would benefit even more from ongoing professional learning with additional coaching support outside of the one-hour sessions of culturally responsive professional development offered during this study. The participants’ desires to learn more about culturally responsive teaching and continue their journey towards becoming refined culturally responsive teachers were evident in their requests for more time and support regarding professional development.

Participants’ Recommendations

While reflecting on the culturally responsive professional development experience and next steps during the post-interview, the participants shared their thoughts regarding the need for culturally responsive professional development opportunities within the school and district. When asked to describe the need for mandating culturally responsive professional development within the school or district, each participant emphasized the dire need for both by using words such as "definitely," "yes," and "of course." As the novice of the participant group, Gina detailed the need for a mandated school or district plan for culturally responsive professional development by stating, "I don't think I've ever had a conversation like this outside this training...out of all the district professional learning days [I have attended], we don't bring up culture.” She further explained how she did not have any training in her undergraduate program or new teacher induction training to prepare her for teaching students that enter her classroom with cultural experiences and perspectives different from her own ways of thinking and doing.

Likewise, Garrett argued undergraduate courses do not prepare teachers for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students as most textbooks and course materials tend to focus on Eurocentric approaches to teaching and learning. Therefore, a county-wide plan for

ensuring all teachers are prepared to teach all students regardless of the school to which they are assigned is needed. Garrett further argued:

We have a melting pot of cultures in our district. If you take me out of this school where the demographics and the culture of the students are closely aligned to mine and put me in a non-Title I school on the other side of the district, I will have to figure out their culture...I have to respect their cultural experiences...I have to let that dictate the way I teach inside the classroom. I and others need training to do this.

According to Garrett, professional development is needed to get all teachers to this level of understanding. In his opinion, teacher preparation programs do not always prepare teachers for the culture shock that some face when they are placed in front of students with whom they do not share cultural experiences. He also mentioned how teachers struggle with their practices when students pose academic or social challenges that do not align with the Eurocentric, individualistic philosophies taught in most undergraduate programs.

Michelle further described the need for culturally responsive professional development within the school or district by stating, "I think everybody in the district, regardless of what capacity of your employment – part-time, full-time, lunch staff, custodians, front office staff, classroom teachers, district people – everybody needs to participate in [culturally responsive professional development]." As a newer employee of the school district, she explained:

I've done a lot of work on equity prior to [coming to this district], and when I came here and noticed that there wasn't a thing, or it didn't seem like it was even a consideration all that much, I was very confused by that and didn't understand why there wasn't some kind of emphasis on this work...We're missing out on a lot of

opportunities by not being intentional about doing the work. Hopefully, this will grow into that district-level focus.

Michelle desired for this effort towards cultivating culturally responsive teachers at the local school level to be expanded into a district-wide initiative as implemented in her previous school district.

Similarly, Brenda believed, teachers, school administrators, and district leaders needed to understand that culturally responsive teaching is “more than knowing where students come from, but also how their families work, how their households work, how their socioeconomic standing affects how they work.” She explained:

In the school, and I don’t mean this in a negative way, but I think there is a need for understanding more of the intellectual part of [culturally responsive teacher], like how the brain works....After taking this course and listening to [teachers interact with students] while going down the hallway, I’m thinking [their reactions] are not culturally responsive teaching – cultures are clashing.

Brenda further argued, “district-wide we need to understand each other’s cultures, and I’m not talking about race.” The need for cultivating all stakeholders’ understandings regarding the difference between culture and race was also evident in one of the participant’s anonymous survey responses which read:

I think before our sessions started, I had a perception that culturally diverse automatically meant people of color or minority. However, as the sessions continued my perspective widened...and I realized that I could have a similar cultural background of students who look nothing like me, which wasn’t something that I really gave much thought to before these sessions.

As noted by Morgan, culturally responsive professional development may be needed in the school and district to provide opportunities for teachers and school leaders to reflect on elements of their own culture, make comparisons between themselves and the students they serve, and identify the behaviors that trigger them and why. She further contended:

Being a [culturally and linguistically diverse] school with a Title I program, there's all these assumptions about our kids and their families and their lives, what they can do, what they know, and what they have, and we're wrong, we're wrong most of the time about their ability and what they can do...I just think that this type of professional development might get us in the mindset of thinking about what we could do as educators to change...and I think academic learning would just grow because there would be mutual respect and understanding. I think that we would be less to judge and not so quick to say things like 'they just don't get it' or 'they can't do it', and we wouldn't work from a deficit mindset.

Morgan believed there was a systemic need for offering culturally responsive professional development to foster the transformation of teachers' perceptions and practices regarding the learning needs and abilities of the culturally and linguistically diverse students served in the school and district selected for this study.

Gina and Elaine also expressed the need for making culturally responsive professional development an ongoing process within the school and district. Both emphasized how all teachers in the school and district would benefit from engaging in courageous conversation regarding student demographics, cultural similarities and differences, and culturally responsive pedagogy at the beginning of the year coupled with the ongoing support of a teacher leader throughout the school year to ensure the application and sustainability of

culturally responsive teaching practices. In their final reflections, the participants alluded to the research noting how teachers often enter the field of education unprepared to teach culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students (Gay et al., 2000). They also confirmed that without comprehensive, ongoing in-service professional development teachers will continue to subscribe to deficit perceptions and subpar practices as related to teaching marginalized groups of students (Gay et al., 2000, Hammond, 2015).

Summary of the Findings

After facilitating four culturally responsive professional development sessions with eight teacher participants in a suburban Title I elementary school in a southeastern state of the United States and analyzing interview transcripts, professional development survey responses, reflective journal entries, and participant-selected artifacts, several themes emerged from the data regarding the participants' perceptions, practices, and professional development needs as related to teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students.

During this study's onset, each participant possessed a surface level understanding of culture and perception of how culture influences teaching and learning, yet each identified deeply rooted cultural belief systems stemming from their upbringings and childhood educational experiences as contributory to their ways of thinking and doing in the classroom. Through rational discourse and critical reflection, the participants identified how some students' social and academic behaviors challenged their cultural-based belief systems and triggered emotional reactions rather than cultural responses. The participants also recognized how their deficit perceptions of culturally and linguistically diverse students' academic mindsets and abilities to complete higher-order thinking tasks led to the implementation of "watered down" assignments along with the adoption of subpar expectations for marginalized

students. Thus, the participants acknowledged the need for transforming their perceptions and practices for the purpose of validating students' cultural identities, guiding students' brains towards a relaxed state of alertness, providing opportunities for students to learn in culturally appropriate ways, and developing students' academic mindset.

Analysis of the data also revealed how all of the participants benefited most from the reflective nature of the series of culturally responsive professional development. The participants were given multiple opportunities to reflect on their perceptions and practices by engaging in whole or small group conversations with their peers and completing reflective journal entries and tasks. In addition to the reflective activities, some participants also noted how the instructional videos and textbook readings were beneficial to their learning as each provided references and models to assist them with identifying and naming their professional areas of strength and growth regarding the implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy. However, all of the participants expressed how the amount of time allotted for each session within the series of professional development was least beneficial as more time was needed to delve into the content resources, engage in rational discourse, and reflect on their interactions with culturally and linguistically diverse students.

In their culminating reflections, most of the participants expressed a desire to engage in ongoing, culturally responsive professional development with coaching support from in-house (school or district) teacher leaders. As noted in the literature, professional development presented outside of school by experts is less effective than job-embedded professional development supported by in-house teacher leaders (Darlington-Hammond, 2011; Gordon et al., 2020; Howard et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2019). Acknowledging the value of job-embedded professional development and in-house support, the participants anticipated the

positive influence of having the opportunity to acquire new understandings and refine their application of new practices through critical reflection and rational discourse with peer leaders. Moreover, all eight participants also described the need for extending culturally responsive professional development opportunities to others within the school and district to include teachers, leaders, and support staff beyond the elementary level and Title I setting. In doing so, all stakeholders involved in the educational experiences of the culturally and linguistically diverse students served within the district would understand the significant roles of culture and the brain as related to teaching and learning. Thereby, school and district leaders would recognize the need for providing more professional development for all stakeholders to unpack their cultural biases to decrease social threats and increase opportunities for all students to connect and learn in socially and intellectually safe environments. Transformative professional development, which involves sociolinguistic components such as rational discourse and critical reflection, has been purported to result in individuals motivated to take collective action to change practices, institutions, and systems (Mezirow, 1994). Hence, the participants culminated this study by advocating for the cultivation of a suburban teacher workforce, themselves included, prepared to validate students' cultural identities and cultivate academic success for all students, specifically the increasing population of culturally and linguistically diverse students served within the school, district, and beyond.

Chapter 5: Discussion

As noted in the introduction of this manuscript, the United States endures the largest influx of immigrants and number of U.S. born ethnic minorities than any other country. Without ongoing, transformative professional development, educational policymakers, school leaders, teachers, and stakeholders will continue to be threatened by the steadily increasing number of culturally and linguistically diverse students in schools across the nation and unsure of how to effectively address the academic and social needs of all students, specifically, in suburban and rural communities where research related to culturally responsive teaching is limited (Gay et al., 2000, Pledger, 2018). Hence, this collective case study was conducted with elementary teachers in a suburban Title I school to examine (1) how, if at all, do teacher perceptions and practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students change after participating in a series of culturally responsive professional development; (2) what factors influenced teachers' perceptions about teaching and learning as related to culturally and linguistically diverse students; and (3) which components, if any, of the structured series of culturally responsive professional development were perceived as most or least beneficial to cultivating culturally responsive teachers? A synthesis of the findings along with the implications, limitations, and recommendations are discussed in this chapter.

Review and Synthesis of the Findings

Drawing on Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory and Hammond's (2015) concept of culturally responsive teaching, I designed this study to examine the influence of engaging teachers in culturally responsive professional development structured to elicit critical reflection and rational discourse focused on the relationship between culture and pedagogy. An in-depth analysis of the qualitative data collected from each participant before,

during, and after participating in the culturally responsive professional development sessions revealed significant changes to the teachers' deficit perceptions and practices regarding their daily interactions with the culturally and linguistically diverse students served in their classrooms. The reflective nature of the professional development was deemed by the participants as most beneficial regarding the reported transformation of their thoughts and actions, whereas the limited amount of time allotted for each professional development session was noted as least beneficial to their growth as culturally responsive teachers. Thus, this study demonstrated the need for providing teachers with ample opportunities, time, and support to reflect on their newly formed understandings of culture, pedagogy, self, and their students as they navigate this journey of acquiring and applying cultural responsiveness.

Connecting the Findings to Existing Literature

During this study, eight elementary teachers from the same Title I elementary school volunteered to engage in a weekly series of culturally responsive professional development. The professional development sessions were led by two in-house instructional coaches with one being me. As noted in the literature, offering job-embedded professional development supported by in-house teacher leaders is more effective than mandating workshops or conferences facilitated by outside experts (Darlington-Hammond, 2011; Gordon et al., 2020; Howard et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2019). As a facilitator of the professional development and the researcher in this study, I collected data from each participant in the form of interviews, journal entries, and survey questionnaires to determine the influence of the professional development sessions. A thorough examination of the data revealed initial deficiencies in the participants' understanding of culture and how culture influences information processing, teaching, and learning. The data also exposed some of the participants' subpar teaching

practices and skewed perceptions which had been shaped by their familial upbringings and childhood educational experiences. As aligned to the literature, the teacher participants' initial perceptions of their students led to the adoption of lowered expectations regarding what students can and cannot do rather than self-reflection focused on ways to change their own practices and the narrative (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015; Mellom et al., 2018; Milner, 2017; Young, 2010). However, after engaging in the reflective activities intentionally crafted for each professional development session, the participants identified a need for examining and adjusting their own cultural lens to shift their deficit perceptions and stifling practices regarding the culturally and linguistically diverse students served in their classrooms. By unpacking the three levels of culture and critically examining their cultural frames of reference, the participants were able to establish the foundational knowledge needed to acquire deeper understandings of the role of culture in the classroom. The participants also developed clarity on how culture shapes the brain's information processing system and drives one's need for safety and belongingness. These newly formed understandings validated the importance of managing one's unchecked biases and emotional reactions as doing such has been purported to minimize social threats and maximize learning opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse students (Hammond, 2015).

Additionally, the participants expressed how the reflective nature of the study was most beneficial to their professional growth and journey in becoming culturally responsive teachers. Throughout the study, reflection was frequently encouraged to provide participants with multiple opportunities to acknowledge and process information which either challenged or affirmed their ways of thinking and doing. However, the time allotted for the participants to engage in the professional development was deemed least beneficial to their growth. The

participants claimed more time was needed to delve deeper into the rational discourse and critical reflection suggested to provoke lasting transformation of perceptions and practices (Mezirow, 1994). The additional time requested by the participants aligned to the existing work of Martin et al. (2019) which posits culturally responsive professional development should provide ample opportunities and time for teachers to transform problematic sets of fixed assumptions, expectations, and habits of the mind regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students. As noted by Adams et al. (2017), “genuine change requires time, patience, risk-taking, and reflection from within a supportive community of learners” (p. 29). Hence, the participants’ requests for more time to engage in critical reflection and rational discourse focused on the relationship between culture and pedagogy validated the need for devising a mandated plan for ongoing, culturally responsive professional development supported by school- or district-level teacher leaders. They believed a mandated plan with in-house support would ensure accountability and sustainability regarding the application of their evolving understandings, perceptions, and practices related to culturally responsive teaching.

Moreover, the findings of this study complement the literature by confirming the influence of and need for ongoing, culturally responsive professional development led by in-house teacher leaders that focuses on “reconceptualizing teacher practices and [perceptions] in a manner that recognizes and respects the intricacies of cultural and racial differences” between students and teachers (Howard, 2003, p. 19). It is vital for teachers to understand Black and Latinx students do not perform lower than White students because of race, language, or poverty, but rather from the deficit ideologies and practices of teachers who lack cultural responsiveness (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015, Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Therefore, sufficient opportunities and time should be provided for teachers to engage in transformative

professional development focused on the intersection of culture, race, and pedagogy for the purpose of cultivating a culturally conscious and responsive teacher workforce prepared to address educational inequities and social injustices by way of advocacy and action. A critical need for advocacy and action was particularly prevalent at the time of this study as kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) school systems across the nation were at risk of being stripped of initiatives, structures, and practices designed to foster cultural awareness and just actions regarding cultural diversity, equity, and inclusion in K-12 schools.

Connecting the Findings to Current Events

While preparing to write the final report of this study, a national debate regarding the role of critical race theory in education erupted. Parents, politicians, and stakeholders alike argued the detrimental effects of incorporating the ideology of critical race theory into K-12 curriculum and instruction. Many of the opposing individuals claimed the use of critical race theory in classrooms would indoctrinate students in social or political ideology that promotes one race above another, thereby, promoting racism and psychological distress on the account of students' race (Staff, 2021). Proponents of critical race theory countered the opponents' argument by asserting the value in implementing classroom instruction guided by the principles of critical race theory as doing so would encourage students to:

...acknowledge the existence and impact of race and racism in our communities and society [while] valuing multiple points of view and life experiences which are essential for helping students learn how to think critically about and participate in our global and diverse world (Boothe & Grossman, 2021, p. 1).

While proponents continued to argue the relevance of teaching from a critical race theory perspective, opponents pushed for policies to restrict any teaching practices closely related to the notion.

The controversial dispute led to the dismantling of developing and existing equity initiatives in many schools and districts across the nation as well as the banning of critical race theory in several states to include the southeastern state in which this research was situated (Sawchuk, 2021). The controversy also revealed the lack of knowledge amongst educational, political, and community leaders concerning the differences between critical race theory and culturally responsive teaching. Thus, school and district leaders across the United States, including those in which the research site was located, began to avoid any topics of discussion or professional development associated with culture, race, and equity to elude political backlash from the opposing stakeholders.

During a time of increasing cultural and linguistic diversity amongst students and teachers in U.S. schools, particularly in suburban schools with Title I programs, I was astonished by some stakeholders' opposition towards addressing culture, race, and equity in education. By the end of this study, I was even more bewildered in discovering 26 states had taken political action to ban critical race theory in schools (Education Week, 2021). The existing educational debates and policy changes at the time of this study further supported the purpose of this research by revealing not only the need for assisting educational leaders and stakeholders with differentiating between critical race theory and culturally responsive teaching but also the dire need for using a transformative approach to cultivate culturally responsive teachers and leaders in schools across the United States.

Establishing Common Language by Defining CRT

Mainstream media's coverage of the debates associated with banning critical race theory in education along with an analysis of the participants' language used during rational discourse and reflective journaling revealed the need for clearly defining terms, notions, and concepts related to this study. For instance, culturally responsive teaching and critical race theory share the acronym CRT; therefore, the terms and their defining principles were often used interchangeably by teachers, leaders, and stakeholders as displayed during the politically and emotionally-driven debates reported by the media. The common misuse of these terms was most likely due to individuals' lack of research, limited training, and underdeveloped understandings. Hence, the findings of this research along with the educational debates occurring at the time of the study revealed an urgent need for clarifying the distinction between culturally responsive teaching and critical race theory (see Table 6). The findings also presented a school and district-wide need for clearly defining other terms associated with equity in education such as race, culture, pedagogy, culturally responsive, and culturally relevant as presented in chapter one of this manuscript.

Culturally responsive teaching, as presented in this study, refers to a pedagogical approach that involves the use of students' cultural frames of reference to enhance the teaching and learning process. Culturally responsive teachers possess a deep understanding of culture and how culture influences the brain. These understandings along with self-awareness developed through continuous reflection are used by culturally responsive teachers to navigate and self-regulate daily interactions with students. Communal structures for learning are implemented in culturally responsive teachers' classrooms to activate connectedness between individuals in the learning community and stimulate information processing in the brain. Students thrive from the

push and care offered by culturally responsive teachers to forge alliances with students to guide them towards developing social awareness, learner independence, and academic identity. As further applied to this study, cultural incongruences between teachers and students have been purported to impede teaching and learning in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms; therefore, culturally responsive teaching focuses attention on students' differing cultures rather than racial identities as teachers and students of the same racial group may not have the same cultural experiences (Howard et al., 2017).

In contrast, critical race theory refers to an approach for critically examining race and racism in society. According to Creswell et al. (2018), critical race theory has three main goals: (a) present stories about discrimination, (b) argue for the eradication of racial subjugation, and (c) address other areas of differences and inequities. Although a particular set of methods to transform socially constructed realities is not associated with critical race theory, the general process associated with the notion involves identifying assumptions, documenting experiences, and presenting a call to action (Chumey, 2015). In the pursuit of transforming educational structures and teacher behaviors for the sake of diminishing the disenfranchisement of culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students, critical race theorists also acknowledge the significance of diversity in values and culture to support constructed understandings of the issues impacting marginalized groups and the value in using knowledge gleaned from inquiry to name systemic issues, construct new realities, and initiate institutional change. Although critical race theory was not used to guide this study, applying the notion to teacher development may yield beneficial in developing culturally responsive educators. Table 6 shows the distinct differences between culturally responsive teaching and critical race theory by displaying a clear definition

for each notion, specific components or tenets of each, and explicit examples of how each can be applied to professional development and teaching.

Table 6

Culturally Responsive Teaching(CRT) versus Critical Race Theory (CRT)

	Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)	Critical Race Theory (CRT)
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pedagogical approach applied to enhance teaching and learning for all students; instructional techniques aligned to students’ cultural ways of receiving and processing information. • It is not an examination of race and racism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A theoretical approach applied by individuals to critically examine the influence of race and racism as related to systems in society (i.e., educational and legal systems). • It is not a program, training, or curriculum.
Components/ Tenets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching moves aligned to students' cultural displays of learning and meaning-making • Connectedness to the learning community or new information • Warm demanding push and care; teacher-student alliance • Communal learning structures • Intellectually challenging tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counter-storytelling • Permanence of Racism • Whiteness as Property • Interest Convergence • The Critique of Liberalism
Applied to Professional Development Example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers reflect on their cultural frames of reference and how they may differ from their students’ • Teachers identify and plan to use instructional strategies aligned to students' cultural displays of learning and meaning-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers examine school-wide discipline data filtered by race and discuss possible causes for disproportionalities • Teachers examine how systems and structures in education (i.e., Special Education, Assessments, Gifted Program, Tracking) impact students of color.
Applied to Teaching Example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers engage students in call and response activities to alert the brain and ignite information processing • Teachers engage all students in high cognitive demand tasks designed to stretch the brain and increase intellectual capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers ask students to examine their positionality and write a story to counter or corroborate how they are perceived in society. • Teachers guide students through a comparative analysis of primary and secondary media sources from the Civil Rights Era to present-day media sources.

(Graham et al., 2019; Hammond, 2015; Howard et al. 2016; Sawchuk, 2021)

Applying Culturally Responsive Teaching and Critical Race Theory to Teacher PD

As previously mentioned, critical race theory was not used to guide the professional development offered in this study; however, coupling the notion with the concept of culturally responsive teaching may yield beneficial in fostering a culturally responsive teacher workforce. Warren-Grice (2017) purports there is a need for “ongoing, equity professional development [for teachers] where confronting issues of racism and other forms of marginalization is deliberate” (p. 21). The application of critical race theory in education, specifically as related to teacher development, often challenges dominant ideologies that perpetuate deficit notions of marginalized students (Graham et al., 2019). As further noted by Graham et al. (2019) applying critical race theory to teacher development promotes "opportunity to broaden teachers' multicultural understanding of racial and structural oppression by providing cross-cultural lenses that incorporate experiential knowledge...and supports teachers' navigational awareness of and responsiveness to racial climates and diverse classrooms" (p. 23). In addition to challenging how teachers perceive and instruct diverse populations of students, critical race theory also problematizes the racial demography in education and highlights the overwhelming presence of Eurocentric ideologies (Graham et al., 2019). In general, critical race theory has been used in education to scrutinize and dismantle notions of fairness, meritocracy, colorblindness, and neutrality regarding the educational experiences of ethnically diverse students (Howard et al., 2016). As noted in the findings of this study, most of the participants viewed race and culture as interchangeable concepts prior to the sessions, and some of the participants possessed deficit assumptions about students and their families based solely on race. Using critical reflection and rational discourse to examine the influence of race in education may have been beneficial to the professional growth and development of each participant in this study. Considering such, I

strongly believe incorporating principles of critical race theory into professional development programs designed to cultivate culturally responsive teachers may yield a critically reflective workforce prepared to teach and advocate for culturally and linguistically diverse students within the sociopolitical context of education throughout the nation.

Implications of the Study

Implications for Teachers and Teacher Leaders

When recognized and utilized efficiently, teacher leaders have substantial influence over school initiatives, instructional practices, and student learning. Hence, just as school and district leadership teams should seek quality teachers to lead change in schools, culturally responsive teachers should also pursue opportunities to lead efforts pertaining to teacher development, teaching and learning, and advocacy for culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families. Based on the literature review and the research participants' critique of this study, teachers are more receptive to professional development led by in-house teacher leaders rather than outside consultants (Darlington-Hammond, 2011; Gordon et al., 2020; Howard et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2019). As with this study, in-house facilitators of professional development often have preexisting relationships, prior knowledge of, and common goals with the participants that lend to the establishment of safe learning spaces in which colleagues can respectfully engage in uncomfortable conversations with their peers. As aligned with five of the seven teacher leadership standards drafted by the Leadership Exploratory Consortium (National Education Association, 2020), culturally responsive teacher leaders may be able to support and sustain culturally responsive teaching in schools by (a) accessing and using research to improve practice and student learning, (b) promoting professional learning for continuous improvement, (c) facilitating improvements in instruction

and student learning, (d) fostering outreach and collaboration with families and community, and (f) advocating for student learning and the profession.

To maintain their own culturally responsive teaching practices while effectively supporting the development of their colleagues, culturally responsive teacher leaders must stay abreast of past and current research related to culture, race, and pedagogy by engaging in self-directed professional development. Information gleaned through research and development may be used by in-house culturally responsive teacher leaders to generalize about ways of supporting teachers and the culturally and linguistically diverse students served within their schools. Their keen understandings and professional experiences regarding culturally responsive teaching may be applied to assist school and district leaders with developing and promoting differentiated professional development pathways consisting of critical reflection, rational discourse, observations, and instructional coaching. Through the facilitation of transformative professional development and instructional coaching, culturally responsive teacher leaders may positively influence accountability and sustainability amongst teachers and school leaders regarding the implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices in all classrooms. Moreover, culturally responsive teacher leaders may strengthen the existence of cultural responsiveness within schools and the district by continuing to advocate the value in acknowledging and addressing the cultural and racial demographic changes in suburban communities along with the importance of collaborating with community leaders and other stakeholders to ensure the implementation of adequate programs, partnerships, and policies to guarantee students and their families are served in culturally appropriate ways.

As further suggested by the findings of this study, teacher perceptions and practices are transformed when they have multiple opportunities, adequate time, safe spaces, and ample support to develop a deep understanding of culture, acquire an awareness of their cultural frames of reference, explore their students' cultural dispositions, and examine the relationship between culture and pedagogy. Thus, teachers in need of refining or acquiring their capacity to confidently identify and perform as culturally responsive teachers should engage in professional development designed to transform their deficit ways of thinking and doing through the processes of critical reflection and rational discourse. Teachers who desire to assume a culturally responsive approach to teaching and learning may benefit from participating in ongoing, transformative professional development focused on culture and pedagogy, seeking opportunities to apply newly acquired understandings of culturally responsive teaching, and engaging in continuous self-reflection and peer conversations regarding their perceptions and practices. Moreover, teachers should avoid depriving and postponing high cognitive demand tasks by assigning “watered down” or rote tasks based on their deficit perceptions of culturally and linguistically diverse students’ academic mindset and ability. Teachers should focus on being a warm demanding ally who guides students in the learning process by fostering the connection, care, and challenge needed to promote student success in the classroom and beyond.

Implications for School and District Leaders

Based on the findings of this study, teachers and students in suburban Title I schools with increasing populations of culturally and linguistically diverse students seem to benefit from leadership teams who recognize the need for and advantage of supporting the implementation of culturally responsive teaching in K-12 classrooms. As noted by Khalifa et

al. (2016), educational leaders who are advocates of culturally responsive teaching consistently seek opportunities to (a) promote and support culturally responsive learning environments by providing multiple opportunities for professional development, (b) establish quality accountability systems for monitoring and sustaining the cultural responsiveness of all personnel, (c) attain and develop culturally responsive teachers, and (d) engage students, parents, and the community in culturally appropriate ways.

In some states, including the state in which this study was situated, teacher and leader effectiveness is evaluated by one's ability to promote and maintain positive and safe learning environments conducive to the diverse cultural needs of students and their families. However, most school districts only offer teachers one-time professional development opportunities related to addressing the needs of diverse students and their families with little to no in-house support for sustainability (Adams et al., 2017; Griffin et al., 2016; Gordon et al., 2020; Hammond, 2015, Mellon et al., 2018, Warren-Grice, 2017). Offering ample time for transformative professional development regarding cultural diversity in schools along with continued support from in-house teacher leaders have been noted to significantly alter teachers' perceptions and practices regarding the learning experiences they offer culturally and linguistically diverse students. Nonetheless, the research participants indicated expectations regarding the implementation of culturally responsive teaching coupled with opportunities for professional development and support related to such were lacking within the school and district. At a minimum, some of the participants had engaged in school-level professional development focused on teaching children of poverty. If teacher evaluation is based on the expectation of being able to establish and maintain a positive learning environment for culturally and linguistically diverse students, then school and district leaders should frequently offer and require multiple opportunities for

all members of the organization to engage in ongoing culturally responsive professional development. They should also provide instructional coaching support by in-house teacher leaders. To address this need identified by the research participants, school and district leaders should consider building teacher capacity regarding the application of cultural responsiveness by relying on the funds of knowledge and expertise of culturally responsive teacher leaders existing within the organization. Utilizing in-house culturally responsive teachers and teacher leaders to plan, organize, and develop culturally responsive learning pathways for school and district leaders, teachers, and staff establishes authentic and accessible resources, opportunities, and support for increasing, monitoring, and sustaining teacher efficacy and student success in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms.

Additionally, school and district leaders should intentionally seek to hire individuals who exhibit a deep understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy. They should also pursue individuals who have clinical or professional experience with teaching in culturally and linguistically diverse school settings and possess an understanding of how cultural responsiveness extends beyond the classroom as family structures also contribute to students' cultural frames of reference. At the time of this study, some of the participants expressed how the traditional nuclear family was no longer the norm as families served in the school and presumably in schools across the nation were comprised of varying family structures (e.g., single-parent families, blended families, same-sex families, grandparents, and other kinship led families, etc.) with some structures formed by interracial or intercultural relationships (Grant et al., 2019). Thus, school and district leaders should not only seek to understand how families operate but also pursue teachers who recognize and respect the different family structures that may exist amongst students as well as the value in getting to know students'

families to build authentic partnerships and offer culturally responsive support rather than adopting deficit assumptions and displaying culturally insensitive actions.

Before initiating a shift in any of the aforementioned, school and district leaders must take time to critically examine their own culture and positionality and how such relates to the teachers, students, and families served under their leadership. They must also devote time and effort towards critically reflecting on their leadership behaviors and developing a deep understanding of culture and how it relates to teaching, learning, and leading. In doing so, school and district leaders may increase their likelihood of developing the cultural consciousness, pedagogical knowledge, and leadership skills needed to proceed with attaining, promoting, monitoring, and supporting a culturally responsive teacher workforce.

Implications for Teacher Preparation Programs

Although the *No Child Left Behind Act* calls for the preparation of teachers who possess the competence and skills to effectively teach all learners, teachers often enter the classroom unprepared and unsure of their ability to adequately teach culturally and linguistically diverse students (Gordon & Espinoza, 2020). Lack of teacher preparation has the potential to produce inadequate self-efficacy as well as the adoption of color-blind and culture-blind teaching ideologies that profoundly affect culturally and linguistically diverse students (Griffin et al, 2016; Maye & Day, 2012). Each participant in this study noted limited exposure or lack of opportunities to engage in teacher preparation courses focusing on culture and its relationship to teaching and learning as a possible cause of their self-reported low levels of teacher efficacy as related to culturally responsive teaching. In teacher preparation programs, pre-service teachers' limited self-efficacy is possibly perpetuated by preparation courses and materials based solely on Eurocentric ideologies; insufficient clinical experiences

in diverse settings; and inadequate learning experiences led by individuals who may lack the awareness, knowledge, skills, or willingness to support the development of culturally responsive teachers. As noted by Griffin et al. (2016), many of the individuals responsible for developing pre-service teachers reflect the White, middle-class, monolingual, female profile. In addition, the aforementioned individuals sometimes lack the cultural proficiency needed to engage pre-service teachers in discourse about culture, race, and equity in education. They tend to possess feelings of discomfort related to these topics which lead to an obscured presentation of information regarding the influence of culture and race in education (Griffin et al., 2016). As a result, pre-service teachers transition into their careers without having opportunities to engage in a critical examination of self and the authentic learning experiences needed to develop a deep understanding of theory and practice associated with the intersection of culture, race, and pedagogy.

Considering such, pre-service teachers and those responsible for ensuring the preparedness for the teacher workforce should have opportunities to (a) acquire an awareness of themselves as pertaining to culture and their positionality in society, (b) expand their understandings of culture and its influence, (c) grapple with the discomfort of discussing culture and race as it pertains to existing inequities in education, and (d) broaden their understanding and application of culturally responsive pedagogy. Hence, teacher preparation programs may benefit from recruiting and developing faculty and staff who are well-versed in cultural diversity, equity, and inclusion; requiring faculty and staff to engage in transformative professional development designed to provoke critical reflection and rational discourse regarding the influence of culture and race in education; and revamping courses and learning experiences to reflect and prepare pre-service teachers for the rapidly changing

cultural and racial demography in schools across the nation. Moreover, teacher preparation programs may cultivate a culturally responsive novice teacher workforce by:

- Providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to observe, examine, and analyze the practice of culturally responsive teaching in action,
- Seeking partnerships with multiple school districts to provide pre-service teachers with learning experiences in a variety of culturally and linguistically diverse settings,
- Identifying culturally responsive in-service teachers to serve as mentor teachers to pre-service teachers during their field experiences,
- Situating pre-service teachers' field experiences in settings made up of students from cultural and ethnic groups differing from their own,
- Providing multiple opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage in authentic learning experiences requiring the application of conceptualized understandings of culturally responsive teaching practices,
- Designing safe opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage in rational discourse and critical reflection regarding culture, race, pedagogy, and self, and
- Offering meaningful feedback during pre-service teaching experiences and scaffolded support as pre-service teachers transition into in-service teaching roles (Siwatu et al., 2011).

Implications for Policymakers and Stakeholders

As student demographics in schools across the nation continue to grow in cultural and linguistic diversity and national debates regarding race, culture, curriculum, and instruction linger, educational policymakers and stakeholders need to ensure policies, systems, and structures are in place to guarantee all students are afforded an equitable, safe, and quality

educational experience designed to prepare each student, in particular those of marginalized groups, for success in and beyond the classroom. Based on this study, the quest for ensuring equity in education should be initiated by developing a common language and clear definitions to address misunderstandings associated with frequently misused terminology related to culture, race, and pedagogy. Without having clear definitions and common knowledge regarding the aforementioned terms along with in-depth clarity distinguishing culturally responsive teaching and critical race theory, efforts to support culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families will continue to be misinterpreted and dismissed by opposing policymakers and stakeholders.

To establish and support the best policies, systems, and structures for some of our most vulnerable community members – culturally and linguistically diverse students – policymakers and stakeholders may benefit from subjecting themselves to a state of vulnerability while developing deeper understandings of culture by reflecting on the implications of their positionality in the sociopolitical context of education. Newfound understandings and awareness gained from the processes of critical reflection and rational discourse may lead to the adoption and enactment of culturally responsive initiatives, systems, structures, and policies informed by all stakeholders including district leaders, school leaders, teachers, parents, students, and the community.

As noted by Grant and Ray (2019), families from all races, social classes, ethnicities, and cultures want the best educational experiences for their students. Hence, to increase the likelihood of fulfilling the desires of all families, policymakers should consider devising, enforcing, and sustaining teacher development, certification, and endorsement policies, programs, and procedures to ensure district leaders, school administrators, teachers, and

support staff receive the training and assistance needed to (a) establish respect for all students and their families; (b) acknowledge the cultural uniqueness, experiences, and viewpoints of all students and their families; and (c) draw on the funds of knowledge of all students and their families to enrich the schooling experience (Grant & Ray, 2019). Creating policies to mandate ongoing, differentiated culturally responsive professional development yielding a certified or endorsed licensure for all district leaders, school administrators, teachers, and support staff may not only increase teacher, leader, and staff efficacy as related to meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families, but may also increase the likelihood of closing the opportunity and achievement gaps existing between student groups. Overall, to reap the full benefit of culturally responsive teaching, widespread instructional reform along with a major shift in professional development, accountability, and assessment of teachers are needed (Gay, 2018).

Limitations of the Study

Although measures were taken to reduce limitations, a few were noted to include the small sampling of participants, time allotted for professional development, depth of the data collection and analysis, pandemic induced design, and researcher bias and positionality.

A primary limitation of the study was the small sampling of eight teacher participants from one suburban elementary school with a Title I program. Although there was some cultural, educational, and professional variance amongst the group of teachers, there were not enough participants to generalize the influence of the study regarding teachers in other K-12 Title I schools within the district or beyond. Therefore, a singular research site along with a small sampling of participants provided limited insight regarding the influence of culturally

responsive professional development on teachers' perceptions and practices related to teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students in suburban schools with a Title I program.

Another limitation of the study was the time allotted for the series of culturally responsive professional development. Each of the four sessions of professional development was scheduled as a weekly 1-hour learning experience occurring during the last semester of the school year. By the request and verbal consent of the participants, 15-30 minutes were added to each session to provide more time for rational discourse and critical reflection. Yet, the data revealed the need for more time to engage in the process. Allotting longer periods of time for each session or planning for more sessions of culturally responsive professional development may have increased the amount of self-reported changes to the participants' perceptions and practices.

A third limitation of the study was the depth of data collection and analysis. Data were collected from the participants in the form of interviews, reflective journal entries, artifacts, and survey responses. To elicit honest responses, the surveys administered after each professional development session were anonymous. The anonymity of the survey responses made it impossible to connect and triangulate each participant's interview transcripts, journal entries, and survey responses. Moreover, the findings of this study were derived solely from the data collected from the teacher participants. Collecting interview or survey data from students about their learning experiences and relationships with the teacher participants may have been useful in corroborating or challenging the participants' self-reported changes in perceptions and practices.

The study was also limited by COVID-19 induced guidelines restricting face-to-face gatherings. For instance, the collection and analysis of observational data were considered at

the beginning of the study to compare participant-reported and researcher-observed changes in practice. However, observations were omitted as the validity of the data was questionable with the research participants operating in a virtual learning environment for the pre-observation and returning to a traditional mode of face-to-face instruction for the post-observation. Moreover, collecting observational data virtually may have obscured my view of classroom instruction and interactions within the learning community. Additionally, the ability to meet with the group of research participants in a face-to-face setting was restricted, therefore, the professional development sessions and interviews were conducted virtually. In the virtual setting, it was difficult to collect data regarding the participants' body language and authentic engagement. Face-to-face interactions may have promoted more connectedness amongst the participants and willingness to fully engage in the learning process; thereby fostering the possibility of deeper discussion, reflection, transformation, and action.

Lastly, the research may have been limited by my positionality and biases as the researcher. Although the participants expressed comfort with engaging in the culturally responsive professional development being led by me as a teacher leader within the school and district, they may have also viewed my instructional coaching position as administrative or authoritative. Hence, misconceived perceptions regarding my positionality may have prohibited the participants from speaking their truths for the sake of appeasing me. Not only did I enter this study having preestablished relationships with the participants, but also with preexisting frames of reference shaped by my cultural, racial, and professional experiences as a U.S. citizen, student, parent, and educator of color. I also possessed strong beliefs about culturally responsive professional development for teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Therefore, my biases and positionality within the sociopolitical context of

this study may have influenced my interpretation of the data. To mitigate any of the abovementioned limitations, member checking, triangulation, and researcher reflective protocols were vital components of this study. Also, the participants were frequently reminded of my obligation to keep shared information confidential and solely available to me for the purpose of completing this study.

Although limitations of this study have been identified and considered, the findings still provide significant insight regarding the influence of professional development designed to cultivate culturally responsive teachers in a suburban school with a Title I program. Nonetheless, researchers possessing differing experiences and philosophical beliefs may obtain different results when conducting a similar study.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study contributes to an existing body of research regarding the characteristics and development of culturally responsive teachers. However, a vast amount of the literature focuses on identifying or cultivating culturally responsive teachers in urban schools serving impoverished Black students. Minimal attention in the research has been directed towards schools in suburban and rural communities. This study complements the standing research and counteracts its limitations by providing a foundation for future research regarding the facilitation of culturally responsive professional development for teachers in suburban schools experiencing an increase in culturally and linguistically diverse students. Future research aligned to this study may benefit from increasing variance amongst the participants, selecting participants from multiple schools, inviting school and district leaders as participants, gathering input from students, extending the timeframe of the study, and exploring the effectiveness of in-house support.

This study focuses on the professional development of eight certified teachers serving in one elementary school with a Title I program. Future studies could involve the selection of elementary, middle, and high school teachers within a district, state, region, or nation serving in suburban schools with and without a Title I program. Doing so may increase variance amongst the participants as related to gender, race, culture, experiences, philosophies, and pedagogical approaches. Including teachers from multiple schools and geographical areas could also present variance in student demographics and findings related to the cultural congruence or incongruence existing between participants and their students. Additionally, involving teachers from multiple schools, grade levels, and geographical locations may also present opportunities for comparative analyses.

Continued research focused on the development of school and district leaders may yield benefits, as well. According to educational researchers, recruiting and sustaining culturally responsive teachers are dependent upon the effective and reflective leadership of individuals who understand the significance of securing and developing quality teachers for marginalized students (Kahlifa et al., 2016). Hence, the development of a culturally responsive school and district leadership team is critical to the cultivation of a culturally responsive teacher workforce as developing teachers alone will not yield sustainable changes in practices and policies proposed to promote equity in education. As teachers work towards transforming their perceptions and practices into ways that are responsive to the cultural needs of students, school and district leaders should also engage in similar opportunities to develop an understanding of culturally responsive teaching and their roles in establishing policies and structures to promote equity in education for culturally and linguistically diverse students. In

addition, developing cultural responsiveness amongst teachers and leaders may also increase accountability regarding equity in the classroom.

Future research may also yield beneficial outcomes by examining the influence of culturally responsive professional development as perceived by the research participants' students. Student data could be collected to explore students' perceptions of teachers, sense of belongingness, and academic identity. Data collected from students before and after the professional development sessions via interviews, journal entries, or surveys could be triangulated with data collected from the teacher participants to affirm or contest reported teaching and learning experiences. The data could also be used to determine changes, if any, to the students' learning experiences and academic success. Student input may yield significant insight regarding changes, if any, to their teachers' perceptions and practices along with evidence to reveal whether or not their learning needs are being met in culturally responsive ways.

Conducting a similar study for an extended period of time may add to the trustworthiness of this study by offering more time in the field. Hence, future researchers should consider conducting a longitudinal study with professional development lasting for at least an entire school year or longer to allow more time for the participants to study, discuss, apply, and reflect on the concept of culturally responsive teaching and how it may challenge or confirm their existing perceptions and practices. Extending the time for the study could also provide months or years rather than weeks for monitoring and analyzing the transformations, if any, to the participants' ways of thinking and teaching as related to interacting with culturally and linguistically diverse students. In addition, establishing a longer timeframe for this study may allow for the participants to delve deeper into rational

discourse, critical reflection and the content of the book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* (Hammond, 2015). The deep dive may aid the participants in developing the skills and knowledge needed to closely examine themselves through the process of critical reflection as they support the development of their peers through rational discourse. Extended time for the study may also offer more opportunities for the participants to apply newfound skills and knowledge while being coached by a culturally responsive teacher leader. Ultimately, conducting a longitudinal study may allow additional time for processing information, shifting perspectives, applying new learning, and establishing systems of accountability while providing the researcher with extensive time in the field to discover findings that may be pertinent to the extension of this work.

Lastly, future research may benefit from an examination of the influence of in-house coaching support offered during and after the series of culturally responsive professional development. As noted in the literature, support from in-house personnel is more beneficial to the development of teachers than outside support. Not only may the exploration of in-house support provide evidence regarding the benefit, if any, of instructional coaching by a culturally responsive teacher leader, but also the influence of establishing an accountability system to develop and sustain teacher practices and the assurance of equitable educational experiences for all students, specifically, culturally and linguistically diverse students in suburban schools with a Title I program.

Concluding Thoughts and Aspirations

Existing research regarding the development of culturally responsive teachers is limited to studies conducted mostly in urban schools; therefore, this dissertation focusing on developing teachers in a suburban school complements the standing body of literature. By

conducting this study, I have gained a deeper understanding of how culture shapes the brain's response system, deep cultural awareness impacts teaching and learning, and self-reflection coupled with rational discourse influence transformation and actions. As a teacher leader in a suburban school district, I desire to use the insight gleaned from this study to cultivate culturally responsive teachers and educational leaders who possess the efficacy needed to ensure equitable learning experiences for all students, specifically, the increasing number of culturally and linguistically diverse students served in our suburban schools with and without a Title I program. Thus, using what I have acquired from this research, I intend to improve and propose the professional development series implemented in this study to district and school leaders to devise a plan to promote, monitor, and sustain the cultural responsiveness of teachers and leaders within schools throughout the district.

From a broader perspective, I desire for educational leaders at the district, state, and national level to use this research as a guide for creating policies, programs, and procedures for mandating and supporting ongoing opportunities for teachers and school leaders to develop the skills, knowledge, and efficacy needed to meet the learning needs of all students in culturally appropriate ways. For instance, a culturally responsive teaching certification or endorsement program could be designed and facilitated by a select group of culturally responsive teacher leaders and offered as a required program of study for practicing and prospective teachers, especially for those teaching or seeking to serve in culturally and linguistically diverse schools. Moreover, I foresee potential in consulting with teacher preparation program coordinators and using the findings of this study to offer support with devising courses or programs of study intended to develop a culturally responsive teacher workforce. Courses or programs could be designed to provide opportunities for pre-service

teachers to engage in the critical reflection and rational discourse exercises suggested to ignite the transformation of assumptions and actions shaped by individuals' lived experiences.

My ultimate goal for presenting this dissertation is to advocate for equitable opportunities, access, and experiences suggested to improve teaching and learning for all students, specifically, the groups of culturally and linguistically diverse students who have been historically underserved and deprived of intellectually challenging and culturally appropriate learning experiences in schools throughout the nation. During a time of growing diversity in suburban schools along with the mounting tension fostered by political debates about culture, race, and education, I aim for this study to inform the thoughts and actions of those in positions of power. As a transformative teacher leader and parent of students with unique cultural backgrounds, I cannot remain silent about issues pertaining to the disenfranchisement of marginalized students in suburban schools presumably caused by teachers' lack of cultural responsiveness and limited efficacy attributable to inadequate opportunities for professional development and support. Thus, I urge school administrators, teacher leaders, educational policymakers, and other stakeholders to prioritize the learning needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students by optimizing ongoing opportunities to cultivate and sustain a culturally responsive teacher workforce to serve students in suburban Title I schools and beyond.

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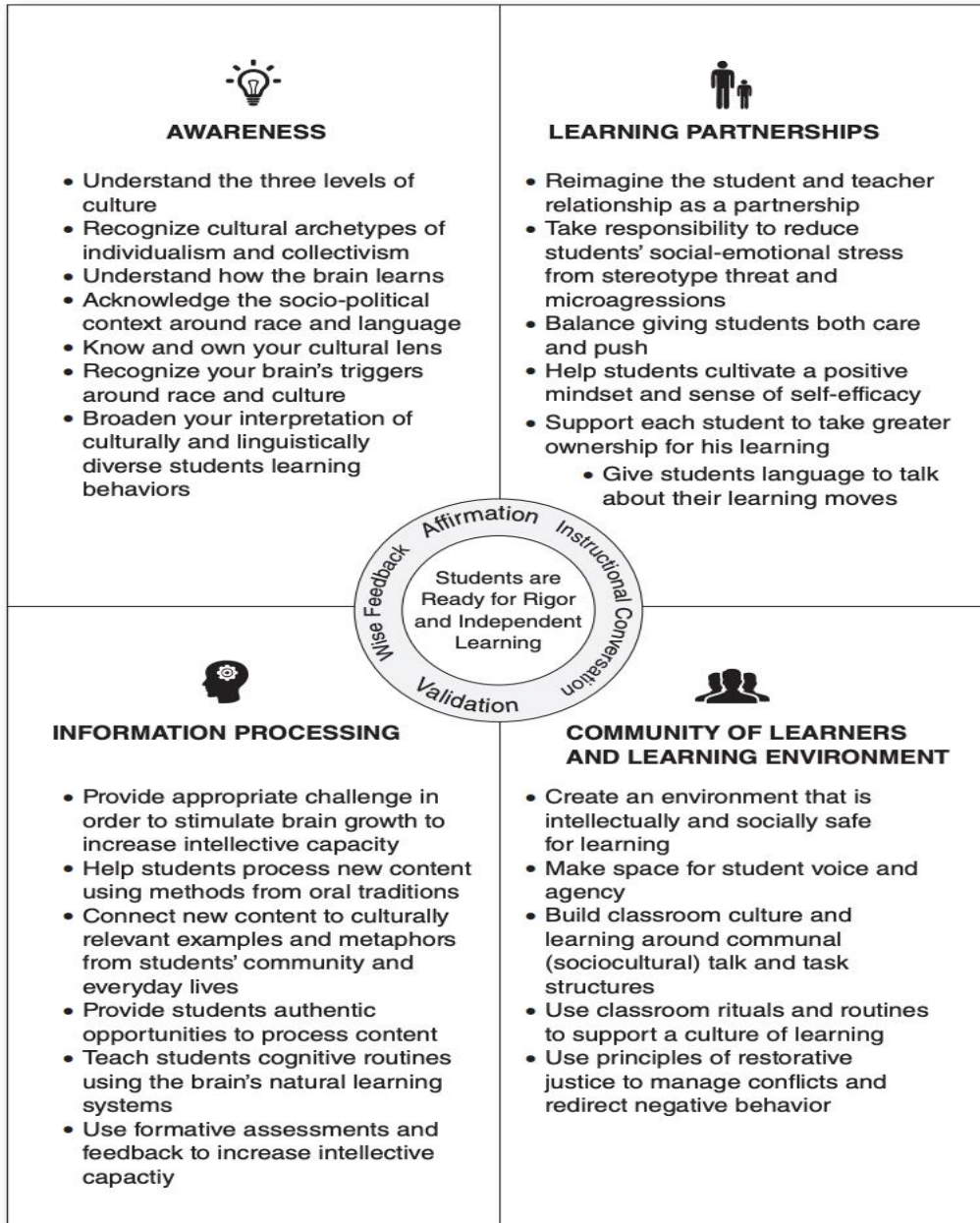
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Appendix A

Ready for Rigor Framework

Figure 1.2 Ready for Rigor Framework

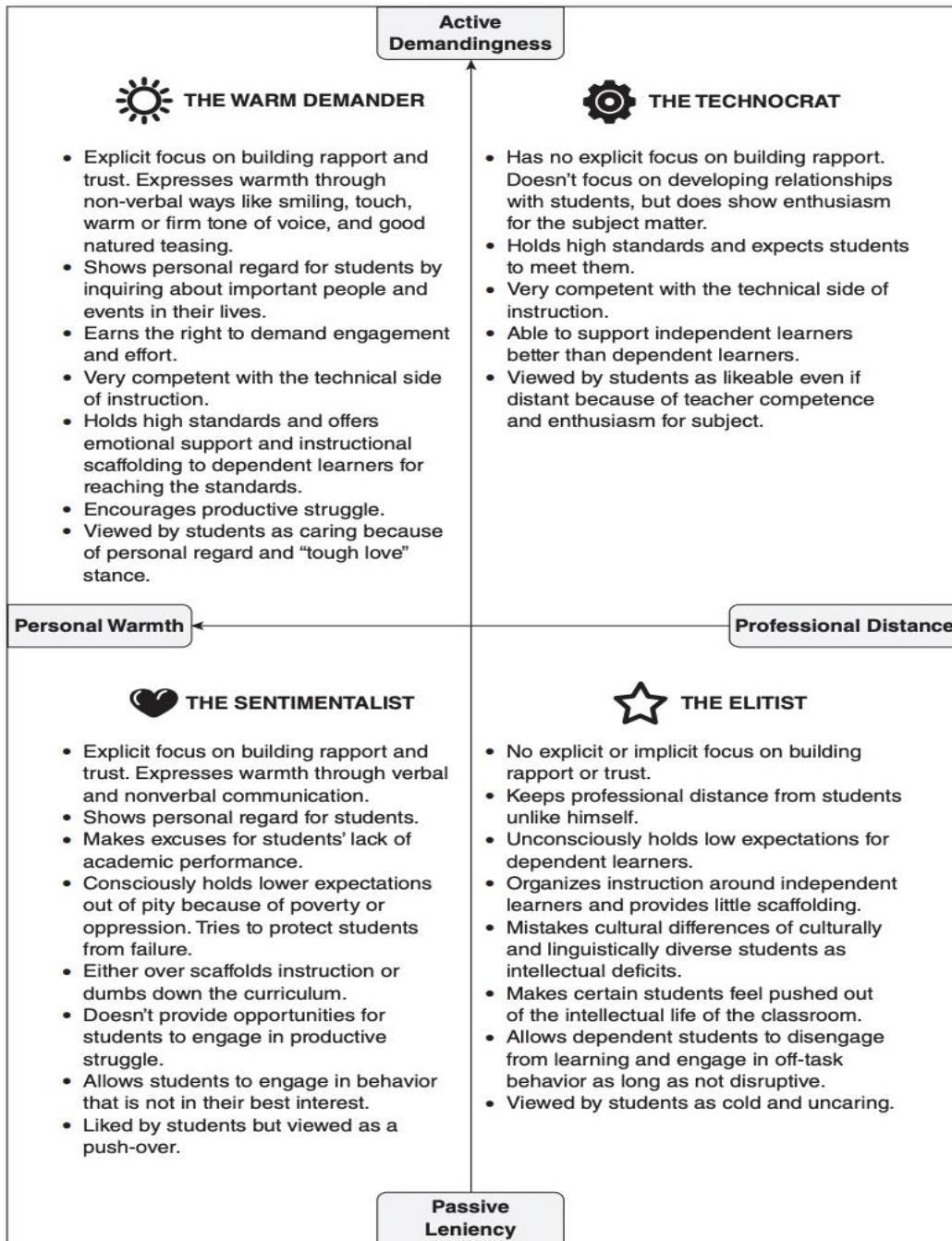


From *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Amongst Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students* (p. 17), by Z. Hammond, 2015, Corwin, Copyrighted 2015 by Corwin. Reprinted with permission.

Appendix B

Warm Demander Chart

Figure 6.2 Warm Demander Chart



From *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Amongst Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students* (p. 99), by Z. Hammond, 2015, Corwin, Copyrighted 2015 by Corwin. Reprinted with permission.

Appendix C

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Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain

GENERAL INFORMATION

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Request Status	Denied	Deny Reason	Permission may not be needed for this request

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Appendix D**Participant Invitation Email**

IRB Study Number: FY21-409

Title of Study: Cultivating Culturally Responsive Elementary Teachers in Suburban Schools with a Title I Program

Principal Investigator: Angela L. Mack, Bagwell College of Education Doctoral Candidate

Dear Valued Colleague,

As a doctoral candidate in the Teacher Leadership program at Kennesaw State University, I am writing to invite you to participate in my dissertation research project on culturally responsive professional development in suburban schools with Title I programs. I am looking for elementary teachers who are over the age of 18 and serving in suburban schools with Title I programs to participate in culturally responsive professional development sessions, reflective journaling, interviews, and observations to determine how, if at all, do teacher perceptions and practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students change after receiving structured and ongoing culturally responsive professional development. The study is also designed to determine which components of the culturally responsive professional development are identified by teachers as the most and/or least beneficial to their development.

Attached to this email is an informed consent letter and a participant selection questionnaire. Please read the attached informed consent letter carefully to determine if you are interested in being a voluntary participant in the study. If you have any questions after reading the informed consent, please feel free to contact me at amack19@students.kennesaw.edu or [REDACTED] to answer your questions before signing and returning the consent letter and completing the attached participant selection questionnaire.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to the possibility of engaging and learning with you as I complete my dissertation project.

Sincerely,

Angela L. Mack
Doctoral Candidate, Teacher Leadership
Kennesaw State University

Appendix E**Participant Selection Survey Questionnaire**

The following questions will be administered via Microsoft Forms to teachers who express interest in the culturally responsive professional learning study.

1. Are you interested in learning more about culturally responsive teaching?

Yes

No

**If “No” is selected the survey will end.*

2. Are you willing to participate in an 8-week research study (6 weeks in the Spring of 2021, 2 weeks in the Fall of 2021) that will involve a commitment to engaging in four weekly professional learning sessions, five reflective journal entries, two interviews, and two classroom observations?

Yes

No

**If “No” is selected the survey will end.*

3. Are you currently employed at a K-5 elementary school with a Title I program?

Yes

No

**If “No” is selected the survey will end.*

4. In which setting is your school location?

Urban

Suburban

Rural

5. Which grade level do you currently teach?

- K
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- Other (Please specify)

6. How many years have you been teaching?

7. Which range best identifies your age?

- 18-20 years old
- 20-29 years old
- 30-39 years old
- 40-49 years old
- 50-59 years old
- 60+ years old

8. Which of the following best describes your race? (As described by the National Center for Education Statistics, 2020)

- Black
- White
- Latino/a
- Asian
- Pacific Islander

- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Multiracial
- Other (Please specify)

9. Which gender pronouns do you identify with the most?

- He/Him
- She/Her
- They/Them
- Other (Please specify)

10. What is the highest degree you have obtained?

- Bachelor's
- Master's
- Educational Specialist's
- Doctorate

11. Do you recall taking a course(s) on multicultural education or culturally responsive teaching during your teacher preparation program? If so, please describe your learning experience in the course(s).

12. Have you participated in professional development for in-service teachers related to multicultural education or culturally responsive teaching? If so, please describe your learning experience in the professional development session(s).

13. If you are still interested in being included in the research study, please provide your first and last name.

14. If you are still interested in participating in the research study, please provide your preferred email address.

Appendix F**Professional Development Reflection Survey Protocol**

Questionnaire will be administered via Microsoft Forms following each CRPL sessions.

1. Please select the title of the session.
 - Session 1: Awareness
 - Session 2: Information Processing
 - Session 3: Learning Partnerships
 - Session 4: Community of Learners & Learning Environment
2. Which components of this culturally responsive professional learning session have been most beneficial to your development as a teacher? Please be specific in your description of the component(s) and the influence.
3. Which components of this culturally responsive professional learning have been least beneficial to your development as a teacher? Please be specific in your description of the component(s) and the irrelevance.
4. Describe how this culturally responsive professional learning session has informed, if at all, your thinking regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students.
5. Describe how this culturally responsive professional learning session has informed, if at all, your practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students.
6. Describe how this culturally responsive professional learning session has informed, if at all, your understanding of self.
7. Explain how you plan to implement or have already implemented what you have gained from this learning session or a previous session.
8. Feel free to share any other questions, concerns, or comments.

Appendix G

Pre- and Post-Professional Development Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I am a doctoral candidate at Kennesaw State University seeking to earn an Ed.D. in Teacher Leadership. As American schools, particularly schools with Title I programs steadily increase in cultural, racial, social, and linguistic diversity, I am curious as to how, if at all, the changes are influencing teachers' thoughts and actions. Therefore, the interview questions are designed for me to gather information about how experiences, beliefs, perceptions, and professional learning influence teachers' practices as related to culturally and linguistically diverse students.

The interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes and will include questions regarding your personal and professional backgrounds and experiences. Some of the questions involve sensitive topics related to race, gender, and class. If at any point during the interview you are uncomfortable with responding to a question, please let me know. You may refuse to answer a question or stop at any time during the interview. Also, if you need clarification of a question, please do not hesitate to ask.

The interview will be audio-recorded so that I can accurately document our conversation and convey your responses. Your name will not appear on the transcription nor my final report, as you will be described using a pseudonym instead. The audio recording of the interview and any associated documents will be kept confidential and securely stored and locked on my personal computer.

To participate in this study, you must be at least 18 years of age. Are you over 18 years of age?

Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

Do I have your permission to proceed with conducting and audio recording this interview?

Pre-Professional Learning Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
 - a. How do you identify in terms of your racial/cultural/ethnic/social identities?
 - b. Do you speak any other languages? If so, which language(s)?
2. How many years have you been teaching?
 - a. Describe the settings of your teaching experience.
3. What led you to become a teacher?
 - a. What are your primary goals as a teacher?
4. Tell me about a typical day in your classroom regarding your interactions with students.

- a. Describe the demographics of the students in your classroom/school.
 - b. Describe how what you know about your students informs your teaching?
5. Thinking back to when you were in elementary school, describe your learning experiences. (For example, learning experiences in terms of relationships with teachers.)
 - a. How do you think your elementary school learning experiences influence your teaching practices?
 - b. How do you think your beliefs about the world influence your teaching practices?
 6. Reflecting on your teaching experience in your current school, describe some of the most significant successes regarding teaching and learning?
 - a. Continuing to reflect on your teaching experiences in your current school, describe some of the most significant challenges regarding teaching and learning?
 7. How do you think race, ethnicity, gender, and/or class influence teaching and learning in your classroom?
 - a. How, if at all, do you use your understanding of self (regarding race, gender, and class) to build relationships with students?
 - b. How, if at all, do you use your understanding of self (regarding race, gender, and class) to inform you teaching practices?
 8. How would you define culturally responsive teaching?
 - a. How, if at all, do you apply what you have defined as culturally responsive teaching practices in your classroom?
 - b. Would you describe yourself as a culturally responsive teacher? Explain why or why not.
 9. Describe the need, if at all, for devising a plan for mandated culturally responsive professional learning in your school or district.
 10. Describe what do you hope to gain from the culturally responsive professional learning sessions?
 11. Do you have any questions for me or anything you want to add?

Post-Professional Learning Semi-Structured Interview Question

1. Tell me about your culturally responsive professional learning experience?
2. How, if at all, has participating in the culturally responsive professional learning shaped your definition of culturally responsive teaching?
 - a. How, if at all, do you apply what you have come to understand as culturally responsive teaching practices in your classroom?

- b. Would you describe yourself as a culturally responsive teacher? Explain why or why not.
3. How, if at all, has your participation in the culturally responsive professional learning informed your perceptions of the students served in your classroom and school? Describe a specific example(s).
4. How, if at all, has your participation in the culturally responsive professional learning informed your practices regarding the culturally and linguistically diverse students served in your classroom or school? Describe a specific example(s).
5. After reflecting on your overlapping identities and understanding of self (regarding race, ethnicity, gender, and class) during the culturally responsive professional learning, how, if at all, do you use or foresee yourself using these understanding to build relationships with students?
 - a. How, if at all, do you use or foresee yourself using these understanding to inform your practices?
6. Describe components of the culturally responsive professional learning that were most beneficial, if any, to your development as a teacher of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Please provide specific examples and explain the benefit.
7. Describe components of the culturally responsive professional learning that were least beneficial, if any, to your development as a teacher of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Please provide specific examples and explain the benefit.
8. Describe the need, if at all, for devising a plan for mandated culturally responsive professional learning in your school or district.
9. Describe why you volunteered to participate in this research project.
 - a. Did you gain what you had hope to from the culturally responsive professional learning experience? Please explain.
 - b. Describe your next steps, if any.
10. Do you have any questions for me or anything you want to add?

Appendix H

Journal Entry Protocol

Thank you for participating in this reflective portion of the study by agreeing to maintain a digital journal. The reflective thoughts shared in your digital journal will only be accessible to you and the researcher. Your written reflections will be used solely for the purpose of this research study and will be kept confidential. Please share your open and honest thoughts regarding each prompt.

Journal Entry Prompt 1

- How do you define your culture? How do your cultural experiences compare to your students' cultural experiences? What similarities do you notice? What differences do you notice?
- What social and learning behaviors trigger you in the classroom? What assumptions might be behind your triggers?

Journal Entry Prompt 2

- How do you incorporate information processing into your lessons currently? Where do you see opportunity for incorporating more information processing activities in your instruction?
- Which of the *Brain Rules* resonate with you? Which *Brain Rules* guide your practices and interactions with students?

Journal Entry Prompt 3

- How do you create a sense of trust and safety in your relationship with our students? Do you do this deliberately or randomly? Explain your thinking.
- Of the four types of teachers described by Hammond, what type are you? Explain your choice. Provide examples specific to your practices. If you did not select warm demander, what shifts are needed in your perceptions and practices in order to become more of a warm demander? If you did select warm demander, have you always been this type of teacher. Explain your thinking.

Journal Entry Prompt 4

- What are the different talk structures and protocols used in your classroom? What routines and rituals are in operation? What do they accomplish? Are they aligned with cultural practices significant to your students?
- Reflect on the poster/infographic you created in session one to illustrate your cultural background and frames of reference. Based on your experience in the culturally responsive professional development, would you change how you described your culture or the relationship between your cultural experiences and your students' cultural experiences? Explain your thinking.

Appendix I

Research Approval Notification from Kennesaw State University

Date: 7-21-2021

IRB #: IRB-FY21-409

Title: Cultivating Culturally Responsive Elementary Teachers in Suburban Schools with a Title I Program

Creation Date: 1-27-2021

End Date:

Status: Approved

Principal Investigator: Angela Mack

Review Board: KSU IRB

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Expedited	Decision	Approved
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Key Study Contacts

Member	Raynice Jean-Sigur	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact	rjeansig@kennesaw.edu
Member	Angela Mack	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	amack19@students.kennesaw.edu
Member	Angela Mack	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	amack19@students.kennesaw.edu

Appendix J

Research Approval Notification from the School District

March 8, 2021

Angela L. Mack

SENT VIA EMAIL

Dear Ms. Mack:

Your research project titled, **Cultivating Culturally Responsive Teachers in Suburban Schools with Title I Programs**, has been approved. Listed below is the school where approval to conduct the research is complete. Please work with the school administrator to schedule administration of instruments or conduct interviews.

School

██████████ Elementary

Should modifications or changes in research procedures become necessary during the research project, changes must be submitted in writing to the department of Accountability, Research & Grants prior to implementation. At the conclusion of your research project, you are expected to submit a copy of your results to this office. Results cannot reference the ██████████ School District or any District schools or departments.

Research files are not considered complete until results are received. If you have any questions regarding the process, contact my office at ██████████

Sincerely,

████████████████████

██

Accountability, Research & Grants

Appendix K

Informed Consent Letter

IRB Study Number: FY21-409

Title of Research Study: Cultivating Culturally Responsive Elementary Teachers in Suburban Schools with a Title I Program

Principal Investigator: Angela Mack, Bagwell College of Education Doctoral Candidate, Kennesaw State University, amack19@students.kennesaw.edu, [REDACTED]

Introduction

Dear Valued Colleague,

As a doctoral candidate in the Teacher Leadership program at Kennesaw State University, I, Angela Mack, am writing to invite you to participate in my dissertation research project on culturally responsive professional development in suburban schools with Title I programs. Please read the following information carefully and completely to determine if you are interested in being a voluntary participant in the study. If you have any questions after reading this consent letter, please feel free to contact me to answer your questions.

Description of Project

The purpose of the study is to determine how, if at all, do teacher perceptions and practices regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students change after receiving structured and ongoing culturally responsive professional development. The study is also designed to determine which components of the culturally responsive professional development are identified by teachers as the most and/or least beneficial to their development.

Explanation of Procedures

If you choose to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete an interest survey for the selection process. If selected as a voluntary participant, you will be asked to attend four virtual professional development sessions with accompanying learning tasks. You will also be asked to respond to four professional development questionnaires and five reflective journal entries connected to the professional development sessions. To ensure the information I am gathering in my study is accurate, I will conduct two interviews with you and two observations of your instruction. The observations will be of your instruction only. The children in your classroom will not be observed. Due to COVID-19 guidelines restricting face-to-face meetings, the professional development sessions, interviews, and observations will be virtual. The professional development sessions will occur for four consecutive weeks on Wednesdays for one-hour. Professional development sessions will take place after school hours and will not interfere with your instructional time with students. The first interview and observation will take place prior to engaging in the series of professional development. The second interview will take place after the final professional development session. The follow-up observation will take place at the

beginning of the 2021-22 school year. The questionnaires and reflective journal entries will be completed after each professional development session with one follow-up reflective journal entry being completed at the beginning of the 2021-22 school year.

Time Required

The entire study will span over a 2-month period and require approximately 10-12 hours of your time. This time includes:

Research Project Tasks and Approximate Time for Each	Approximate Total Time
4 Virtual Professional Development Session (1 hour per session)	4 hours
4 Professional Development Surveys (15 minutes per survey)	1 hour
5 Reflective Journal Entries (30 minutes per entry)	2.5 hours
2 Virtual Interviews (45-60 minutes per interview)	2 hours
2 Virtual Observations (30 minutes per observation)	1 hour
Additional Reflection Tasks (optional; participant-selected time)	1.5 hours or less

Potential Risks and Benefits

The study is designed to engage teachers in critical reflection and courageous conversations related to culture and pedagogy. The researcher does not anticipate any risks; however, the topics of discussion may cause emotional discomfort for some individuals as challenging our cultural frames of reference may place us in a vulnerable situation. You may refuse to respond to a question or stop participating at any time. Please keep in mind that engaging in such conversations and reflection have been suggested by scholars to initiate transformative learning processes needed to develop cultural awareness of self and others, acknowledge our assumptions and perceptions, and refine our practices. The ultimate goal of the culturally responsive professional development is to ensure equity in the classroom by developing teachers' understandings of how to build the intellectual capacity of all students. Therefore, students may ultimately benefit from the study as the desired result is to improve teaching and learning for all students.

Confidentiality

Measures will be in place to keep your shared information confidential, and you will be asked to keep any information shared by others during the professional development sessions confidential. All collected data will be stored and locked on my personal computer and flash drive and in a locked file cabinet. To protect your identity, your name and school will be replaced with pseudonyms. Also, your location will not be listed in my report.

Compensation

The focus of the professional development sessions will be based on the research of Zaretta Hammond, author of *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*. Therefore, each participant will receive a copy of the book to keep and a \$10.00 Chick-fil-A gift card as a token of appreciation after completing all components of the study.

Inclusion Criteria for Participation

You must be over the age of 18 to participate in the study. If you would like to be included as a voluntary participant in the study, please sign this informed consent letter and complete the attached Participant Selection Questionnaire. Signed consent forms may be returned by interoffice mail or email. Six to eight participants will be selected based on the alignment of their survey responses to the study criteria along with the order in which the completed surveys are received. Please remember your participation in the study is voluntary, and you will be free to withdraw from participating at any time without any repercussions.

Contact Information

If you have any questions concerning my research project or your role as a participant in this study, please feel free to contact me at amack19@students.kennesaw.edu or [REDACTED].

I look forward to engaging and learning with you!

Sincerely,

Angela L. Mack
 Doctoral Candidate, Teacher Leadership
 Kennesaw State University

Signed Consent

By signing below, I am attesting that I have read the information regarding the above-referenced study and freely give my consent to participate. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty. I also understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form after it has been signed by the participant and the researcher.

Participant's Name (Printed): _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Name (Printed): _____

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding these activities should be addressed to the Institutional Review Board, Kennesaw State University, 585 Cobb Avenue, KH3417, Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591, (470) 578-7721

Appendix L

Sample of Participants' Culture Collages

<p>Gina's Pre-PD Collage Gina identified a need for making changes to her collage.</p>	<p>Michelle's Pre- and Post-PD Collage Michelle did not identify a need for making changes to her collage.</p>
	<p>Garrett's Pre-PD Collage Garrett identified a need for making changes to his collage.</p> <p>My Culture</p>
<p>Elaine's Post-PD Collage Elaine's self-identified changes are reflected in her collage shown below.</p>	