

THE IMPACT OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES
ON
TEACHER ENGAGEMENT OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING
THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH

(Under the Direction of Karen Bryant)

ABSTRACT

This action research (AR) case study addresses the impact of professional learning communities (PLC) on the teacher engagement of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). This mixed methods action research study examined the perceived beliefs, assumptions, and behaviors of teachers related to CRT. The AR team engaged in experiences to determine whether those varied experiences supported their personal and professional understanding of the CRT theory and approach. The following research questions were the basis for this case study and enabled the team to evaluate the AR process:

1. What are teachers' pedagogical beliefs and attitudes relative to CRT and how do those beliefs and attitudes influence their teaching?
2. How does participation in a PLC impact teachers' conceptual understanding and use of CRT strategies in the classroom?
3. What does an AR team learn through the use of CRT in the classroom?

The study used a mixed methods approach using the Culturally Responsive Teaching Efficacy Scale (CRTES), the Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Expectations Scale (CRTOES), and the Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy Scale

(CRCMSE). Qualitative instruments included researcher notes, interviews, individual team interviews, and experiential feedback from the action research team.

Conclusions about how schools can increase teacher engagement in CRT professional learning included the following:

1. A diverse action research team who learns about CRT professional learning before and during the school year learns about the CRT approach at a higher level;
2. Incorporate CRT strategies and skills into teacher leader standards to inform teacher expectations and a focus on individual student needs;
3. Plan a CRT professional learning program under the leadership of a skilled CRT facilitator based on experiential learning and adult learning theory.

The results implied that teachers who participate in professional learning based on adult learning theory and experiential theory for CRT increase their self-efficacy and learning about the impact of culturally responsive teaching practices.

INDEX WORDS: action research case study, Culturally Responsive Teaching, professional learning communities, adult learning theory, and experiential learning theory

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ACTION RESEARCH

by

CRYSTAL COOPER THOMPSON

B.S., William Paterson University, 1997

M.Ed., The University of Georgia, 2007

Ed. S., The University of West Georgia, 2011

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial

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by

CRYSTAL COOPER THOMPSON

Major Professor: Karen Bryant
Committee: Sheneka M. Williams
John Dayton

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour
Dean of Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2018

DEDICATION

To

Teachers and Students

Every child who walks in schools deserves someone to be their voice and protection. You have motivated and inspired me every day to finish so that I could be available to spread this study to more educators. I do this for you...

and

Aston Sean Thompson

My husband, who has always been my supporter and confidant. You have been by my side through two degrees and I am appreciative of your patience and encouragement through all of it. When you would say, "I am proud of you," you don't know how much that meant to me. Thanks for your sense of humor and desire to see me succeed that motivated me every day.

and

Eddie C. Cooper Jr. and Eloise Cooper

My Parents

You have always offered unrelenting love, concern and support throughout my life that has catapulted me to persevere through some of the toughest moments in my life.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Our nation continues to become a more ethnically and linguistically diverse environment. When considering this reality and its impact on children in classrooms, there is a need to pause and consider how well teachers are equipped to meet their needs. In many cases, teachers have limited experiences and knowledge of sufficiently being able to optimize learning that concludes with positive results. Still in other schools, teachers struggle with classroom management, discipline and building positive teacher/student relationships. Several teaching strategies are offered in institutions, districts and schools that engage teachers in ways to improve their teaching ability to meet the needs of these students; however, achievement gaps among students continue to persist.

This case study is grounded in a context that relates to several past historical events in history and the progress made thereafter. Specifically, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's experienced monumental victories for civil rights in the U.S. Supreme Court. The development of nonviolent protests under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. helped change the landscape of the country and its need for more a more inclusive environment. "Since the end of World War II, public and private schools in Canada and the United States have served increasingly diverse groups of students" (Lindsey, Robins, Lindsey, & Terrell., 2009, p.5). This culture and diversity shift has caused educators and school leaders to address

how the school curriculum should be delivered, transformed and differentiated to meet the needs of the students in a culturally responsive teaching environment. Cross (1989), provided three caveats that must be considered when trying to create personal and organizational change among educators in this approach of CRT: (a) the presumption of entitlement, (b) systems of oppression, and (3) unawareness of the need to adapt. These three caveats are areas and barriers that some facilitators of professional learning are not always brave and/or equipped enough to address. The desire to promote healthy learning environments for all, has stemmed from efforts over the years to affect change in, “desegregation, integration, race relations, human relations, antiracism, anti-oppression, tolerance training, cultural competence, and multicultural transformation, all of which related to diverse constructs” (Lindsey et al., 2009, p.7). If one were to try to summarize the past 50 years in historical context in short, it could be summarized as: (a) prior to the 1950s, segregation, (b) in the 1950s, desegregation, (c) in the 1960s, integration, equal access, and equal rights, (d) in the 1970s, equal benefits, multiculturalism, (e) in the 1980s, diversity, (f) in the 1990s, cultural competence, and (g) in the 2000s, cultural proficiency (Lindsey et al., 2009).

Society has responded to diversity differently during every decade, yet has not sustained equity and full inclusivity. It has been over 50 years later since the 1954 *Brown v. Topeka* Board of Education ruling that ended segregation in public facilities, that “provided the legal and political leverage by which segregation policies and practices that permeated every region of this country could be legally dismantled” (Lindsey et al., 2009, p.9). The dismantling continues to be present in communities who strive to build a stronger focus for improvement for all students.

Context of the Case Study

The purpose of a multicase study is to illuminate some of the many contexts, “especially the problematic ones that are the social, economic, political, ethical and aesthetic contexts” (Stake, 2013, p. 12). Examining the context of this study is essential to assure that the case embodies a comprehensive view of the project’s location that provides clarity to the reader. This is vital to those who would desire to seek information for future studies.

The focus of this action research case study occurred in Ubuntu Public School

¹District at Hillside Elementary School², a Title I school within an urban school district.

Hillside Elementary is located in the northwest region of the district, thirty minutes north of a large urban city in the Southeastern region of the United States. The school is one part of the 19 clusters of schools that include three elementary schools, a middle, and high school. When compared to other schools in the district with the same demographics, Hillside is a high performing Title I school serving nearly 800 students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through five. The administrative team consists of a principal and three assistant principals. The school is ethnically and racially diverse (Table 1) with an uneven distribution among White, Black, and Asian/Pacific Islander students and a growing majority of Hispanic students. Other factors that contribute to a diverse population include the fact that over 50% of the students are categorized as economically disadvantaged, and 30% are categorized as English Learners (EL) (Table 2). There is a 20:1 student to teacher ratio.

¹ Pseudonym for district

² Pseudonym for school

Table 1

Hillside Elementary School Demographics as a Percentage of Student Population

| Hispanic | White | Black | Asian/Pacific Islander | Multiracial |
|----------|-------|-------|---------------------------|-------------|
| 45 | 32 | 14 | 4 | 3 |

Table 2

Hillside Elementary School Instructional Setting Demographic as a Percentage of Student Population

| LEP/EL | | Special Education | | Gifted | | Free/ Reduced Lunch | |
|---------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| LEP/ EL | Other Students | Special Ed. | Other Students | Gifted | Other Students | F/R Lunch | Other Students |
| 30 | 70 | 12 | 88 | 4 | 96 | 55 | 45 |

Note. LEP stands for Limited English Proficient. EL stands for English Learner.

Hillside Elementary School is one of 83 elementary schools in Ubuntu Public Schools (UPS)³. UPS is comprised of over 179,266 students, 56% of whom are designated economically disadvantaged (GADOE, 2017). Hillside Elementary opened in 2003 with 1,400 students, but lost significant enrollment in 2009 when it qualified for Title I funding and now serves over 800 students. I have served as this school's principal since the 2012 school year. In the role of principal and instructional leader, I am responsible for overseeing all of the instructional frameworks and the operational management of the building while supervising a

³ Pseudonym for district

staff of over 100 employees. I observe teachers and support them in the implementation of research-based teaching practices and student behavior strategies.

The school is notable for its murals, outdoor classroom, STEM lab, playground, and technology labs throughout the building. Staff and students are continuously transitioning to the large media center, specials classes for music, art, physical education, STEM and math, and other learning environments. Visitors such as parents, community members, and civic groups often visit to have lunch with students, attend meetings, or support staff and students in classrooms.

Since its inception, the school has become an inviting and innovative space with open seating in labs, classrooms, and hallways that create a 21st century learning environment. The school houses three tower gardens where students grow vegetables and herbs for in-house pets and community businesses. Students are in the building before and after school to participate in extracurricular activities and tutoring sessions with teachers. As the school has grown, it has received accolades and recognition for educational and community based accomplishments. Notable is its most recent recognition as a Silver Level School for showing the greatest gains for the last three years on the College and Career Performance Index (CCRPI) from the Georgia Governor's Office.

In recent years, state and federal expectations have created a high level of accountability regarding teaching and learning. Data regarding student needs is readily available, and can be used to highlight inequity in all types of districts. I viewed the alignment of culturally responsive teaching in a PLC to be a focus for my studies. Through attending conferences, various professional learning sessions, and reading literature, this idea of equity in schools has gained my interest.

Problem Framing Locally

This study's problem resulted from inequitable student outcomes. Teachers could benefit from formal professional learning on the culturally responsive teaching (CRT) approach in a viable PLC. In an effort to improve and positively affect student achievement within a reasonable action research cycle, the research team reviewed the theory of CRT. This includes the influence of positive student/teacher relationships which lead to improved academic performance with racially and linguistically diverse students. The goal of this case study was to find an explanation related to this problem and how the establishment of a PLC could examine CRT methods for students who are not meeting expected performance levels as compared to other subgroups.

Since 2012, I have had the opportunity to hire qualified teachers to improve student achievement. I also encouraged them to seek professional learning (PL) opportunities that would develop and sustain their use of effective pedagogical practices in the classroom. Teaching has improved due to the use of research-based practices, student-centered coaching practices and feedback. The demographics of our faculty are relatively diverse compared to the NCES demographic averages (Table 3).

Table 3

Hillside Elementary School Teacher Demographics as a Percentage

| | Male | Female | White | Black/African-American | Hispanic | Asian/Pacific | American Indian |
|---------------|------|--------|-------|------------------------|----------|---------------|-----------------|
| United States | 23.4 | 76.6 | 80 | 6.7 | 8.8 | 2.3 | 0.2 |
| Hillside ES | 8 | 92 | 75 | 17 | 5 | 3 | 0 |

As a result, “the need to improve academic achievement among ethnic minority and poor families is one of the most urgent challenges facing education and U.S. society today” (Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000).

Teachers at Hillside Elementary School have been trained in various methods of instructional delivery, design, and research-based literacy methods since the school opened in 2003. The focus on literacy results at the school sparked inquiry into ways to improve student learning. For low-income children in particular, a *readiness gap* fuels much of what has become known as the achievement gap. (Annie Casey Foundation, 2010). Despite the efforts of teachers to implement a research-based reading/writing workshop model and a project-based learning approach, reading performance results show that students are not performing at expected reading performance levels in third through fifth grade.

Table 4

State-Milestones End of Grade Language Arts (Data Source: School Reports)

| Course Name | 2015-2016 | | | | | 2016-2017 | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-------|-----|------|---------|-----------|-------|-----|------|---------|
| | N | Begin | Dev | Prof | Disting | N | Begin | Dev | Prof | Disting |
| 3 rd Language Arts | 129 | 32% | 33% | 28% | 7% | 127 | 39% | 42% | 17% | 3% |
| 4 th Language Arts | 131 | 25% | 32% | 31% | 11% | 118 | 12% | 33% | 38% | 17% |
| 5 th Language Arts | 123 | 12% | 28% | 53% | 7% | 127 | 17% | 35% | 38% | 10% |

The most recent language arts state performance results from the Georgia Milestones Assessment revealed that only 20% of 3rd graders scored at the proficient and distinguished level, with 45% of 4th graders and 52% of 5th graders achieving at the same level according to state reports. The table above reveals data over the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school year (Table 4).

Hillside students scored lower in reading than students at other non-Title I schools in the district and state, which created a sense of urgency around reversing the trend. According to the district's evaluation system, third grade specifically did not perform as expected with other comparable schools on the Georgia Milestones Assessment. The discrepancy in reading performance achievement negatively affected the economically disadvantaged students of color as evidenced by performance gaps among subgroups, specifically; economically-disadvantaged students, Black, Hispanic, male, linguistically diverse, and White student groups (Table 5).

Table 5

State-Milestones End of Grade (Data Source: School Reports)

| | Grade 3 | | Grade 4 | | Grade 5 | |
|-------------------|---------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | ELA | Math | ELA | Math | ELA | Math |
| White | 30 | 57 | 68 | 90 | 59 | 65 |
| Special Education | 0/ -30 | 10/ -47 | - | - | 12/ -47 | 6/ -59 |
| EL | 0/ -30 | 16/ -41 | - | - | - | - |
| Female | 28/ -2 | 50/ -7 | 61/ -7 | 58/ -32 | 48/ -11 | 37/ -28 |
| Male | 14/ -16 | 42/ -15 | 48/ -20 | 68/ -22 | 48/ -11 | 61/ -4 |
| African American | 22/ -8 | 23/ - 34 | 65/ -3 | 53/ -37 | 54/ -5 | 27/ -38 |
| Hispanic | 7/ -27 | 39/ -18 | 40/ -28 | 50/ -40 | 31/ -28 | 43/ -22 |

Note. Data from the Georgia Department of Education-Statewide Longitudinal Data System

(2017)

Problem Framing for the District

With a diverse and thriving population, the district focuses on adapting to change in demographics. Currently, the district has a diverse population (Table 6).

Table 6

Elementary District Student Demographics as a Percentage

| Economically Disadvantaged | Black | Hispanic | Asian | White |
|----------------------------|-------|----------|-------|-------|
| 87% | 30 | 32 | 10 | 22 |

This demographic data reveals a high level of diversity, and one could assume that every school in the district that has diverse populations could benefit from strategies to improve student outcomes. From viewing demographic data above, one can assume that the diversity in demographic in race and class, could pose a challenge for a district that is high performing. With these given points, aiming to raise student achievement with economically disadvantaged and racially and linguistically diverse students is a reasonable goal to obtain. Additionally, every district in the state of Georgia is accountable to improving performance. The state department has a measure named the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI). The CCRPI is a comprehensive school improvement, accountability, and communication platform for all educational stakeholders that promotes college and career readiness for all Georgia public school students (GADOE, 2018). This comprehensive annual tool communicates how well schools, districts and the state itself is preparing students for the next education level.

When reviewing the districts' 2017 progress on the Georgia Milestones Assessment demographically for Elementary Schools, (Figure 1), it indicates that some subgroups are

performing at expected levels and others are not. Specifically, when reviewing subgroup performance it indicates that Asian students are meeting in all areas except language arts (ELA). Black students are meeting all areas in math, however not meeting state performance targets for ELA, math, science and social studies. Hispanic students show needed improvement in all subjects and specifically in ELA where they have not met state and subgroup performance targets. The economically disadvantaged (ED) subgroup performed at a level that requires growth in all subjects in achieving state and subgroup expected performance. This comprehensive data set is influential in seeing how the Ubuntu school district has areas of growth when compared to white students, where they have met all areas, in all subjects for the state and subgroup performance group.

One could assume that every school in the district with diverse populations could benefit from strategies to improve student outcomes. One could also assume that the diversity in race and class, could pose a challenge for a district that is high performing. When viewing Table 6 it reveals the need to support ED students in performing proficiently. With these given points, aiming to raise student achievement with economically disadvantaged and racially and linguistically diverse students is a reasonable goal to obtain.

| Performance | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Legend: | Subgroup met both State and Subgroup Performance Targets | Subgroup met Subgroup but not State Performance Target | Subgroup met State but not Subgroup Performance Target | Subgroup did not meet either the State or Subgroup Performance Targets |
| Not Applicable | Subgroup met Participation Rate, State Performance Target and Subgroup Performance Target | Subgroup met Participation Rate and Subgroup Performance Target but not State Performance Target | Subgroup met Participation Rate and State Performance Target but not Subgroup Performance Target | Subgroup met the Participation Rate, but did not meet either the State or Subgroup Performance Targets |
| Subgroup Performance | End of Grade | | | |
| | English Language Arts | Mathematics | Science | Social Studies |
| American Indian/Alaskan | | | | |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | | | | |
| Black | | | | |
| Hispanic | | | | |
| Multi-Racial | | | | |
| White | | | | |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | | |
| English Learners | | | | |
| Students With Disability | | | | |

Figure 1.

ES GA Milestones Assessment Demographic Results

Problem Framing Regionally

According to data from 2013, only 21% of fourth-grade children from low-income families in Georgia could read at or above grade level. Additionally, two-thirds of Georgia's children are not reading proficiently. With 34% reading proficiently, that leaves 66% that are not. There is also a gap between white student proficiency and other subgroups that frames this problem needing to close achievement gaps (Table 5). The first major milestone for any child's success in education is the ability to read by the end of third grade. During third grade, they should be transitioning from learning to read to reading to learn (Georgia Reading, 2016). The data in Table 5 shows Georgia Milestones Assessment data for specific demographic subgroups in comparison to the White subgroup, which is currently outperforming all subgroups at Hillside Elementary. This data built a strong context for the need to pursue this action research in closing achievement gaps.

According to the most recent U.S. Department of Education Schools, State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce report, students of color are expected to make up 56% of the student population by 2024, and the elementary and secondary education workforce is still overwhelmingly White. All indicators affirm that fact that responses in schools have not been adequate to deal with the full range of issues presented by the complexities of teaching in diverse communities (Howard, 2003).

Problem Framing Nationally

The 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court ruling legalized segregation in the United States. Though in 1918, all states were required to have free public schools, the schools continued to have inequitable conditions and outcomes. In 1954, Brown v. Board of Education reversed Plessy v. Ferguson and outlawed segregation. President Lyndon B. Johnson, declared a War on Poverty on January 8, 1964, which focused on improving education, job training, and community development. In 1965, President Johnson's administration began to support personnel and services that aided marginalized racial groups and economically disadvantaged U.S. citizens under the Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Title I, a federal grant program, was designed to build equitable outcomes for students who were faced with varying opportunities and who lived in high poverty. In 1974, the Supreme Court expanded the rights of students who had limited English skills, ensuring their equal education as well.

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan issued, "The Nation at Risk" report that pointed to severe underperformance of American schools becoming the "catalyst for standards-based, testing focused education reform at the federal, state, and local levels for three decades" (United States, 1983). In 2001 after little improvement, President George W. Bush signed No Child Left Behind (NCLB) into law that increased federal funding for education and

implemented standards-based reform. This law worked to increase accountability and ushered in mandated high stakes testing. In 2012, the Obama administration began granting flexibility to states regarding detailed requirements of NCL. In turn, the Obama administration required rigorous and comprehensive state- developed plans intended to close achievement gaps, increase equity, improve the quality of instruction, and increase outcomes for all students (Department of Education, 2018).

On December 10, 2015, President Barack Obama, signed and reauthorized the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which moved the federal government's role of accountability for academic progress to the state level instead (Department of Education, 2018).

Professional development is considered an essential mechanism for deepening teachers' content knowledge and developing their teaching practice (Desimone et al., 2002). Teachers in different school settings are continuously learning in some capacity. Yet, calls for high quality professional development are endless, and there remains a shortage of such programs—characterized by coherence, active learning, sufficient duration, collective participation, and a focus on content knowledge (Yoon, K.S., Duncan T., et al, 2007). There are districts making a difference by implementing CRT strategies, yet the practices are not consistent and pervasive across the nation. After years of historical initiatives and policies, along with educational reforms, No Child Left Behind, and Race to the Top, racially and linguistically diverse still “left behind,” not having opportunities to gain access to the top of their classes. Racial disparities in graduation rates, disciplinary consequences, and low enrollment in gifted and accelerated courses have made long-standing conversations of equity, still a present conversation that needs to be discussed at a larger scale.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The figure below illustrates the conceptual and theoretical framework for this study. PLCs grounded in adult learning theory and experiential theory inform culturally responsive teaching pedagogy for educators.

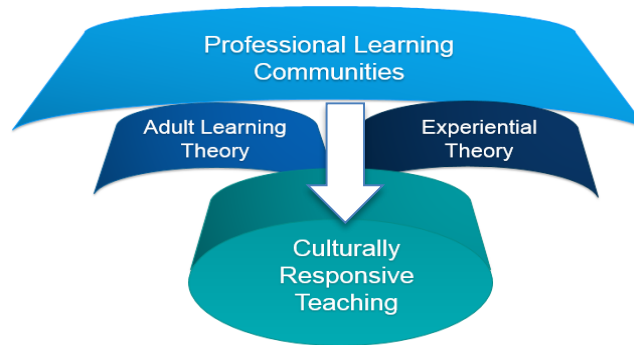


Figure 2. Conceptual Theoretical Framework

Finding a conceptual and theoretical framework that best fits this action research study has been a reflective journey. Butin (2010), cautions practitioner scholars not to become experts in various theories, but rather to determine how theories fit their research topics and goals. This aids practitioner scholars in their ability to focus on the structure of the research, possible outcomes in the literature, and potential limitations of the work (Butin, 2010). Additionally, researchers must understand the varying theoretical frameworks that may help them to understand the problem and/or solutions (Butin, 2010). This study will employ the Adult Learning Theory and Experiential Theory frameworks.

Explanation of Conceptual Theoretical Framework Model

This study seeks to offer the practice of CRT professional learning experiences to teachers through Adult Learning Theory and Experiential Theory frameworks. If teachers are

more equipped with strategies to work with students who are racially and linguistically diverse, there could be improvement in performance outcomes and teacher/student relationships. Through the action research process, action research (AR) team members reviewed data that created a sense of urgency related to the need to build more equitable outcomes of student performance. The professional learning experience was the intervention, and it was designed to apply to areas where teachers needed more support and professional learning regarding the culturally responsive pedagogy. Throughout the study, the AR team members reflected on how the experiences during the professional learning experience helped to build their efficacy and knowledge related to CRT.

A study of over 150 influences directly or indirectly related to learning outcomes affecting student learning included: the student, the home, the school, the curricula, the teacher, and the learning approaches; findings indicated that the teacher is the variable with the consistent effect on student learning (Hattie, 2008). The study has influenced this research; as a principal and leader of the AR team, I focused on the adults in PLCs and how they are influenced.

The work with the AR team was to refine the school's PLCs based on best practices in literature to search for effective methods to improve the teaching and learning of students related to CRT. Researchers Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) drew from findings of a research project that spanned six years. Through their thorough research, they found that leadership is only second to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning.

A Review of the Theoretical Frameworks

Since the engagement of adults is crucial to student achievement, this action research case study first identified and analyzed the influence of Knowles' (1980, 1984) adult learning theory on the PLC. The focus of Knowles' work is to consider the key characteristics of adult learners through five assumptions: (a) self- concept, (b) adult learner experience, (c) readiness to learn, (d) orientation to learning, and (e) motivation to learn. I chose to use this concept with the AR team to create our professional learning plan for CRT (Knowles, 1980, 1984).

Another theory that built the action research case study was Kolb's Experiential Learning (Figure 3), which is a holistic perspective that combines experience, perception, cognition, and behavior (Kolb, 2001). In approaching this study, Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory and Knowles' (1989, 1984) Adult Learning Theory provided the basis and groundwork for the dual implementation of PLCs and CRT. Knowles first introduced Adult Learning Theory in 1970 through attempting to address the learning styles and needs at the workplace for adult learners are different from those of children. Many different versions of the theory have been developed since its inception, including andragogy, which explains the method and practice of teaching adult learners (Davenport & Davenport, 1985).

Using Kolb's experiential theory (Figure 3), the team engaged in utilizing the Adult Learning Theory to promote change among teachers and address the inequities in student performance as a transformative measure of improvement. The premise for utilizing this approach was that teachers may understand the need to address CRT by going on field experiences to different schools and environments, participating in protocols and *feeling* the change rather than being forced to change through leadership demands and directives.

Based on examples of successful programs in empirical studies in research, our team framed the professional learning plan around these theoretical and conceptual frameworks to ensure that we used an approach that other districts and schools may decide to emulate for future implementation.

The Kolb Experiential Learning Cycle

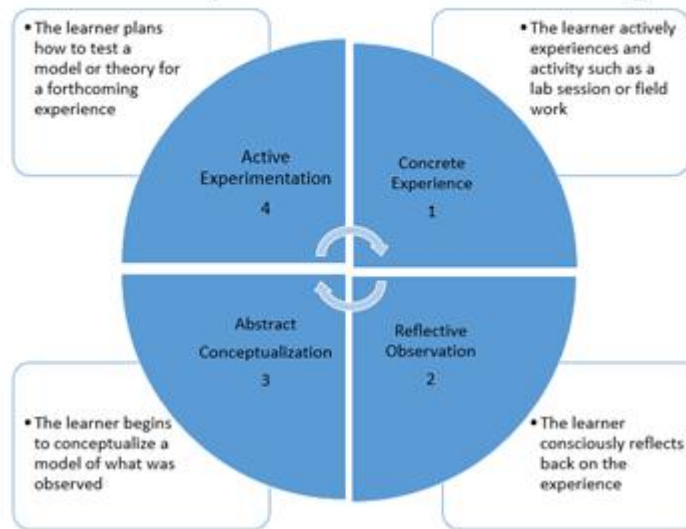


Figure 3. The Kolb Experiential Learning Cycle. Adapted from Kolb (1984).

The application of CRT could also improve teacher efficacy and student/teacher relationships at Hillside ES. Geneva Gay (1984) describes CRT as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strength of these students. The overall Conceptual Theoretical Framework developed for this study is represented in Figure 2. This illustrates that utilizing Adult Learning Theory to plan

professional learning, coupled with experiences, would enable participants to learn about CRT in a PLC.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this action research study was to explore, design, implement, and assess a professional learning program intended to inform and improve teachers' implementation of CRT in classrooms at Hillside Elementary. The use of CRT within the context of PLCs was identified as a means to influence teacher efficacy in improving student learning and equitable outcomes. With a high level of organizational commitment to a consistent professional learning program, this action research study was designed to result in improvement of teachers' self and collective efficacy. When defining self-efficacy, Bandura (1977), defined it as a person's belief that he or she can (or cannot) successfully organize and execute an action to achieve a desired outcome in a particular situation. Collective efficacy relates to teachers holding shared perceptions that when combined with effort, they can, "organize and execute the course of action required to have a positive effect on students" (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2004, p. 4). Hattie (2008) has shown that collective efficacy is the primary factor that influences student achievement in schools.

Research Questions:

1. There are three research questions that the AR team focused on that created a purpose in this the study: What are teachers' pedagogical beliefs and attitudes relative to CRT and how do those beliefs and attitudes influence their teaching?
2. How does participation in a PLC impact teachers' conceptual understanding and use of CRT strategies in the classroom?

3. What does an AR team learn through the use of CRT in the classroom?

Significance

This study has the potential to have a large impact on schools, students, and leadership in schools, districts, colleges and universities. The feedback and data from this study will allow leaders to understand what helps teachers learn new concepts, apply them, and make academic changes in the classrooms that could help students learn at higher levels while closing achievement gaps.

Once teachers learn a new approach, it is imperative that leaders are equipped with support and coaching that will help in evaluating their learning and understanding of the new concept beyond a book study or presentation. However, before a school begins this transformation, the school leader must encompass applicable leadership characteristics, knowledge and skills needed in our schools. Irrespective of the change model, school reform initiative, or current mandates, school leaders must be willing to explore and attend to their core values, beliefs, and assumptions about serving all students' needs in their schools (Lindsey et al., 2009). School leadership is a significant element of this type of inside/outside work with school personnel.

Currently, the literature supports the need to have CRT training in pre-service classes for new teachers. According to the National Center of Education Statistics (2013) the demographics of public school teachers is 82% White, 6.4% Black and 7.5% Hispanic. With this known, some schools' racial achievement gaps continue to persist, because, "fundamentally schools are not designed to educate students of color and indigenous students (Singleton, G.E. 2016, p. 13). Additionally, educators may "continue to lack the will, skill, knowledge and capacity to affirm racial diversity" (Singleton, G.E. 2013, p. 13). CRT could

help teachers of all races working with diverse students bridge gaps of perception, bias, and understanding, helping to recreate environments where achievement gaps begin to change.

Chapter Summary

How does a school begin to meet the needs of all students regardless of their race, gender or class? This study's primary purpose is to raise awareness to theories that have proven to embrace an inclusive rich classroom and professional learning experience for students who have historically not been able to meet the expectations of their peers. It also serves to illustrate the connection between professional learning, experiential theory and adult learning theory. All three can serve to increase teacher knowledge and skills, which will support higher student performance. The subsequent chapter will offer the pertinent literature and empirical findings that informed this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the pertinent literature that addresses the framework for this action research study. This includes a review of journals, articles, and empirical studies as well as books about CRT, professional learning communities, adult learning, and experiential theory. The University of Georgia resource libraries offered several databases to search the literature related to the topics. Moreover, Google alerts identified additional current articles during the course of the study.

The intent of this literature review is to summarize the large body of research relevant to disparities in racially diverse and linguistically diverse students' achievement. I studied areas including teacher and student efficacy, deficit learning theory, and student motivation to build this action research study. The primary focus was to summarize research in these key areas: (a) equitable access to a quality education (b) the importance of teacher/student relationships (c) the definition surrounding culturally responsive teaching and (d) the definition of professional learning communities.

Equitable Access to a Quality Education

The U.S. has kept a pulse on equitable outcomes for several decades. The Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision defended basic rights for equitable school access. This decision ruled unanimously that "separate but equal" public schools for Blacks and Whites was unconstitutional. Barton (2004) asserted that equal access had not led to equal achievement in a social context despite this ruling.

Brown v. Board of Education (1954) was a positive attempt to build equity among students, yet it progressively showed that its efforts were not as strong as hoped. Coleman and his colleagues conducted a study titled Equality of Educational Opportunity (1966) as a review of the effects post Brown v. Board of Education (1954). The study found that the achievement of African American students was lower than that of White students, even if they had a similar family make up and income level. Later studies found that the racial gap in achievement had been documented as early as kindergarten/first grade and continued to grow as students progressed through the public school system in the U.S. (Vanneman, Hamilton, Baldwin-Anderson, & Rahman, 2009). As years progressed, the performance of African American and Hispanics began to improve slightly as several advocacy groups including women's rights movements began to encourage more equitable education reform and employment opportunities for people of color and women (Gorski, 1999).

In the 1980s, there was an emergence of multicultural education by several activists and researchers who were dissatisfied with schools that just wanted to casually incorporate, "token programs and special units on famous women or famous people of color" (Gorski, 1999). One of the first pioneers and scholars of multicultural education was James Banks who grounded his research in the idea of educational equality (Banks, 1981; 1989). His work focused on examining schools as social systems from a multicultural context (1981). Banks posited that sustaining a more cohesive multicultural school environment would require more attention related to examining, transforming, and including policies that would thoroughly review teachers' attitudes, instructional materials, assessment methods, counseling and teaching styles (Banks, 1981; 1989).

At the end of the 1980s, more K-12 scholars emerged including Carl Grant, Christine Sleeter, Geneva Gay, and Sonia Nieto who formulated astounding research regarding more frameworks for equitable education (Gorski, 1999). After tracking ways that schools were differentiating to meet their students' needs, what emerged were still a high level of culturally oppressive teaching approaches that included but were not limited to standardized tests, school funding discrepancies, classroom climate, and discriminatory hiring practices that led to what could have been described as an oppressive education system (Gorski, 1999). The United States continued to evolve where the cultural landscape changed and more cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious diversity would cause schools to revisit their present system that was not meeting the needs of the students. However, there is still a need to equip educators with strategies to build equity in creative and critical thinking skills, intercultural competence and social and global awareness (Gorski, 1999).

Culturally Responsive Teaching

A teacher can help their students soar and beat the odds, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or gender through quality teaching and caring attitudes (Nieto 2010). However, it is essential that the teachers continuously do inside and outside work to effectively teach racially and linguistically diverse students. CRT is an approach that many scholars have continued to pursue as a possibility for improved student achievement. Through the years, CRT continues to evolve and become more finite in its approach to teaching and learning in raising academic performance for all students.

To support this philosophy, a theory emerged that became a mainstay to support teachers, named culturally relevant teaching that set itself apart from multicultural education and social

justice. Having the tools to teach the students who are in the classroom is the hallmark of culturally responsive teaching. Ladson-Billings (2009) focused on three themes (a) concept of self and others, (b) structure of interactions, and (c) construction of knowledge. In her work, she challenges educators to know themselves and their students and to allow themselves authentic opportunities to gain cultural knowledge that intersects with their teaching.

Researchers, scholars, and organizations over the past 30 years, have espoused numerous definitions of multi-cultural education, yet they are often times mistakenly interwoven into other key terms related to this work. For instance, Hammond (2014) defines multicultural education as social harmony and the focus of diversity. This type of education involves exposing privileged students to diverse literature, multiple perspectives and inclusion in the curriculum, which can also be confused with social justice. This term is defined as a way to build consciousness for the social political context that students face in society (Hammond, 2014). Being able to support educators in knowing how these words interchange with one another could add to a conceptual understanding of CRT.

Geneva Gay (2010) provided another conceptual theory for CRT. Her four themes focused on teacher behavior: (a) caring, (b), communication, (c) curriculum, and (d) instruction. She asserts that culture should be the center of teachers' approach to students. Additionally, she explains that cultural diversity is a strength and not a problem, and that much of the educational approach to cultural differences has been through a deficiency lens. (Gay, 2010). Finally, she recommends that schools look more closely at racial disparities as symptoms that will lead to deeper causes related to White racial dominance.

Hammond (2014), asserts that CRT not be confused with multicultural education and social justice, but rather be viewed as independent learning. This theory is grounded in

neuroscience, and claims that CRT means that teachers focus on improving the learning capacity of their students to move from dependent learners to independent learners. Teachers who are equipped with these skills understand how to include affective and cognitive aspects of teaching to teach resilience and an academic mindset.

The literature regarding race and schooling in the U.S. speaks to a long 500-year history of racism, slavery, and cultural genocide, which has had a negative and devastating impact on the lives of many students of color (Howard, 2016). Some teachers come into the profession with an idea that, regardless of race or language, all students come with the same background, which perpetuates a one size fits all learning experience. To be culturally responsive, teachers must take time to understand the full view of their students' personal and cultural histories (Howard, 2016). Many systemic issues impede a full and equitable opportunity in improvement for our students. "We would need effective policies and actions to counter racism, improve communities, upgrade schools facilities, enhance the quality of teachers, and provide early learning programs for disadvantaged children" (Zhao, 2016). However, these macro-level changes (Valencia, 2015) are difficult to effect, to say the least. They require tremendous political will, massive financial investment, breaking deeply rooted stereotypes, and changing time honored institutions and practices (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Valencia, 2015).

One reason that the No Child Left Behind act did not improve the education for disadvantaged students is that the law aimed to improve the existing education paradigm, which, many educational researchers argue, was designed to reproduce the existing social stratification and perpetuate social inequality (Au, 2008; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Brown, 1995, 2003; Collins, 1979; Vesely, 2012; Zanten, 2005). Efforts to improve the existing

paradigm are not only unable to close the achievement gap and lift people out of poverty, but actually threaten the future achievement of all children because the paradigm has become outdated in the face of recent societal changes brought about by technology (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014; Goldin & Katz, 2008; Keeley, 2015). A transformative change must occur to save our children from continuous cycles of inequity.

Culturally Proficient Educators

Having a culturally proficient mindset helps us to interact with people from all facets of life regardless of their race, gender and class. “Cultural proficiency is a model for shifting the culture of the school or district; it is a model for individual transformation and organizational change” (Lindsey et al., 2009, p.4). It is not a package or something that you turn on or off, rather it is a mind-set, and a response to racial and diverse dilemmas in our environments (Lindsey et al., 2009). Equally important is the impact that culturally proficient leaders have on the paradigm shift from viewing cultural differences as problems to learning how to positively interact with students and educators in diverse schools and environments. “At the organization level, culturally proficient leaders foster policies and practices that provide the opportunity for effective interactions among students, educators and community members” (Lindsey et al., 2009, p. 4). Helping schools to remember the interrelatedness of cultural proficiency is imperative to personal and organizational change.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Intersectionality of race, gender and class illustrate the idea of improving instruction through the strengthening of a school’s PLCs with the infusion of embracing the theory of culturally responsive pedagogy. Santamaria (2009), defines CRT as a way to “Affirm students’ cultures, viewing them as transformative and emancipatory strengths (rather than deficits);

incorporates students' cultures in the teaching process, thus empowering them to take ownership of their learning; and leads to increased participation in societal activities" (p. 226-227).

Classrooms can be challenging and rigorous academic environments where students are required to blend with other students in a social manner to complete academic tasks. Our living communities are not always as diverse as our work and school communities. As a result, our lives are "intertwined with these unknown others" (Gay, 2010 p. 21). We must teach our students and our teachers how to relate better to people from different ethnic racial, cultural, language and gender backgrounds (Gay, 2010). "These *relational competencies* must include knowing, valuing, doing, caring and sharing power, resources and responsibilities" (Gay, 2010 p. 21).

CRT reminds school leaders and educators of the need to be intentional and cognizant of how relationships and teaching style in the classroom cultivates an improved environment for learning for all students. Gay (2010), who was a major developer of CRT says that CRT recognizes the

power of teaching while fully realizing that, without accompanying changes in all other aspects of schooling and society, the very best of teaching will not be able to accomplish the systemic reforms needed for ethnically diverse students to receive genuine educational equity and achieve excellence (p. xxiv)

Hammond (2014) has introduced another thought provoking perspective to CRT with an infusion of neuroscience. She contends that "Geneva Gay and Gloria Ladson-Billings each describe CRT as encompassing the social-emotional, relational and cognitive aspects of teaching" (p.4). Resulting with a natural connection to how neuroscience and culturally responsive teaching connect to student learning (Hammond, 2014). Thinking of CRT more so

as a mindset, and a way of thinking about and organizing instruction is a goal that Hammond (2014) says that CRT could provide.

Hammond (2014) defines CRT as:

“An educator’s ability to recognize students’ cultural displays of learning and meaning making and respond positively and constructively with teaching moves that use cultural knowledge as a scaffold to connect what the student knows to new concepts and content in order to promote effective information processing. All the while, the educator understands the importance of being in relationship and having a social-emotional connection to the student in order to create a safe space for learning. (p. 15)

Smolen, Colville-Hall, Liang, and MacDonald (2006) feel strongly that teachers must become culturally responsive since they represent the majority culture and often lack the background experience of working with diverse student groups. Opportunities to understand this approach happen in some universities and colleges, but not consistently and pervasively. Prater, Wilder and Dyches (2008) determined that teachers must be culturally responsive to be able to respond appropriately to changing demographics within university classroom settings, where many of these opportunities to learn CRT are held. Several teacher preparation programs have acknowledged the necessity to reform; however resistance to substantive change may rest in teachers discomfort with, if not fear of, addressing issues such as race and inequity in their college courses (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Inequities have continued to persist and racially and linguistically diverse students will continue to be poorly served until public school leaders and teachers acknowledge the need to build culturally responsive teachers in the classroom and colleges and universities (Sobel, Gutierrez, Zion, & Blanchett, 2011).

Teacher-Student Relationships

The broad scope of teaching students includes incorporating both instructional and social-emotional constructs. Teachers are not just asked to help students learn academically, but also to build their social and emotional capability. Therefore, the relationships that are built in the classroom are a major component of how students grow and thrive. Hammond (2018) encourages teachers to make sure that they first work to help build students' competence and then confidence will come, which is a way to create a counter narrative for marginalized students (Hammond, 2018).

Relationships are the 'on ramp' to building competence and when students are calm and comfortable, students will be ready for the tasks they are confronted with in class. When considering that "only the learner learns," it helps our students to focus on learning how to establish an academic mindset while they go through the productive struggle that teachers allow for in the classroom (Hammond, 2018, Para 43).

When considering synergy in relationships, teachers have to understand how many factors work in tandem to create a culturally responsive environment. The relationship acts as a holder of the work of teachers to both care and push (Hammond, 2018). According to Hammond, when students are in an environment where trust acts as the fuel metaphorically like in a car, then the engine can be revved up to commit to a culturally responsive environment. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943, 1954) explains that five motivational needs are essential to livelihood, and even more so the positive experience for learners in the classroom: (a) self-actualization, (b) esteem, (c) social, (d) safety, and (e) physiological. These original needs expanded to include cognitive and aesthetic needs (Maslow, 1970a) and later transcendence needs (Maslow, 1970b).

Relatively, the deficit mindset supports a frame of mind that the responsibility falls on the students and their families to fit into "dominant language and culture *before* they have equal

access to an education” (Wolter, 2015, p.6). Furthermore, the framework of deficit thinking is a “person-centered explanation of school failure” (Valencia, 2010, p. 9). This deficit thinking occurs mostly with individuals who have cultural, linguistic, and economic differences, while “institutional structures and inequitable schooling arrangements that excluded students from learning are held exculpatory” (p.9). Alongside deficit thinking, comes the idea of how our society views and perceives groups of people by their color, race, gender, and place of origin. Steele (1997) points out a phenomenon called “stereotype threat” which is described as a social psychological situation that can have negative effects on stereotyped individuals. These effects cause students to suffer from an emotional and cognitive burden (Milner & Hoy, 2003).

White female teachers, who make up a majority of the U.S. teaching force, may not have had “prolonged, ongoing interaction with people of color prior to teaching in predominantly Black or Latino schools” (Warren, 2015, p. 573). They may have developed some misconceptions and assumptions that cause them to have a deficit social and cultural perspective of “racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students” (Warren, 2015, p. 573). Culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) was detailed throughout this study as a foundational theory for this work that may further the disconnection of the teaching force with the students in the classroom. Additionally, teachers were given the following articles to build their background knowledge: “White Fragility” (DiAngelo, 2011), “Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life” (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007), and “White Privilege” (McIntosh, 1988) all helped to contextualize the dominant culture research that correlates to privilege and perspectives related to race, culture and diversity. The literature also bridges opportunity gaps and achievement gaps and how they both work in concert to build a conceptual understanding of the possible reasons regarding the gaps that were prevalent at Hillside

Elementary School. Achievement gaps and opportunity gaps are two words that are used interchangeably, yet they mean two different things in the relation to students. Milner & Howard (2015) move us to think beyond an achievement gap to an opportunity gap. With accountability as the cornerstone of all academic dialogue, Milner challenges people “to not just focus on the outcomes of test scores, but rather the processes that lead to the outcomes—that is teaching and learning” (Milner, 2015. P. 7). Additionally, he contends that “some sociologists would argue that it is ineffectual to spend extensive amounts of time comparing one group with another (Milner & Howard, 2015, p. 7). Rather he encourages teachers and leaders to begin to understand the reasons that may cause the disparities in performance that exist. Relationally, Milner and Howard (2015) inform those trying to increase student achievement of all students to begin to think about how systems, processes, and institutions are overtly and covertly designed to maintain status quo and sustain depressingly complicated disparities in education (p. 8). “Finally, when considering the importance of increasing reading proficiency, there is now considerable evidence from recent intervention studies, that reading difficulties, in most beginning readers may not be directly caused by biologically based cognitive deficits intrinsic to the child, but may, in fact, be related to the *opportunities* provided for children learning to read (emphasis added)” (Milner & Howard, 2015, p. 378). Essentially, coupled with deficit theory and stereotype threat, the opportunities in a child’s neighborhood, home and environment may contribute to disparities in their learning. H. Richard Milner (2010) suggests moving away from a focus on the achievement gap to the opportunity gap. He stated:

A focus on an achievement gap places too much blame and emphasis on students themselves as individuals and not enough attention on why gaps and disparities are commonplace in schools across the country. Opportunity, on the other hand, forces us to think about how systems, process and institutions are covertly designed to maintain the

status quo and sustain depressingly complicated disparities in education. (p. 8).

Douglas et al. (2008) highlights a qualitative study that focused on black student perceptions of their white teachers; the study stems from Richard Milner's (2006) theoretical assumptions that there is a performance gap between black and white students. In this study, four themes emerged which included: students feeling disrespect from their white teachers due to color of their skin causing them to "demand respect" (p 53). Secondly, from this study most students felt that teachers and their peers had negative perceptions of them because of their race and/or the clothes they wore. They felt that their "administrators were out of touch with them, and not part of the solution, but rather the problem" (p. 55). However, the study revealed that despite these challenges, they liked their environment and felt much better and safer in their predominantly white environments, than in other fully Black school environments.

Singham (2003) explains that there are no genetic or other immutable traits that could cause the gap. In fact, several scholars have reported that deficit thinking by white teachers is one of the most powerful forces working against students of color (Hale, 2001; Milner, 2006; Thompson, 2004). Developing an action research team was influential in identifying how the theory of deficit thinking could be causal to gaps in education in schools.

Culturally relevant pedagogy is a theory developed by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) to support students of color intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural context to teach in the classroom. While Ladson-Billings' work provides a foundation for work with diverse student populations, the intent of this study is to focus on a pedagogy first detailed by Gay & Howard (2000) that utilizes CRT as a means to respond to the needs of the students more purposefully.

Culturally Responsive Teaching Classroom Management (CRTCM)

The national dialogue on the academic achievement gap between African American, Hispanic, and Native American students and their White and Asian American peers represents only one aspect of K-12 education in which racial disparities exist (Howard, 2010).

Disproportionality in discipline in school districts revealed the following data from 132

Southern school districts (Smith, & Harper, 2015):

- Blacks were disproportionately suspended at rates five times or higher than represented in the student population.
- In 84 districts, Blacks were 100% of the students suspended from public schools.
- In 346 districts, Blacks were 75% or more of the students suspended from public schools

This data reveals that the minority overrepresentation in discipline conversations causes schools and districts to consider alternative methods with classroom management processes, and culturally responsive teaching factors. A report was created by the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education at the Graduate School of Education at Penn State. In the 2011-2012 academic school year, 13 Southern states were examined to reveal the rates in which school discipline practices were impacting African American students in every K-12 school in those 13 states (Smith, & Harper, 2015). The results revealed that 24% of students in the 3,022 districts had high rates of students that were suspended or expelled. Additional data reported during that year that 101,813 African American students from Georgia K-12 public schools were suspended. African American students were 37% of students in school districts in Georgia, but comprised 67% of suspensions and 64% of expulsions (Smith, & Harper, 2015). Cultural conflicts often stem from a teacher's misinterpretation of a child's classroom behavior, resulting in unnecessary disciplinary action (Gay & Howard, 2000, Townsend, 2000; Weinstein et al., 2004). Implications and suggestions for reversing these trends are available in various sectors, articles and books.

However, the impact that implicit bias has on discipline is an area worth pursuing.

“Understanding the relationship between culture and classroom behavior may assist teachers in making informed judgments of inappropriate classroom behavior” (Siwatu, 2014, p. 864). , Equipping teachers to develop an understanding of the cultural context of classroom behavior may potentially minimize the occurrence of cultural conflicts in the classroom (Gay, 1981). To address this discussion was a need to assess teachers’ culturally responsive classroom management self-efficacy (CRCMSE) beliefs to identify tasks that they felt most and least efficacious is important (Siwatu, Putnam, Starker-Glass, & Lewis, 2017). With the data received, they can design interventions to help in developing resilient self-efficacy beliefs (Siwatu et al., 2017). There are many classroom management researchers who have introduced various perspectives, however, researchers have not adequately addressed issues specific to managing classroom managing a classroom populated by students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004). The CRCMSE scale (Appendix E) administered to the AR team reveals the CRCM competencies developed by Weinstein et al. (2004) based on literature reviews. They identified five essential components of CRCM: (a) recognition of one’s own ethnocentrism and biases; (b) knowledge of students’ cultural backgrounds; (c) understanding of the broader social, economic, and political context of our educational system; (d) ability and willingness to used culturally appropriate classroom management strategies; and (e) commitment to building caring classroom communities.

Though Weinstein and her colleagues were aware of various strategies in research, they were clear in their opinion of CRCM being more of a frame of mind that influences a teacher’s classroom management decisions than a bag of strategies (Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003; Weinstein et al., 2004).

Theoretical Framework Influencers

This action research plan has several theories interwoven throughout, however there were some that made a substantial impact on its focus on improving academic performance at Hillside Elementary School. Since discussing the strong correlation of the teacher and student relationship, some literature reviews were tightly coupled to possible theories related to the problem. One literature review revealed that there were very few studies that offered empirical evidence of empathy's utility in the culturally responsive classroom.

Warren's (2013) research article is a study that examined the benefit of improving the student-teacher interaction of four White female educators and a sampling of their Black male students. Warren, (2013) provided three components of the theoretical framework: a) facilitate teachers' instructional flexibility and risk taking; b) establish trusting student-teacher relationships; and c) support teacher's ability to intervene proactively to ensure students meet high academic expectations. His findings revealed that the use of these components produced evidence of cultural responsiveness. The article discussed the difference between being empathetic and developing an empathetic disposition in the frame of how it fits intellectually, emotionally and behaviorally when applied to students. The author reported that the idea of cultivating 'empathy' as a professional disposition could have a direct and positive impact on student outcomes.

Warren (2015) speaks to how they (teachers) "must broker the boundaries of their help with their stakeholders. This timely and relevant text spoke to several factors that the author feels could contribute to the disparities with students from various backgrounds. The text builds a strong connection to opportunity gaps and achievement gaps and how educators need to decipher between the two. "For over 50 years, there has been much effort to ensure equal

education for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, and even disability (Wolter, 2015).”Yet, we know that more intentional professional learning is still needed to permeate a teacher’s understanding of this critical approach to building equity for all students.

Hughes, (2007) spoke of a theory related to social relatedness, which is closely coupled with contemporary theories of academic motivation and engagement. Related to this theory, it is essential that students experience a sense of belonging at school and supportive relationships with teachers and classmates. When this is held as a value, they are more motivated to participate actively and appropriately in the life of the classroom. There is a large body of research completed with students in grades 3 and higher, where Hughes spoke of how social relatedness can be viewed in the primary grades, offering long-term consequences for student learning (Hughes, 2007). This article by Hughes offered a context that spoke to other literature that related to the power of positive relations with teachers in the classroom, and between home and school that appeared to be less common for low-income and racial minority children than for higher income children (Hughes, 2007).

Consequently, the research and work done by Hammond (2015) speaks volumes to the design and principles of teachers’ fully becoming active or *warm demanders*, who hold relationship and friendliness at the hallmark of their everyday interactions. She speaks to building a collectivist culture where students are listened to, understood and not just of understanding the sense of urgency, that faces our marginalized students, but internalizing for applicable teacher moves (Hammond, 2018).

Self-Efficacy is another closely related theory that can be grounded in adult learning. Banks (1997) included expectancies in his discussion of self-efficacy. He argued that

expectancy-value theorists historically have focused on outcome expectations in their models, and stated further that efficacy expectations are more predictive of performance and choices (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

“Ability and expectancy beliefs are crucial to the expectancy-value theory of motivation and are present in other major theories as well” (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Generally speaking, when students and adults engage in activities that are intrinsically valued, there intend to be positive consequences that will build closer alignment to the act of academics (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

Motivation theories intersect with one’s beliefs about his or her ability in a prominent way. (Eccles & Wigfield (2000). There are several theories that can relate, like Weiner’s Attribution theory, (1985), which in short states that attributions made to ability (and lack of ability) have important motivational consequences, and whereas attributing success to ability has motivating consequences that can be positive or negative (Eccles & Wigfield, 2000). On the other hand, Covington (1992) coupled a theory to relate to an individual’s ability beliefs in his self-worth model that explained that people try to maintain a positive sense of ability in order to preserve their self-worth.

In summary, there is ample literature that supports the need to infuse CRT practices in classroom where racially and linguistically diverse students thrive. Additionally, it builds a case that this is an approach that will not only have an effect on students but on the teacher effect as well.

Professional Learning Communities

Though the literature does not reflect a single definition for a PLC (Lee, Zhang, & Yin, 2011), a working definition for the purposes of this study is when a group of teachers work on a

common goal of exchanging ideas and improving instructional practices throughout the year in a reflective manner. The concept of a PLC in schools focuses on improving student learning by improving teaching practice (Vescio, V., D., & Adams, A. 2008). With this known, the literature speaks to assumptions that relate when PLCs are properly implemented in schools. Two assumptions that are related to these learning communities. The first is that “knowledge is situated in the day-to-day lived experiences of teachers and best understood through critical reflection with others who share the same experience” (Vescio, V., D., & Adams, A. 2008, p. 81). This is critical in bridging the reflective practice that teachers could benefit from participating in a PLC. Secondly, it is assumed that “actively engaging teachers in PLCs will increase their professional knowledge and enhance student learning” (Vescio, V., D., & Adams, A. 2008, p. 81). An AR team would serve as a group of teachers who would not only serve as a PLC, but also create conditions for future PLCs to collaborate and improve instructional practices and learning opportunities for all students.

Teachers describe a professional learning community at HES, as an understood and consistent structure that allows teachers to engage in reflection, planning and continuous improvement. The Ubuntu District follows the Standards for Professional Learning model, developed by Learning Forward, to aid in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the development/learning programs (Learning Forward, 2018). Learning Forward is a national professional learning organization focused on leading actionable professional learning communities. It is a viable part of the performance culture of the Ubuntu School District and many other districts across the United States and Canada. A major element of the Learning Forward organization is an interest in gaining perceptions of certified staff members about how their organization utilizes the professional learning approach within their schools. They have

been able to garner this feedback using the Standards Assessment Inventory (SAI); a survey that includes a 50 question, 20-minute survey that measures the impact of professional learning and allows schools to utilize feedback to make needed improvements. This survey is given to staff at HES in the spring and results are reported to the staff at the beginning of the subsequent fall semester. The data from the SAI guided the AR team in formulating the professional learning design related to the case study.

In the professional literature, there is no single, precise definition for a professional learning community (PLC) (Lee et al., 2011). “A consensus view drawn from educational researchers and administrators is that a PLC exists in a school when a group of teachers collaboratively and critically exchange their instructional practices in an ongoing, reflective, inclusive learning-oriented and growth-promoting way to support innovation and knowledge sharing” (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000; Stoll & Louis, 2007; Toole & Louis, 2002, p. 2). The idea of having collective efficacy and collective responsibility as a team and school has been shown to support results when done correctly. Correctly, the operative word here is what makes a difference in schools’ ability to make a difference in student performance.

There are scholars in the professional development arena who have supported and criticized common pathways to professional development as sporadic, inauthentic, disconnected from teacher work, and unresponsive to students, their families and communities (Bryk, Rollow, & Pinnell, 1996; Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu & Easton, 2010; Elmore, 2004, 2008; Fullan, Hill & Crevola, 2006; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Yoonm, 2001; Payne, 2008; Schneider, 2002; Sebring & Bryk). The main criticism is that it is not meeting the needs and learning challenges that schools face.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) include shared characteristics of a common mission, vision and values; collective inquiry; collaborative purpose; action-orientation; experiential learning; and a focus on continuous improvement (DuFour & Eaker, 2005). The PLC structure is the overarching funnel through which this action research study progressed. DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek (2004) state that a successful PLC should focus on 1) ensuring that students learn, 2) a culture of collaboration, and 3) results that are indicated in formative and summative assessments. DuFour et al. (2004) has said, “A group of staff members who are determined to work together [toward a common goal] will find a way” (p. 6). Hillside Elementary staff members had a history of participation in a rich culture of collaboration and have fortified their student learning knowledge, with focused teacher collaboration as a continuous goal. Consequently, this structure of collaboration will be organic and natural in its formation.

Teachers approach professional learning differently at schools due to the leadership, culture, vision and their personal commitment to the work. Some continue to appreciate the silos of individual tasks during planning periods, while others enjoy the ability to plan and collaborate with others. Professional development is both an intellectual and personal venture. It requires engagement with recent ideas about education, but the attempt of trying out these new activities in the classroom. Additionally, professional learning aids in the development of classroom practice coupled with an emotional response as personal beliefs throughout learning are challenged” (Bell & Gilbert, 1994; Day & Sachs, 2004; Stoll, Harris, & Handscomb, 2012). Nevertheless, sound professional learning would support teachers in continuously adding new research-based strategies in the classroom setting to improve student achievement.

One would hope that in all schools, teachers are involved in professional development that is teacher-centered and focused on the transmission of information to make change in their practice (Bausmith & Barry, 2011). However, that is not always the case. Traditional models of professional development have moved to teachers as active participants in their learning who reflect on their practice (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002). This fact has substantiated the claim that addressing an active and experiential professional learning community would be a worthwhile endeavor to pursue.

Structure of a Professional Learning Community (PLC)

Avalos (2011) defined the core of professional development to be about teachers learning, learning how to learn, and transforming their knowledge into practice for the benefit of their students' growth. Not all professional development is the same in terms of how it affects teacher and student performance in schools. Essentially, naming of the framework has varied over the years with names such as staff development, professional development, professional learning and finally professional learning communities or PLCs. This difference in naming of the work will be analyzed in the action research process as a continuation of collaboration review as an action research team.

When considering the essential elements to consider when faced with instituting authentic collaborative teams, teachers have offered the following suggestions: (a) investigate the receptivity and available structures for the PLC, (b) establish norms for the group, (c) explore research materials, (d) start small (Killion, 2015). This feedback will be influential in forming the action research team's work when addressing the PLC.

When viewing various studies related to professional learning communities and its agency for practice, there were many views and opinions that all pointed to it being positive if

instituted correctly. Joanne Killion is the senior advisor of Learning Forward, which is the leading professional learning organization in the United States and Canada. She has written many research articles that ask educators of pertinent questions relating to the use of PLCs in their schools. One survey that she instituted related to teacher-to teacher collaboration on instructional teams. The results of this study (2010-2012) of 9,000 teachers completed in Miami-Dade Public Schools suggested that 84% of the teachers felt that they were part of a collaborative team that works together on instruction with 90% viewing it as a positive experience.

Blakenstein and Noguera (2016) wrote about the challenge of zero-sum (the haves versus the have nots) that was revealed through a cycle named the Cycle of Courage, which is detailed as: (1) For Every Student, (2) Getting to your Core, (3) Making Organizational Meaning, (4) Ensuring Constancy and Consistency of Purpose (5) Facing the Facts and your Fears and (6) Building Sustainable Relationships. A new way of thinking needs to be embraced in schools that doesn't "define children by their behavior (e. g., hyperactive, disruptive, etc.), labeled because of their needs (e.g., slow, insolent, etc.), and discarded" (p. 11). Schools instead, should be places that are organized to meet their needs, where "educators take time to get to know all students so that they can spend time cultivating talents and build their own potential" (p. 11).

Peters (2016) addressed the issue of inequity by incorporating a Conceptual Framework for Teacher Transformation that takes teachers through stages throughout the process. This results in teachers undergoing a process in professional learning that includes time to indulge in stages of (1) stance and schema awareness, (2) interruptive and catalytic experience (3) making new meaning, and (4) changed or new action. All of these stages helped teachers and staff

members attend to their personal bias, the instructional frameworks at their school with the ability to participate in an Equity Walk. This collaborative approach helps school teams to calibrate classrooms to build awareness of patterns, teaching styles and support of all students regarding race, gender and class.

The results from this study also revealed that teachers perceived conversations about student work and classroom management was less helpful to their practice, coupled with school and teacher factors influencing the quality and type of collaboration. Additionally, in schools where there were more non-gifted exceptional students, collaboration about instruction was weaker on average. Black, Hispanic and white teachers reported decreasing collaboration quality while teachers with bachelor's degrees would collaborate more than those with advanced degrees. Ultimately, from this study, teacher collaboration had a positive and strong outcome on student achievement, especially when the topic was about assessment. It would be relevant to engage in data conversations about ways to affect student outcomes through the review of local, district and state assessments results.

Empirical Findings

This AR study focused on the professional learning that teachers receive for learning CRT based on adult learning theory and experiential learning theory. There are few empirical studies based on evaluating culturally responsive teaching professional learning for educators based on these two theories, however, there is literature that relates to adult learning theory and experiential theory developing a strong case for productive professional learning.

The empirical studies that informed this study are detailed below in Table 7 with the full empirical findings table found in Appendix A. Siwatu (2007), offered context for this study, due to his instruments and findings. The empirical studies chosen were aligned to the

theme of the study topic of CRT and teacher/student relationships, self-efficacy and specifically CRT professional learning.

Table 7

Brief Empirical Findings Table

| Reference | Key Findings |
|--|--|
| Siwatu, K.O (2007). Preservice teachers' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy and outcome expectancy beliefs. <i>Teaching and Teacher Education</i> , 23, 1086-1101 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate self-efficacy building activities in the preparation of CRT teachers that are specific to CRT • Build comprehensive faculty • development in CRT |
| Siwatu, K.O (2007) Preservice teachers' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy and outcome expectancy beliefs. <i>Teaching and Teacher Education</i> , 23, 1086-1101 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservice teachers are more efficacious in their ability to help students feel like important members of the classroom and develop positive, personal relationships with their students, than they are in their ability to communicate with English Language Learners |
| Voltz, D. L., Brazil, N., & Scott, R. (2003). Professional development for culturally responsive instruction: A promising practice for addressing the disproportionate representation of students of color in special education. <i>Teacher Education and Special Education</i> , 26(1), 63-73 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Development opportunities can influence how teachers think about the issue of addressing cultural differences in the classroom, and can expand their understanding of the diversity versus disability conundrum |
| Hughes, J., & Kwok, O. M. (2007). Influence of student teacher and parent-teacher relationships on lower achieving readers' engagement and achievement in the primary grades. <i>Journal of educational psychology</i> , 99(1), 39. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of teachers' relationships with students and their parents mediates the associations between children's background characteristics and teacher-related classroom engagement • Child classroom engagement, in turn mediates the associations between student-teacher and parent-teacher relatedness and child achievement the following year |

Gaps in Literature

Deficiencies in past literature may exist because topics may not have been explored with a particular group or population (Creswell, 2014). The literature may need to be replicated to see if the same findings hold given new samples of people or new sites of study (Creswell, 2014). Since referencing the research associated with the problem in this study, there are areas that could offer further exploration. One area to consider is research related to what professional learning activities, experiences and protocols would offer deeper understanding and self-efficacy of CRT. Furthermore, the transformational change that occurs with teachers who employ these strategies personally and professionally with students. The research also has gaps in how schools with staff that mirror their students' transition through learning CRT and its application. There is a gap of literature associated with action research methodology as a means to investigate self-efficacy and collective efficacy aligned to student learning with teachers who grasp the CRT approach. This study will add to the body of research that is deficient.

Chapter Summary

Black, Latino, and American Indian or Alaska Native students are more likely to attend schools with higher concentrations of inexperienced teachers (U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2011). Eleven percent of Black students and 9% of Latino students attend schools where more than 20% of teachers are in their first year of teaching compared to 5% of white students and 4% of Asian students (US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2016). As a result, the school is an environment that has opportunity to bridge and provide a platform for success among all students.

Overall, the literature speaks to a teacher effect and how teachers need to be educated on the most comprehensive and effective ways to impact reading achievement. Coupled with

the pedagogical view of effective reading teaching in the classroom, teachers need to be equipped with empathy and a non-biased view of all of their students in hopes that this will not hinder high student learning.

Being able to have a skilled facilitator is essential in helping to not just change teachers' pedagogical beliefs, but to transform them (Krownapple, 2017). Professional learning makes a strong case for the skilled facilitator to channel CRT learning. Most recent federal achievement data reveals that poor, black and Hispanic children are becoming more and more isolated from their white affluent peers in public schools (Saphier, 2017). As we move to consider teacher practice and its impact on our neediest students, one has to think of the professional learning that each teacher receives to support equitable student learning. There is a large gap between the knowledge and skills teachers should have and could receive with proper professional learning and continuous support and development. This chapter's literature review shows the hallmark reforms that worked to provide equity, coupled with the relevant literature that supports the need to improve teacher practice through professional learning and culturally responsive teaching.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Case Study Design

This case study examined how an experiential professional learning program focused on CRT could transform a teacher's engagement and efficacy toward the learning of CRT with racially and linguistically diverse students. The research questions guiding this study are:

1. What are teachers' pedagogical beliefs and attitudes relative to CRT and how do those beliefs and attitudes influence their teaching?
2. How does participation in a PLC impact teachers' conceptual understanding and use of CRT strategies in the classroom?
3. What does an AR team learn through the use of CRT in the classroom?

This chapter offers an overview of research methodologies; section two gives a comprehensive description of the research design, research site, participants, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques, and trustworthiness of the data.

The Action Research Process

Methods refer to the procedures for collecting data, which in this case is both quantitative and qualitative. Additionally, methods include the process of deciding who will be included in the study and how to analyze and report data in the sequence of events within the study. The methodology for this study reflects the importance of conveying the emergent and ongoing nature of action research (Herr & Anderson, 2014). The study is positioned to take the AR team through structured self-reflection based on a continuous cycle of plan act, observe,

and reflect, and then to move them toward a revised plan based on ongoing actions and observations (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1987). Through a cycle that overlaps, the initial plan may become obsolete as the team develops answers to the research questions and process of learning (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1987). The AR study was a co-construction of collaboration developed with others without researcher restraint. The AR study is a co-construction, developed in collaboration with others, in a setting over which the researcher has little control (Herr & Anderson, 2014).

The AR team transformed the plan of study as they consulted and collaborated throughout the study. As researcher, it is imperative to be open and responsive to the stages that the process will take, and to understand the fluidity and emergent nature of the process as it evolves (Herr & Anderson, 2014). As the team began making meaning, it was important for me to be involved, intervene as needed, and maintain focus on the purpose of the study. The outcome of the study may not be a product; a documented process of learning, changing, and transforming is sufficient for the overall purpose of the AR case study.

The study followed an action research cycle explained by Coghlan and Brannick (2015), (Figure 4). This study aligned to the Action Research Meta-cycle explained by Coghlan and Brannick (2015), which included setting the context and purpose by constructing, planning action, taking action, and evaluating action. The first cycle of constructing began May 2017 and ended August 2017, which built a context for the purpose of study. During these months, student data was collected from summative assessments and teachers were administered the SAI assessment. The second cycle, planning action, took place from August 2017 to January 2018 where the AR team focused on the most relevant student data, while implementing a plan that addressed the research questions with possible interventions and

recommended professional learning design feedback. The evaluative cycle was conducted from January to February 2018, and it served to address the research questions and to determine if and how a PLC made an impact on teachers' individual self-efficacy and collective efficacy beliefs and attitudes about CRT. At the conclusion of this study, all quantitative and qualitative data was examined, transcribed, coded, and reflected upon to determine the impact of the action research approach on professional learning and CRT in answering the research questions.



Figure 4. Action Research Cycle. Adapted from Coghlan & Brannick, 2015.

Therefore, this case study action research approach was designed to not only transform student learning for the purpose of this study, but also permeate teacher learning so that it could influence learning habits and outcomes of future students. As Coghlan and Brannick explained, “There can be no learning without action and no (sober and deliberate) action without learning” (2014, p. 55). With a mixed methods approach, “the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone” (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). The planned quantitative and qualitative research methods and timeline to answer the research questions are shown for triangulation in Table 8.

Table 8

Triangulation of Research Methods

| Research Questions | Data Collection | Analysis Approach | Timeline |
|--|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| Q1. What are teachers' pedagogical beliefs and attitudes relative to Culturally Responsive Teaching and how do they influence their teaching? | CRT Efficacy Scales Cultural Autobiography experience and reflection Book Study Discussions PLC Discussions Individual interviews | Likert Scale Analysis Coding for Themes Document Analysis | September 2017- January 2018 |
| Q2. How does participation in a professional learning community impact a teachers' conceptual understanding and use of Culturally Responsive Teaching strategies in the classroom? | Individual interviews School Visits Survey PLC discussions Online PL Experience Planning documents | Coding for Themes Coding for Themes Likert Scale Analysis Document Analysis | January 2018 December 2018 |
| Q3. What does an Action Research team learn through the use of Culturally Responsive Teaching in the classroom? | Individual interviews Researcher Journal Member Checking | Coding for Themes Reflection Reflection | January-February 2018 |

Data Collection

Data collection is a major portion of action research, which requires deep reflection, time, and consideration. Maintaining the focus and purpose of the data collection of data was vital, influenced by AR team member feedback. Data collection consisted of two data sets that included quantitative Culturally Responsive Efficacy Scales experience surveys along with individual interviews. All instruments administered were approved through the university Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix C). After research methods were approved through IRB, participants were selected and I followed through with informed consent (Appendix D).

The AR team reviewed academic performance data for all demographics on local, district, and state assessments throughout the semester. They reviewed 2016-2017 data to generalize and discuss informed assumptions that built on confirming a rationale for the work and supporting the research to attempt at treating the problem and creating teacher related interventions.

Collecting data is an intricate, complicated, and complex process that will involve organization and conscientious planning. According to Stake (2013), the interviewer should use the collected data to define the difference in analysis and interpretation. Analysis involves procedures such as coding, categorizing, concept mapping, and theme organization (Stake, 2013). With the expectation that varying themes would arise from various methods, I collected data in a quantitative and qualitative manner focusing on the three research questions. As the primary researcher, I recorded all meetings on a cell phone and four recorders.

The AR team used a cross-sectional sequence that is longitudinal due to it being conducted over time from August through February. The gathering of data from the pre and post CRT efficacy survey and individual interviews was single stage because people were sampled directly without anonymity (Creswell, 2014). The AR team participated in a pre and post survey that gauged their self-efficacy in implementing the tenets of the CRT approach (Appendix E). They also utilized the data from the school's SAI survey to build a foundation of the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher's views on the professional learning culture of the school. They worked as a team to reflect on their perceptions after the treatment of the 6-month cycle of the professional learning experience and implementation design as a closing to the action research cycle in the evaluation phase.

The data collected was expansive and included monthly, recorded focus interviews with the primary researcher. Additionally, as the primary researcher, I recorded impressions of field experiences and reflection as the AR team progressed through the study. To support data collection, I utilized a researcher journal where I recorded my personal journey and all of my own thinking, perceptions, and challenges through the study.

Data collected was aligned to the monthly meetings for validity. When the AR team meeting concluded, each AR team member was interviewed for at least 20-30 minutes to ask questions that not only related to the three research questions, but also to questions that would provide further information related to the study. Recordings of all meetings and interviews coupled with interview transcriptions, member checking, and field notes aided in adding analysis and trustworthiness of the findings.

Instrumentation: Culturally Responsive Teaching Efficacy Scales

The Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy (CRTSE) scale (Siwatu, 2007), created by Kama Going Siwatu out of Texas Tech University was used as the primary quantitative data collection tool for this study. Siwatu created and used this instrument with preservice teachers in the Midwest. Used as a diagnostic of efficacy beliefs, the Likert-type scale was given to all participants during the August orientation meeting and in January at the completion of the formal monthly AR meetings. The CRTSE had three surveys that included: (1) CRT Self-Efficacy Scale (2) CRT Outcome Expectancy Scale and (3) CRT Classroom-Management Self-Efficacy Scale. Though the three purposes remain the same in this study, they are correlated with teachers and staff within a PLC. According to Siwatu (2007), more simple items on the self-efficacy scale relate to general teaching practices, and more challenging teaching practices relate to specific culturally sensitive and responsive teaching

practices (Siwatu, 2007). This instrument related to the first research question associated with beliefs and attitudes, and according to AR team members was able to be completed in less than 10 minutes, yet with careful thought and reflection.

Professional Learning Community (PLC) Discussions

All of the AR team members were involved in PLC discussions at the AR meetings. During these meetings, questions were posed that allowed the team to discuss, which provided an ample amount of qualitative data for collection. The implementation of norms was imperative to allow for equal opportunities to voice opinions and perspective. Details related to these findings associated with norms will be included in Chapter 5.

AR team members shared feedback, reflected on the professional learning, gave and offered recommendations for future research, studies, and the overall impact for future experiences for other schools and districts. The rationale for adding in PLC discussions was to encourage participants to talk to one another, ask questions, and understand one another's point of view rather than answering questions in turn (Merton, 2008). A limitation to this experience is that I could not hear and collect full perspectives from all participants due to some fear and discomfort at having such conversations with a researcher who also serves as team members' supervisor and principal.

Therefore, I also included individual interviews, naturally occurring interactions, journals, and field notes of observations as sources that provided additional qualitative data regarding their experiences and data from the group reflection. Patton (1990) explained that the central strength of interviewing is that it provides a means for doing what is very difficult or impossible to do any other way---finding out "what is in and on someone else's mind" (p. 7).

The AR team members were recorded discussing their personal and professional experiences of the process during all monthly meetings. Additionally, the AR team was able to offer feedback pertaining to the study, which allowed ample feedback for other researchers, and other future studies for the district and other educational sectors. There were eight questions asked of the team related to the research questions posed and the interventions that were included with the AR research design and are included in (Appendix F). Questions that were posed were open questions as opposed to closed questions because “closed questions are those in which the implied response is restricted in some way” (Roulston, 2010, p. 9). Open questions allow for elaboration and interjection from team members to allow for deeper conversations, understanding and connection (Roulston, 2010). Open questions provide broader opportunities for interviewees to expand on their own thoughts, and answer questions in their own words (Roulston, 2010). This process for interviewing required a guide for open-ended questions (Appendix F) with additional probes for additional details (Roulston, 2010, p.13).

All focused interview conversations were recorded, transcribed, and coded for themes after every experience during meetings. Minutes from meetings collected were in a semi-structured format that required note taking and audio recording that was transcribed verbatim by me personally and through audiotranscription.org. At the onset of the AR cycle, I transcribed each of the two-hour sessions resulting in close to 10 hours of transcribed data.

Individual AR Team Interviews

Interviewing was a major component of this study due to the need to capture the experiences of the AR team and their transition through various reflections through the study. As principal and the principal investigator, I came to the project with certain bias to the study that required an enormous amount of effort to prevent interference with interpretation of data

and interview responses. This qualitative measure of data collection was carefully organized in order to avoid obstacles and improper data collection. As the principal investigator and interviewer, the research behind the study was delivered proactively while making sure that this information was thorough and research-based (Fowler, 2013). Secondly, Fowler (2013) emphasizes the need to protect the respondents from any harm, which is reason for the documents provided during the orientation meeting through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. I originally predicted that the interview process would pose a challenge because of my position as principal. Therefore, I ensured that individuals participated in the creation of the questions and had prior access to them to soften the anxiety at the end. As a result, though some team members revealed nervousness when answering, they all appeared consciously aware and comfortable answering agreed questions with thoroughness and fullness. The opportunity to assure that individuals felt safe and free of retaliation due to their freedom in conversations was crucial and stated in the interview protocol (Appendix F).

An interview protocol (Appendix F) was utilized for asking questions and recording answers. Though the interview notes were recorded for journaling purposes and field notes, all audio recordings were transcribed as interview notes for coding as analysis following anonymity and the ability for staff to reveal their reflection on questions. Cresswell (2014) recommends mixing quantitative and qualitative questions in the studies to emphasize methods, content or both in a study. I wrote the three research questions in a table and was able to add applicable comments from AR team members into those sections to capture the answers that correlated with findings.

The process of interviewing has “no correct format that is appropriate for all situations, and no single way of wording questions that will always work. The particular situation, the

needs of the interviewee, and the personal style of the interviewer all come together to create a unique situation for each interview” (Patton, 1980, p. 252). As the principal to the participants in my study, I realized that there would be an uncomfortable feeling for some participants on the AR team; therefore, I intended to assure rapport, be an active listener, and incorporate open questioning (Simons, 2009). I included the same interview guide given for feedback and collaboration to drive questions along with a recorder to guarantee that all discussions were recorded accurately. The final participant interviews were approximately 6 hours in length and were sent to [audiotranscription.org](https://www.audiotranscription.org) for purposes of having clear comments and answers to the interview questions. The interviews were held in the data room, a familiar place, or my office in a conversational style to create a comfortable atmosphere that may increase the amount of data collected.

Data Analysis

I was cognizant of how to gather, code, and utilize the data to collect themes and patterns reflective of the participants’ perspectives. I utilized the website [audiotranscription.org](https://www.audiotranscription.org) for the final interviews. I found that coding my own collections was effective and helped me gain insight. At the conclusion of the original data gathering process, the field notes, transcribed data, and other types of data were arranged by common themes. The data was organized through transcribing field notes, and sorting and arranging the different types of data (Creswell, 2014.) According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (1994, there are “three interlinked processes that are named data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification” (pp. 10-12). Using these essentials of data gathering and thematic dictation, I used the coding process to develop themes relating to the data. This review allowed me to provide the AR team with ways to find and identify categories that may have

affected professional learning and CRT among teachers. The organization of this data from individual and PLC discussions was thematically clustered to inform the interventions and future recommendations from the AR team.

Coding for Themes and Member Checking

The next step as a researcher was to move forward with the development of a preliminary list of coding categories by which responses were classified-either as positive comments, negative comments or neutral comments (Creswell, 2014). Once data was collected, coded, and coupled with assigning themes, the AR team met in February to follow the process of member checking. The use of member checking is imperative in determining the accuracy of the qualitative major findings, themes, case analysis, and grounded theory (Creswell, 2014). It was essential that AR team members were invested in assuring valid and reliable data reporting. Therefore, collaborative conversations were embedded into the monthly meetings to ensure that data was accurate throughout the case study.

All meetings were transcribed and reviewed to add to the collection of themes and patterns. Next, each team member reviewed the interview protocol prior to participating in final interviews. This was an essential way to ensure that the three research questions could be answered accurately and efficiently. All qualitative data was generated from audio recordings, and was then transcribed, coded, and compiled to determine findings.

Once recordings, coded transcriptions and themes were determined, each member was offered access to review and offer feedback or revisions. No one responded with any feedback or revisions other than being amazed at the ability of the transcription service to provide such an intricate review of their comments. The AR team collectively reviewed the findings to ensure the validity of the data for the reporting of findings.

Familiarization

It was essential that I become familiar with the data by reading it in its entirety and writing notes in the margins for reflective purposes. Whenever data from experiences, surveys and transcribed interview data was gathered, I reviewed the documents, formed general codes, and began to conceptualize themes of the initial findings. To provide additional validity, I reviewed all documents at least two times before finalizing any emerging themes for reporting purposes.

Validity and Trustworthiness

The need to have valid and reliable data is essential when committing to action research. “Validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research and is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 201). Because this was a mixed methods study, it was imperative that qualitative data was valid and reliable to relate to the assumption that conclusions from quantitative data could provide. To enhance the trustworthiness of the data included, triangulation and member checking were used (Creswell, 2014). Engagement in data collection and review, along with consistent descriptions of data across all data sets was reviewed to reveal themes.

Positionality of Researcher

One of the challenges that became apparent prior to this process was my positionality as a principal at the site and also the researcher. I considered the potential of participants to feel vulnerable being open and honest, and as a result, implemented a proactive approach to this barrier through norm-setting practice and protocol engagement throughout the sessions. Overall, trust was a major factor on both sides of the action research experience. I was mindful

about making sure that the experiences used as interventions were processes that would provide a professional stance to participants as they learned CRT pedagogy. As an insider, my role in the study provided opportunities to collect data, report findings, and be on site to gain insight into the process as it progressed.

Limitations of the Study

The study conducted was an action research case study that was intentional and not a study that related to randomized samples. For that reason, the subjects were purposefully chosen to offer a diverse insight. Additionally, “one may assume that personal involvement and/or subjectivity of the researcher, the way in which inferences are drawn from the single case and the validity and usefulness” (Simons, 2009, p. 24) could cause a distorted view. However, Simons (2009), speaks to how they may not all be limitations due to how they are perceived or interpreted. I found that through listening to the AR team develop their norms for the work that some were concerned about my role as principal and researcher. It could have posed a concern for trust and transparency, yet they quickly trusted agreement not to let that interfere with their work.

Consequently, I would check in with members periodically during the action research cycle to see how they felt the experience was progressing. From these conversations, I was led to believe that there were no issues with limiting discussions and candor with the team or myself as primary researcher. My primary goal of committing to this action research was for others to find value that will ultimately aid in them duplicating or motivating action in their school and/or district settings.

Another point related to limitations was the small sample size of 14 participants. The act of recruiting at Hillside Elementary School was an additional limitation due to resources,

time to complete study, and availability. Future studies should consider including a larger sample size of various educators to gather a broader view. Future studies may consider having an initial interview to gather participants' views of the potential AR process and again at the summation to compare changes in views.

Researcher Subjectivity

I was introduced to the concept of action research when I matriculated in an Educational Leadership (Ed.S.) program. I was able to have an action research team, who also worked on a problem at the local school. As a principal at HES, I was connected and engaged throughout the research cycle and had conceptual knowledge of the AR process. I had to think that as the “main instrument of data gathering”; it is me who observes, interviews, and interacts with people on the AR team (Simons, 2009, p. 4). Consequently, there were times that I had to go through the process of *dis-identification*, which is “to observe oneself without becoming emotionally attached to what one sees” (Holly, 1993, p. 166). This alignment had to change in order for sensitive experiences and conversations to take place on the AR team. The team offered feedback regarding the CRT and PLC topic, not just because of what the student data and research revealed, but because it aligned personally to my academic interests.

As a learner and part of a family of educators, namely my mother who was a high school teacher in an urban district, I grew up observing the life of an educator from various angles. After attending college, I served in New Jersey for six years as an elementary teacher and one year as a reading coach for the state. After moving from New Jersey to Georgia, I was assigned to a Title I school as a literacy coach and then as an assistant principal for seven years. I have served as the principal in the school I am leading for the past five years. These experiences in various demographic and geographic settings added perspective to my research.

I attended private, parochial, and public schools with students of different races and built strong relationships with individuals from various ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. My parents instilled a spirit of inclusiveness in me that allowed me to feel comfortable in situations where I was the only Black woman or person in the room. My ability to code switch, or change my language or behavior based on the environment, enabled me to blend in comfortably with many different races. I attended a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) of higher learning where Whites accounted for over 50% or greater of the student population (Brown & Dancy, 2010). This afforded me several opportunities to experience culture, blending, and bias at many different levels. My varied experiences enabled me to contribute to the AR team conversations because I had been exposed to different types of thinking and different perspectives.

I have thought about my own bias and partiality so it did not interfere with the action research process. I brought many different thoughts and perspectives, and felt that it was imperative that neutrality was evident in my practice. As a member of the community and in the role as principal, I continuously reminded myself to remain neutral in my design and collaborative efforts to ensure that the AR process was free of any impartiality or coerciveness due to my position.

To address my subjectivity, I added my thoughts to my researcher journal during and after sessions to assure that I captured all revelations and questions related to the work. Additionally, I aligned the research questions to the collection of multiple data sources to ensure a high level of validity and trustworthiness of the results collected. I met and discussed matters with a fellow cohort member frequently while consulting with my major professor to

ensure that I was following a path that would not interfere with a strong and relevant action research study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the approach of the methodology and literature that framed this action research study. It included rationale for the research cycle, research design, methods for collecting and analyzing data, and issues of validity, trustworthiness and subjectivity. The purpose of the study of examining beliefs and attitudes related to CRT and professional learning makes a mixed methods study reasonable. This chapter communicated how the quantitative and qualitative data was collected and triangulated. Findings will be discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY- THE STORY OF THE ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

In order to create a context for this action research study, a story will help to create an understanding of the rationale for the study and the deliberate process that ensued. Early in my doctoral program, I engaged in the review of school data, reading of applicable research related to the intersectionality of race, gender and class and culturally responsive teaching. Through these acts, it revealed inquiry to begin researching possible interventions to remedy the problems I was experiencing at my school site. Coming from a literacy background, I immediately was attached to reading and its effect on learning. As I moved deeper into my classes and milestones, feedback from professors and colleagues, suggested that I might want to consider creating opportunities for the adults in hopes of achieving transformational shifts in creating positive student outcomes.

Therefore, I immersed myself in applicable literature that enabled me to focus on CRT and its effects. Once, I conversed with various stakeholders, I was introduced to many resources, scholars and events that moved my research to consider how the action of delivering professional learning could directly impact the adults in the building to understand culturally responsive teaching at a higher level. There was a considerable amount of professional learning at the school related to literacy instruction and learning models. However, we had no intentional work on the intersectionality of race, gender and class besides a poverty simulation experience with staff members five years prior.

Description of the Context

The context of this action research case study is HES, one of the 42 elementary Title I schools within the Ubuntu Public Schools (UPS) district. AR team included a diverse group of classroom and support teachers, a counselor and an administrator from the school staff. Due to my personal connection to professional learning and CRT in my own leadership experience, it was incumbent of me to find these two major areas of education to be both an interest and a necessary intervention for teachers and the community at Hillside Elementary.

Hillside Elementary School

As previously described in Chapter 1, HES is a high-performing Title I school within a large, award-winning school district. HES began educating students in 2003 as a large school transforming to a Title I school in 2009. The school serves as an exemplar of transformation as more than half of the staff moved to a high performing school that housed predominantly white students to a school with 32% White, 45% Hispanic and 15% African-American. With this move, many of the staff remained, yet 50% of the staff needed to be hired and placed in teaching and other staff positions. Over the next eight years, the school had various areas of positive performance in student achievement and outcomes, yet a high level of performance had yet to be revealed consistently. The school has modeled and maintained a high level of employee engagement and has little turnover, which makes the ability to build teacher capacity in CRT applicable and possible.

Story and Outcomes

As an inside principal researcher, I worked in collaboration with the current staff to commit to the AR team who acted as stakeholders in the school. Due to the action research being conducted in my school, I did not require any additional approval outside of university

IRB approval (Appendix C). However, during a typical monthly meeting with my area superintendent, she was informed of the study and its alignment to school data and the need for improvement, at which she supported.

Originally, I sought to keep the AR team small, with a goal of no more than 10 participants. However, with reading various studies and the vision for the study in future schools and districts, I sought to establish a team that was diverse, inclusive and large enough for adequate participation in experiences and conversations. Once I delivered my first conversation for interested participants, I was approached in the hallway from various participants who had interest in taking the learning journey. I reviewed my staff list and reflected throughout the spring and summer semester about who would best serve on this AR team. I initially began with 15 participants and ended with 14 due to one participant not being able to participate any longer for personal reasons.

Recruiting Interested Participants

The team of stakeholders were selected to support the research and the design of the professional learning design based on CRT. During the month of August, I presented an overview of the intention behind the study to the staff. They were given an opportunity to view the overall rationale behind the study and what their participation would involve. They were able to ask clarifying questions and relate their interest, time and motivation to how they could benefit from participation in the study and AR process. I followed up the presentation with an email reviewing the rationale for the study, the power point and the research compliance documents that were submitted for IRB (Appendix C). Once complete, I asked the staff where their commitment rested regarding joining the AR team. A link encouraging interested participants to send a response to the survey link detailed their preference. Once I gathered

interest, I worked through the survey to build an AR team that was inclusive of the demographic view of the staff, willing to be vulnerable and open to change and a new philosophy. Additionally, I considered individuals who would be curious of what CRT may be for themselves and their students. I desired to build a team that was not necessarily aware of the theory, but more so diverse in thought with a willingness to challenge their bias and teaching philosophy with a willingness to improve student performance.

When devising research questions for the study, I sought to not only capture the learning of the teachers who were participating in the professional learning and application in the classroom, but additionally, I was interested in understanding the viewpoints and perspectives of the AR team that would support the plan and implementation of the intervention of professional learning itself. Therefore, the third research question, “What does an Action Research team learn through the use of Culturally Responsive Teaching in the classroom?” was a purposeful way to gather perspectives to the research study. The team members were encouraged to think as practitioners and support the progress of the team to design, and implement interventions at Hillside Elementary that could have long lasting effects for students from different backgrounds and levels of learning. The assumption was that their reflections, feedback, and recommendations, would be a helpful tool that could be added to this study for future schools and districts that aspire to the same consideration for their professional learning plan. PLC discussions were utilized to add a layer of reflection to the work and to add insight into the natural experiences of team members.

Table 9

*Action Research Team Background Characteristics**(Primary-Grades K-2 & Intermediate-Grades 3-5)*

| Position | Gender | Race | Years of Experience |
|--|--------|------------------|---------------------|
| Resource Teacher | Female | White | 6 |
| Primary Teacher | Female | Indian | 22 |
| Speech Pathologist | Female | African-American | 33 |
| Intermediate teacher | Female | African-American | 17 |
| Intermediate teacher | Female | White | 12 |
| Intermediate teacher | Male | Hispanic | 16 |
| Music Teacher | Female | White | 6 |
| Instructional Coach | Female | White | 26 |
| Resource Teacher | Female | White | 10 |
| Parent Instructional Support Coordinator | Female | Hispanic | 25 |
| Intermediate teacher | Female | White | 6 |
| Guidance Counselor | Female | White | 14 |
| Primary teacher | Female | Multiracial | 3 |

My assistant principal was a confidant who also supported me in notetaking throughout our meetings. She worked as an assistant principal at the local school for four years and had always had an interest in the topic of CRT and professional learning. As a supervisor over the professional learning at HES, she was someone that I consulted with in regards to building my AR team.

Action Research Team Members

Fourteen participants were able to complete the study due to one declining to continue due to, personal reasons. A brief description of the fourteen members who participated in the case study are included below:

Ms. Kankunda Ibo had a strong background in technology, innovation and literacy with 17 years of teaching experience in six diverse districts. She modeled enthusiasm from the beginning of this study and always desired to learn more about cultural relations and student learning discussions. She worked in three Georgia counties, one in Virginia and one in Abu Dhabi. She expressed her opinions openly even when they may not have been popular or the norm. Importantly, when the first experience, of the Picture Walk, was completed and discussion ensued, she was the first one to offer a counter argument to the discussion. This personality type was needed for the AR team to view different perspectives. Due to her vast experience and knowledge outside of the country and in other districts, she offered varying views and added much to the dialogue.

Oliva Samford was in her third year of teaching at HES. She had an interest in professional learning and quickly became a trusted leader at the school even as a first-year teacher. As a multi-racial female who was raised in Hawaii and the contiguous United States, she offered input related to her personal experiences. She kept the group focused on answering

the questions or completing the tasks. She was often times observed offering clarifying questions to ensure the validity of responses throughout the monthly meetings.

Ava Garner was a former teacher of 10 years in India and taught at HES for the past 11 years. As a teacher of Indian descent, she offered diverse view and experiences to the group. As a current teacher of the year and a kindergarten teacher, she was able to connect to students who entered the country with limited English. She has been highly sought after teacher by parents since teaching at HES due to her ability to connect with parents and students. She invited AR team members to her church for the visitation experience. Her ability to build strong relationships strengthened conversations because she would gently remind the team of its importance in all interactions to build a strong culturally responsive classroom and school.

Mia Stanley, the most experienced on the AR team, was a 30-year veteran and speech pathologist. She participated in HES's first Leadership Academy and desired to build her own capacity in several ways. Her thoughts were influential in AR meetings and she led members at her church for the visitation experience. She offered personal accounts of growing up in the southeast during the Jim Crow period and how it affected how she views life as a result. Her insight allowed staff to have a resident who could offer feedback in discussions that helped to catapult our team's work forward.

Emily Love, a current special education resource teacher, was one of the members on the team who was constantly researching articles, podcasts, and resources to support our AR teamwork. Her willingness to continue the conversations with colleagues, family, and friends was paramount. She would email current and insightful topics and make copies of articles and place them in AR team members' mailboxes. It had a large impact on how others viewed our work on the team. She showed interest in continuing this work with other staff and desired to

create professional learning presentations for the staff and beyond. She willingly participated in conversations about White privilege and how to learn most from this study.

Charlotte Jones approached me about joining the AR team, and even though I had 14 team members at the time, I felt compelled to allow her to join our team. She was a resource teacher and was able to connect to many of the experiences. Growing up Catholic in New Jersey before moving to Metro Atlanta afforded her a context for how living in different areas adds to your understanding of how culture works. She grew up in a family that supported different racial friendships, which are some that she still holds today.

Sean Hawkins, a Hispanic male, had a major role on the AR team representing a male and Hispanic point of view. He had a challenging childhood that offered a lot of insight and perspective. He was often observed speaking up and offering context to our discussions that helped our team understand new ideas. He was one of the AR team members who connected to this work and found himself more equipped to engage in courageous conversations in different settings after his AR experience.

Addison Smart, a former Emotionally Behavior Teacher (EBD), was influential in helping others gain understanding about how perceptions and behaviors connect with the work of instruction. Her significance on the team was due to her background in special education and delivery of high quality instruction. She was particularly impacted by the cultural autobiography, which led her to talk with her family about events that affected her.

Lillian Isom was a second year music specialist at HES. Her specialty was including culture in her classroom through the arts. When she began at the school, she quickly jumped in and modeled inclusivity with her students and colleagues. It was very easy for her to become a part of the culture and help her students display their talents. She built a positive relationship

with all of the students in the building and was unique to our team due to this. Her willingness to join the AR team added a level of context of the arts and the ability for us to see students for their strengths and their true selves.

Aubrey Mitchell served as an instructional coach at HES and supported implementation of the curriculum in classrooms. Spending the last 12 years at the school, afforded her the ability to connect to the school's transition from a non-title school of 1,400 students to a smaller Title I school of 800 students. She worked with English as a Second Language (ESOL) students, low performing, and gifted students. Her ability to create differentiated lesson plans and make sure that student needs are met allowed for the team to always stay focused on instruction.

Ariana Williams was in her fourth year of teaching as a third grade teacher. She formerly taught in a high poverty school where the major population was Hispanic and non-English speaking. She was the first AR member to make a connection to a student and it transformed the team to think of their students through the experiences. Her ability to connect to the various experiences was strong and because of this, she was able to evolve to a deeper understanding. She was an active participant and often times shared recent classroom events that connected to conversations at AR team meetings.

Maria Costa, who as a Hispanic woman, was also able to offer thoughts from a parent perspective, since she served as the parent liaison at the school. She was insightful on this journey and was noted several times offering a counter view to several conversations. She was moved by the cultural autobiography and felt compelled to read it during the final interview. This experience was a way for her to connect to her past, privilege and desire to bring this work to others. Her perspective was often times added to discussions and helped her to guide other

teachers understand the CRT approach when prompted. This work became a sense of urgency for her and she was interested in spreading this information to others so that it could affect more students for transformational change. She regarded her work with Title I families as a privilege and enjoyed helping families build parent capacity to have the knowledge and skills to help their children be successful.

Audrey Hughes had only been a counselor at Hillside Elementary for one month, when she agreed to join the AR team. She came to the team with a diverse perspective, having been a counselor in a predominantly Hispanic Title I school in the district previously and having a large context for diversity in her role. Her ability to associate this experience with differences related to class and religion added a large perspective to the idea of difference, having lived it now since moving to an affluent suburb in the metro Atlanta area. She also had a background in play therapy and small group intervention.

Ellie Brown is one of the assistant principals at Hillside Elementary School. She was currently in her fifth year and was formerly awarded as an Ubuntu school district Top 25 Teacher of the Year. She had a strong background in literacy instruction and leadership and has worked in Title I schools her entire educational career. As an assistant principal, she served in many roles, yet one role that associated well with the study was her leadership over the ESOL and professional learning program, where she designed workshops and supported teachers in delivering presentations. Her context for culture has always been fascinating, as she has always had diverse experiences with music, culture and understanding of different people. During the action research process, she was the note taker for the team and served as a guide to me if I had a question or comment to add to our upcoming meetings. She was an engaged member and would consistently bring a high level of energy and purpose to AR team

conversations. She made those in her group always feel comfortable despite her leadership role.

Sharlene Cross was the one member who was not able to attend all meetings and participate in all experiences. She chose to step down from the AR team in December during the online course. She was able to offer a lot of insight while serving.

To align with the study, the AR team met monthly for two hours from September 2017 through January 2018. When the research cycle concluded, the AR team was offered staff development contact hours, required by the district, and Professional Learning Units (PLUs), required by the state licensing agency. Mrs. Brown was able to assure that all of the AR members received participation recognition by the district staff development system.

Action Research Cycles

Intervention(s) & Implementation Plan

To organize the action research cycle of interventions, the action research case study was organized into four phases of implementation: Constructing, Planning, Taking Action and Evaluation Action (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). A detailed timeline of events is outlined in Table 11.

The planning stage began with informational meeting serving to garner support and guidance for understanding the purpose, how confidentiality would be critical for participation, and what the professional learning expectations would be for the work of the AR team. At a faculty meeting in August, I presented a verbal overview with a small verbal invitational conversation during a faculty meeting (Appendix B). This phase included the identification of the AR team members based on diversity, years of experience and interest. The goal was to have no more than 10-15 members join the action research team that would include a diverse

group of dedicated staff members who would continue on the AR research cycle of interventions. All members were interested and excited about joining the team and 15 members assembled, including one who heard about the work and asked to join.

The AR team was established by a personal invitation including the Principal Investigator, who is the Principal member of the administrative team, one of the school's assistant principals, also a member of the administrative team, a counselor, instructional coach and twelve teachers. While learning of the commitments and expectations, the AR team members were asked to be thoughtful about their personal and professional willingness to commit to an extra experience outside of their normal duties and responsibilities. Two presentations were made to the administrative team and one to the faculty detailing the proposed research questions, purpose and participation. Once all members agreed to participate, they were all required to sign the Participant Consent Form (Appendix D).

They were given the pre-administration of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Scales (Appendix E). Upon receipt of Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the AR team began meeting in September after an informational meeting during pre-planning week. The team continued to meet once a month for two hours outside of formal interviews and experiential rounds included in the study.

The construction phase was a significant process as it marked the beginning of building a professional learning community. The team was presented information on the definition of an action research study, the conceptual theories associated with the problem the school was facing and possible interventions to help improve the past outcomes in student learning and teacher self-efficacy relating to CRT.

In August, once the team assembled, the initial survey process began along with focus interviews, and professional learning related to CRT commenced so that the AR team could have a context for the work while committing to the book study and AR process.

The AR team agreed that utilizing the book *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* by Zaretta Hammond, would be a valuable resource. As Hammond (2014) highlights in her book, “a growing body of research around closing the achievement gap has found that building brain power is the missing link to closing the achievement gap for underperforming culturally and linguistically diverse students” (National Study Group for the Affirmative Development of Academic Ability, 2004, p.3). This 2004 task force report was one of the motivators to the book, so it seemed to be an essential concept to explore for the AR team. This book, “set out to explicitly highlight the natural intersection between so-called “brain-based learning and culturally responsive teaching” (Hammond, 2014, p.3).

When considering the interventions for this AR case study, the impact that the interventions could have on the AR team personally and professionally were considered and evaluated prior to the study implementation. This context for the interventions allowed for AR team members to experience the impact of CRT in another school context, through interviews, discussions, and protocols. The embedded book study provided a comprehensive learning model for them to relate to while the experiential theory and adult learning theory were aligned through the study. The intentional interventions provided for full immersion of the interwoven entities of professional learning and CRT.

The study included quantitative measures using surveys and qualitative measures through individual and PLC discussions, experiential visitations, and interviews and reflective journaling. Due to the study being focused on a professional learning design, it began with a

review of data from the Standards Assessment Inventory (SAI) that informed the AR team about teacher views of local professional learning. The SAI had already been administered to the staff for the 2016-2017 school year.

Beginning in November, the taking action stage, the AR team disaggregated data added comments from the book study, along with details related to the design of the proposed CRT professional learning design, experiences from planned visits, and perception data. Team members used this information to take action related to developing the professional learning design for CRT. In December, the AR team participated in an online course for CRT and in January, the AR team had a reflective view of data, which was a pivotal month for focused interviews, interviews and analysis.

In January, the evaluating action stage, the post CRT efficacy scale was administered and concluded with the professional learning design approach, and individual interviews, which signaled the end of the cycle of data collection. Additionally, the end of the cycle PLC discussions at the AR meetings were about the action research process, learning and experiences that informed professional learning design.

After receiving all of the data collected, the AR team began to make recommendations related to the study. Throughout the AR study, several indicators caused for times of reflection due to the nature of the study and the discussion that ensued.

The AR team progressed to the second phase which focused on “qualitative open-ended interviews to collect detailed views,” from the teachers to further explain our findings and a plan for intervention (Creswell, 2014, p.19). The feedback received from this phase added context to the research questions, themes, and conclusions.

Consequently, the feedback is vital for the following interventions throughout the study: (a) cultural autobiography, (b) field experiences in schools and other outside experiences, (c) completion of the book study, and (d) close of the study in January with results and commentary related to focus interviews and post quantitative surveys. Table 10 details the interventions planned and outcomes that were proposed for the action research study.

Table 10

Intervention and Implementation Phases

| Date | Events |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Phase I: Constructing | |
| May 2017 – September 2017 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student academic data, student engagement data, professional learning (SAI) collection and analysis -AR team initial interviews, monthly focus meetings -AR team consent forms given and signed -Norm creating, goals and acceptance of calendar and process -Defining purpose and key problem for AR team to focus --eview of literature on Culturally Responsive Teaching -Pre survey administered: Culturally Responsive Efficacy Scale |
| Phase II: Planning | |
| August 2017 – September 2017 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Interventions designed utilizing literature review, school and system context and needs -Collaborate on book study review and discussion -Confirm interventions and calendar of events -CRT experiences & Cultural visits -Book schools and establish norms for visits with AR team |
| Phase III: Taking Action | |
| September 2017 - December 2017 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Experiential rounds at schools and locations (5) -Initial discussions related to CRT -AR team reflection of personal journey through CRT -Focus interviews at sessions related to case studies and professional learning offered |
| Phase IV: Evaluating Action | |
| January 2018 – February 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Final interviews and PLC discussions with AR Team -Evaluate interventions from focus and individual interviews -Utilize reflections of AR team interventions and their impact on a professional learning design -Post surveys administered-Culturally Responsive Efficacy Scale -Member Checking |

Throughout the action research cycle, the team participated in continuous personal and professional reflection that occurred during meetings and outside of meetings. They were asked to place reflections in their journals. This act was not consistent for all AR team members, but it provided a safe space for them to collect their thoughts. The AR team engaged in discussions where they began the “planning action” phase, which influenced the time for action research interventions (Table 11).

Table 11:

Detailed intervention and implementation plan.

| Intervention CRT Professional Learning | Action Research Team Activities Experiences | Anticipated Outcomes/Connection to Problem, Theoretical Framework | Connection to Problem and Theoretical Framework | Timeline | Data Collected From the Intervention |
|--|---|---|---|----------------------------------|---|
| Devise a CRT Professional Learning Plan for Staff | -Begin to create a vision and mission for the work of schools and CRT -Devise a professional learning plan for CRT -Inform AR team of academic and student engagement data and the sense of urgency to address CRT -Administer survey to AR team | AR Team will begin to understand the rationale and essentials for planning a professional learning program that includes the purpose, rationale and long-term effects of improving outcomes and closing achievement gaps among all subgroups. | Inequitable academic outcomes Experiential Theory Adult Learning Theory | August 2017- Septebmer 2017 | Artifacts: Vision and Mission, Professional Learning Plan, CRT Efficacy Scale; Focus Interviews |
| Journey of Cultural Competence | -Gain knowledge of the professional learning process of change -Create cultural autobiography -Discussion of differences, differentiation, perception and student learning needs | Adult Learning Theory Experiential Theory Researcher used the KASAB Theory of Change as a basis: Knowledge Attitudes Skills Affirmation Behavior | Experiential Theory Adult Learning Theory | August 2017- January 2018 | PLC discussions/Individual interviews; Cultural Autobiographies |
| Cultural Visits | -AR team will visit 3 schools (ES, MS, HS) -AR team will visit two places outside of their comfort zones to possibly add context to the cultural proficiency experience | AR team members will possibly be able to add reflections to journals AR team will possibly be able to add reflection to their design of the professional learning program for CRT | Experiential Theory Adult Learning Theory | September- October 2017 | PLC discussions Individual Interviews |
| Book Study- "Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain," by Zaretta Hammond | -AR team will read text to gain knowledge of CRT and its effects on student learning, neuroscience and cognitive science | AR team will gain knowledge in implementing instructional change in their classroom related to the tenets of independent learners and rigorous instruction | Experiential Theory | September 2017- November 2017 | PLC Discussions Individual Interviews |

Action Research Case Study Design

With an action research study such as this, it was essential that the AR team participate, provide insight and ensure that the interventions experienced were meaningful and aligned to the research questions. Additionally, the adult learning and experiential theory served as the conceptual theoretical framework that guided all of the interventions that the team experienced. Essentially, the AR team continuously offered ample feedback before and after each meeting by reviewing, the agenda and modifying where needed. The intervention plan (Table 11) provides an analysis of the project and the process that directed the team to collect data and scaffold their learning through the process that was based on empirical research.

Criteria of Selected Interventions

The experience of participating in a CRT professional learning experience was an intervention in itself, because it served to be the main thrust of the action research. Additionally, the ability to participate in various experiences added substantial opportunities to reflect on interventions for themselves and future participants. The interventions of this action research project were value-laden, formally discussed and collaborated upon to be able to gauge participation and reflection. “The goals of action research deliberately blur the lines of terms such as expert, participant, and researcher (Herr & Anderson, 2014, p.150). Collaborating on our next moves as a team was a recurring event. The need to have a “pedagogy of collegiality,” was essential to the deep courageous conversations and experiences that the group participated in to transform their thinking and their practice (Cahill, Cerecer, & Bradley, 2010).

One area that was a major concern for me as their principal, supervisor, and inside researcher was the willingness for the AR team to be honest, transparent, and give answers that show respect (Butin, 2010). I was not concerned that they would offer untruths, but “that they

would want their answers to be more socially acceptable and in general mute perspectives that are not culturally sanctioned,” (Butin, 2010, p. 97). Therefore, it was essential for me to report this fact throughout our six months together and especially before the formal individual interviews. I realize that my “gender, race, and ethnicity, tone and body language” all would affect how individuals would respond to the questions posed (Butin, 2010, p. 97). I made sure that we were in a comfortable environment and that they received the questions ahead of time after the final AR team review to assure that they were comfortable and prepared.

After the interventions were discussed and agreed upon, the AR team realized that they *had to be safe but real*, as one AR team member stated. The need to be cautious was obvious, but if this team was going to be informative to future schools and researchers, there needed to be some willingness to be vulnerable and open to feedback on their own perceptions and assumptions regarding race, culture, and diversity. This was a difficult reality for the team, evidenced by their norm conversation, but as the months progressed and team became more cohesive, the need to push their comfort levels during intervention experiences was evident.

They wanted to truly not just *walk the talk* but *talk the walk* so that they could assist in duplicating this experience to others. They were able to experience the interventions as adults because they were “doing things concretely, and because there was constant processing, of how well they were progressing, they became what Fullan (2016) calls *accountability literate*. This accountability to the purpose drove the team to stay connected to the experiences to provide applicable reflective data at the conclusion of the study to transform classrooms.

Finally, the interventions had to be employed in a manner that allowed for all team members to be vested and able to be part of, therefore I was very cognizant of attendance and time that needed to be considered for each activity and experience planned.

Support from the Literature

One of the major themes of this action research focused on a professional learning community and how it would transform teachers' efficacy and understanding of the CRT approach. When you are attempting to not just transform personal and professional lives on race, and diversity, we used this insight as a basis for our alignment of to keep in mind that:

Quality teaching requires strong professional learning communities. Collegial interchange, not isolation, must become the norm for teachers. Communities of learning can no longer be utopian; they must become the building blocks that establish a new foundation for America's schools (National Commission on Teaching, 2003 p. 17).

Experiences such as the writing of their cultural autobiography, protocols, book study, and visits to various locations all added to the literature related to experiential theory by supporting AR team members' connection to their attitudes and beliefs.

Through many revisions of the problem, topics, and research questions, I was able to consider how this study would be implemented with fidelity using interventions supported in the literature. This plan allowed for conversations related to data collection to ensure information was synthesized in a coherent and logical manner. This study was defined as an action research case study that implemented quantitative and qualitative methods to aid in improving the treatment of marginalized groups, that being students of color who were not performing at optimal levels.

Defining Terms during Intervention

Defining the use of terms in this action research study was essential; therefore, as I conceptualized the framework for this study, I sought to identify key terms and convey their meaning to the AR team throughout our monthly sessions. I focused on defining vocabulary

utilized in the CRT approach and conversation in research that I felt best suited our work and conceptual understanding at the time of the study.

The word achievement gap has had its turn in education sectors and since delving into research regarding this study, Ladson-Billings coined the phrase *education debt*. In her landmark article titled, “From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding Achievement in U.S. Schools,” she explained that this term should be used in place of the word ‘achievement gap’. She explained that, “the historical, economic, sociopolitical and moral decisions and policies that characterize our society have created an education debt” (Billings-Ladson, G., 2006, p.5). As a result, these long-standing deficits have caused the gaps in student learning results. Ladson-Billings (2006) challenges scholars to think more critically about the fact that many study the different races, but rarely have the remedies to solve their problems. Consequently, the need to build more equitable opportunities with racially and linguistically diverse students, continuously poses a sense of urgency in schools across the nation. “In order to preserve and promote a democracy, we, as educators, are intensely aware of the need for all our students to have both access and opportunity for educational equity” (Colorado Department of Education, 2010.) The challenge that many schools face is bridging gaps between societal issues that affect students and staff with perceptions of racial difference and perspective. “Harassment and prejudice in the areas of race, ethnicity, culture, lifestyle, language, socioeconomics, religion, sexual orientation, gender, and ability among others, are social and community issues which must be addressed not just in the community but as well in schools (Department of Education, 2010). Inequities will not change overnight, however a concerted effort among school personnel to help create a counter narrative for the most underserved students is essential.

Equity was defined as access to material and human resources in proportion to needs. Once disparities have been identified, if educational leaders proceed with equal allocation of resources, the disparities continue. Equitable allocation responds to identified needs (Lindsey et al., 2009). Singleton (2015) views equity as a moral imperative eliminate racial achievement disparities. For the purposes of group alignment and definition, the group was given the following definition of equity: “Raising the achievement of all students, while narrowing the gaps between the highest and lowest performing students, and eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories” (Singleton, G. 2015, p. 55). In short, the teachers who understand this concept are willing to seek knowledge of inequities and integrate pathways to dismantle barriers that may prevent equitable student outcomes.

Equality is different from equity where the “processes, structures and ideologies are not addressed and dismantled” (Singleton, G. 2015). Equality is a mindset that everyone has the same opportunities and experiences. However, “race and experiences based on race, are not equal” (Singleton, G. 2015 p. 56). To relate to schools, equality does not guarantee that all students will get what they need; it could offer the same access to books, technology and environment for example, but not equitable learning outcomes. Initially, we collaborated to build an understanding of equality and equity utilizing the highly publicized image from the work of the Interaction Institute of Social Change (2016) worked with artist Angus Maguire to create a visual that helped to conceptualize the differences in the two commonly confused and contrasting words.

Culturally Responsive Teaching has been defined in several places in academia as a compilation of thoughts and ideas from various scholars. Gay & Howard (2000), theorists of the study, describe CRT as

using the cultural characteristics, experiences, perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively...when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly” (p.14).

When CRT is used daily in teaching, it becomes validating and affirming because it builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school, and also acknowledges the legitimacy of cultural heritages of different ethnic groups (Gay, 2010). Furthermore, CRT transforms teaching styles to include instructional strategies that incorporate student-learning styles and multicultural resources and materials while driving students toward independent learning.

When considering the impact of bias on teacher perception, it proved to be a major part of this study and how it influenced their teaching style and relationships. Some may think they are not biased resulting in not forming any opinions of others and rather being neutral regarding concepts in society and the world. However, implicit bias “refers to the unconscious attitudes and stereotypes that shape our responses to certain groups (p. 29) especially around race, class, and language. Implicit bias operates involuntarily, often without one’s awareness or intentional control. Implicit bias is not implicit racism (Hammond, 2014, p. 29).” Not to be confused with implicit racism, implicit bias is based in neuroscience and related to the brain’s efforts to process large amounts of data, by using a shortcut known as stereotyping (Hammond, 2014). The different experiences that we are exposed to go unnoticed and can be considered so

“normal” that the bias messages received can often go unnoticed or unchecked within the larger society (Kirwan Institute, 2013).

Inquiry

Inquiry was a mainstay throughout this AR experience at Hillside Elementary in the Ubuntu School District. It required that the AR team constantly be curious not just about the theory and the learning acquired, but also about how they are personally navigating through this problem solving process with their students. The action research process included addressing issues related to teacher efficacy and engagement that could lead to higher rates of student achievement in the classroom. Incorporating a quantitative and qualitative analysis of meeting transcripts and interviews with AR team participants proved to be insightful for those seeking answers to the validity of using the culturally responsive teaching approach.

School Team Intervention

The AR team was diverse and comprised of school staff that experienced different CRT professional learning experiences. All AR team members indicated that they never participated in formal CRT training prior to this action research case study, they participated in 10 hours of training that provided opportunity for rich discussion and reflection about historical events and current issues facing racially and linguistically diverse students. Additionally, they received resources, podcasts, and articles to enrich their learning. In September, the team met to formally begin the action research process. “Any group that meets regularly or that is trying to ‘do business’ needs to identify its existing norms or develop new norms” (Richardson, 1999, p. 1). Therefore, to build cohesion with such challenging work, creating norms was one of the experiences the team committed to as their first intervention. Most important in the process was the need for the team to feel comfortable and trust one another if they were to commit to

such sensitive work for the study. Norm setting created an ideal segue into more conversations that are courageous. After discussion of applicable norms, the team would review them at each meeting. Findings related to this experience will be included in Chapter 5.

Furthermore, the school AR team focused on their personal adult needs and how their needs related to their experiences during monthly meetings. The professional learning was an experience in itself, where I would teach them applicable CRT strategies and embed experiences that helped to deepen their learning. After each experience, they would be able to reflect as team about the experiences and interventions best suited to their learning needs. The AR team was able to collectively experience CRT strategies as adult participants while reflecting as action researchers as to whether those particular experiences deepened their understanding.

Action research is inquiry that is done by or with insiders to an organization or community, but never to or on them. It is a reflective process, but is different from isolated, spontaneous reflection in that it is deliberately and systematically undertaken... (Herr & Anderson, 2014, p.3)

Monthly Action Research Team Meetings

Every AR team member was given the meeting dates prior to committing to the AR research cycle. The two-hour meetings were conducted in September, October, November and January, with an online meeting for December that the team felt would be a good idea due to the busy time of year, and a possible data point for how an online meeting could be considered for the study. I created Powerpoints for every meeting and reminded the team of monthly meetings with an agenda and purpose for the meeting via email. At monthly meetings, the AR team would receive a small amount of professional learning in CRT with pertinent data conversations, research, and book study discussions. The team decided to sit at different table

groups for every meeting to be able to converse with different participants and receive different viewpoints.

We spent time planning the professional learning for our culminating project at each meeting, and used the feedback and reflections to guide the plan. Finally, we would end each meeting confirming our affiliation to the experiences from the session with confirmation of what was left to do for the next meeting. I led the AR team through various experiences to connect to the research related to Kolb's Experiential theory approach. The team experiences were as followed:

Table 12

CRT Professional Learning Experiences

| Experience | Details | Reference |
|--|--|---|
| Norm Creation Process September Meeting | All AR team members participated in a norm generating process. | Learning Forward (2013). Creating Norms. The Learning System, Summer 2013, 8(4) |
| Book Study | Every AR team was given a text to utilize to learn about CRT and its impact on student learning. | Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain (Hammond, 2014) |
| Reflective Journals | Each AR team member was given a journal to record perspectives, thoughts, and reflections related to CRT. | Researcher request |
| Picture Perception Walk September Meeting | AR Team was given various black and white pictures from different areas and they were asked to offer their perception of the pictures to one another | Walker, C. (2017) Picture Perception Walk; Presented at a Leadership Conference breakout session on 6/7/17 |
| Cultural Autobiography October-November Meeting | All AR team members were required to write a cultural autobiography related to their personal cultural journey | Terrell, R. D., & Lindsey, R. B. (2008). Culturally proficient leadership: The personal journey begins within. Corwin Press. |
| Liar's Poker Protocol October Meeting | Participants are given a deck of cards and the Aces are high. After 6-7 minutes, participants are to connect to the treatment they experienced being an Ace or not. The goal is to reflect on the treatment they felt and how it could connect to schools. | National School Reform Developed by Debbie Bambino from memory of the activity modeled by Nancy Mohr Retrieved from http://www.nsrharmony.org/ |
| <i>My Name is Jorge</i> reading with Spanish speaking AR team member November Meeting | A book written in English and translated to Spanish. After reading in Spanish first, then in English, participants are led to engage in how being a Non-English speaker feels. listening experience | Medina, J. (2014). <i>My name is Jorge: On both sides of the river</i> . Highlights Press. |
| Video of Chapter 1 discussion November Meeting | Participants were able to review a summary from the author related to the text. | Hammond, Z. (2014). Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain |
| Visits to schools with different demographics Ongoing | A seven-member team visited 2 Elementary schools in the same district, 1 elementary school in a neighboring urban school district, and 1 middle school and high school in the home district | Researcher request |
| Visits to other cultural experiences and venues Ongoing | AR team members were asked to go alone or with a team member to a place outside of their comfort zone or cultural context to reflect on their engagement and experiences. | Researcher request |
| Privilege Walk | AR team members participated in an experience based on lived and non-lived experiences according to several questions | Adapted from Peggy McIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" by Dave Stark |

School Visits in another Context

Seven of the AR members visited five schools as an intervention. They had the opportunity to visit schools that had different demographics located in dissimilar areas of the district and community. “A number of research studies have noted a strong relationship between peer observation and professional development (Beaty, 1998; Race, 2001; Allen, 2002; Bell, 2002). Consequently, the decision to include this intervention supported the literature and the fact that an education that has this process of peer observation encourages and supports reflection will have important benefits in terms of the refinement of teaching skills (Martin & Double, 1998).

Initial Data Collection

This mixed methods study’s purpose was to test the theory of experiential theory and adult learning theory with CRT professional learning. AR team members began the quantitative measurement of the action research process by measuring their self-efficacy which related to the first research question: What are teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and attitudes relative to CRT and how do those beliefs and attitudes influence their teaching? The examination of efficacy was important to this study because it was hoped it would be possible to identify characteristics and factors contributing to significant differences in attitudes and beliefs.

The CRTES Likert-scale instrument administered consisted of three separate surveys. AR team members were first required to rate their confidence in their ability to successfully accomplish tasks related to CRT teaching. The second survey required them to rate their degree of certainty that a behavior would lead to a specified CRT outcome. By determining a degree of confidence ranging from 0 (no confidence at all) to 100 (completely confident). The

AR team responses to each question were summed to generate a total score that ranged from zero to 4000. AR team members that had higher scores on the CRTSE scale revealed more confidence in their ability to those with lower scores.

Final Data Collection

At the final meeting in January, the 14 AR team members were given the three post CRT Efficacy Scales and time to discuss a professional learning plan. At the November meeting, they began preliminary conversations and were able to solidify their thoughts for data collection. To correlate to the administration of the pre-assessment CRT Efficacy scale surveys, the AR team members completed them independently. Once collected, I entered the pre and post CRT efficacy scale scores into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. I calculated mean scores for each question and subsets of efficacy scores that also measured their efficacy for CRT outcomes and classroom management. Responses from the Likert-Scale survey were summed for both administrations to tabulate growth from the beginning to the conclusion of the action research process. With post scores, organized for each question, on each CRT survey, a range was created that would provide high and low levels of efficacy results. Results and findings will be detailed in Chapter 5.

A week after the last AR meeting, I scheduled individual interviews with the action research members over two weeks in January. Each meeting was in the school's data room or my office and lasted between 20 and 40 minutes. Each meeting was audio recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were sent to audiotranscription.org to aid in timely feedback to collect codes, categories, and themes.

In February, I offered all AR team members an opportunity to attend a member-checking meeting to view the findings and data, of which nine participated. The team also received their individual sheets with their scores and growth.

Chapter Summary

This chapter established and described the school context for the case study and essential elements that aided in its design. A pivotal point for this action research is the AR team and how they contributed to the study. The AR team's ability to connect to their personal and professional journey provided data that related to all three-research questions. More importantly, as stakeholders, they were able to view the implementation of CRT tenets from their perspective. Not only did their positions add full disclosure, but their race, gender, and years of experience made for rich conversations and interviews that provided ample data to review and report. The interventions detailed in this chapter were a compilation of ideas offered to the team and offered experiential adult learning which aligned to the conceptual theoretical framework of the study. The story and outcomes were detailed in a timely fashion to provide a view of the various interchanges that led the study for closure. The AR team felt that this experience transformed their thinking. Chapter 5 will review the findings of this action research study.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

This action research case study addressed the impact of professional learning on the learning of culturally responsive teaching. The purpose of this action research case study was to identify and analyze the influence that professional learning and experiences had on participants' personal and professional growth and self-efficacy. The study was in pursuit of answers to the following questions:

1. What are teachers' pedagogical beliefs and attitudes relative to CRT and how do those beliefs and attitudes influence their teaching?
2. How does participation in a PLC impact teachers' conceptual understanding and use of CRT strategies in the classroom?
3. What does an AR team learn through the use of CRT in the classroom?

This chapter will report qualitative and quantitative findings from the action research case study related to each research question (Table 13). Findings were determined by analyzing data from the three Culturally Responsive Efficacy scales, PLC discussions and AR team interviews, and discussion recordings. Additionally, I utilized data garnered from the intervention experiences, research journals, notes from monthly meetings, and member checking. The study utilized in-depth interviews to gain insight into how the educators conceptualized their self-efficacy toward culturally responsive teaching and their understanding of what it meant to be culturally responsive. The AR team members openly expressed their perspectives, their experiences, and

how their teaching and leadership practices were influenced by their professional learning during the study. This chapter comprises responses from the AR team members to associate their voices and perspective to the overall context of the study.

Table 13

Summary of Findings

| Research Questions | Findings |
|---|---|
| Q1. What are teachers' pedagogical beliefs and attitudes relative to CRT and how do those beliefs and attitudes influence their teaching? | <p>Theme 1- Personal views of implicit bias affect teacher perceptions of student abilities</p> <p>Theme 2- Student behaviors are viewed more positively when teachers are equipped with the understanding of the culturally responsive teaching approach</p> <p>Theme 3- CRT helps teachers to increase their sense of self-efficacy to engage students academically, socially and emotionally</p> <p>Theme 4- The cultural autobiography experience can be an experience while learning CRT that strengthens the learning of the CRT approach</p> <p>Theme 5- An increased awareness of privilege based on the intersectionality of race, gender and class were revealed.</p> <p>Theme 6-Perceptions of the home-school connection between teachers and parents with implementing culturally appropriate strategies require support and further professional learning</p> |
| Q2. How does participation in a PLC impact teachers' conceptual understanding and use of CRT strategies in the classroom? | <p>Theme 1- Experiential learning contributes to higher application, understanding and connectedness to various races of students</p> <p>Theme 2-Creating a brave space with norms for Culturally Responsive Teaching professional learning can create a positive environment for adult learners to engage</p> <p>Theme 3-Culturally Responsive Teaching can help teachers understand that equality and equity are not synonymous.</p> <p>Theme 1- Culturally Responsive Teaching means being responsive and actionable</p> |
| Q3. What does an AR team learn through the use of CRT in the classroom? | <p>Theme 2- Culturally Responsive Teaching is about empowering students to learn differently to promote more independent learning opportunities</p> <p>Theme 3- Action Research involves adult learners becoming more engaged collaboratively in creating culturally responsive learning spaces for students</p> <p>Theme 4- Action research is most effective when all team members are open to varying perspectives</p> |

Quantitative Data Findings

Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale Results

Data from the Culturally Responsive Teaching Efficacy Scale revealed interesting self-efficacy outcomes for the AR team members' beliefs at the end of the professional learning intervention. The following tables will show individual and team scores where they grew with the professional learning intervention during the action research process.

All AR team members completed the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale (CRTSE) (Siwatu, 2007), Culturally Responsive Outcome Efficacy Scale (Siwatu, 2007) and Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy Scale (Siwatu, 2015), used with permission. These Likert-type scaled questionnaires were chosen after I researched surveys that had already been widely used and tested for validity and reliability. Originally, the surveys were administered to pre-service teachers and mentor teachers. I chose to use this scale because several AR team members informed me that they had not received culture or diversity courses in their formal schooling and it offered data related to their self-efficacy. Additionally, it served as a formative and summative measurement for the change in their self-efficacy beliefs.

According to Siwatu (2007), the CRT self-efficacy scale was designed with the intent of (a) deepening the field's understanding of the nature of preservice teachers' CRTSE beliefs (b) identifying the types of culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy forming experiences that preservice teachers encountered during preservice education programs and (3) examining preservice teachers' beliefs regarding the influence the self-efficacy forming experiences on the development of their CRTSE beliefs.

The first CRTSE scale used in the study consisted of 40 Likert-type items. AR team members were asked to rate how confident they were in their ability to engage in specific culturally responsive teaching practices (e.g., I am able to build a sense of trust with my students) by indicating a degree of confidence from 0 (no confidence at all) to 100 (completely confident). Each AR team member's response to the 40 questions were totaled to produce a score that ranged from 0 to 4000. Where AR team members scored higher, it indicated higher confidence in their ability compared to those with lower scores (Siwatu, 2009). I collected the pre and post surveys and compared their growth from the beginning of the action research process to the end for all three efficacy scales. The three CRT efficacy scales revealed 4-10% differences for all AR team members after their participation on the AR team (Figure 5). However, the individual scores showed that many members increased or decreased by a much more significant percentage.

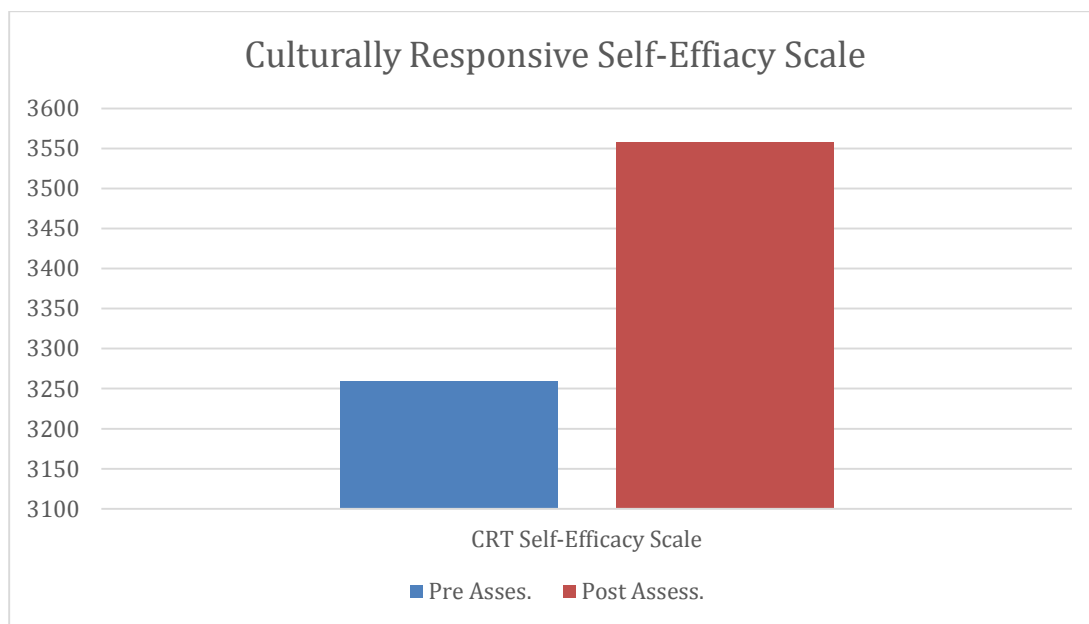


Figure 5. Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale Results

CRTSE Findings:

- A descriptive analysis of this CRT Efficacy scale indicates that the AR team average score increased by 9% from the pre to post administration.
- The AR team began the intervention by exhibiting less efficacy in their ability to complete tasks related to CRT.

The following tables shows the five questions that the AR team scored highest and lowest in their efficacy beliefs for CRT. To maintain confidentiality pseudonyms and numbers were not purposefully included. However, the ability to view the various degrees in self-efficacy changed per person is data worth noting for this study. Below is another view that displays how each member increased or decreased in their self-efficacy from the beginning of the professional learning on CRT to the conclusion.

Table 14

Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale (CRTSE) (N=13)

| Pre- Assessment | Post-Assessment | Difference in Points | Difference in Percentage (Rounded) |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2590 | 3460 | +870 | 25% |
| 2870 | 3080 | +210 | 6% |
| 2720 | 3711 | +991 | 26% |
| 3170 | 3545 | +375 | 11% |
| 3610 | 3860 | +250 | 6% |
| 3070 | 3420 | +350 | 10% |
| 2760 | 3260 | +500 | 15% |
| 4060 | 4060 | No change | 0% |
| 3690 | 3030 | -660 | -21% |
| 3896 | 3595 | -301 | 8% |
| 3330 | 3480 | +150 | 4% |
| 3040 | 3810 | +770 | 20% |
| 3555 | 3940 | +385 | 10% |
| N/A | 3110 | N/A | N/A |

Individual CRTSE Findings:

- Overall AR team efficacy total scores on the CRTES increased from for 11 out of 13 AR team members from August 2017 to January 2018.
- One AR team member remained the same with no change and one team member on this scale decreased by 21%.

The original development of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Efficacy scale (CRTOE) was created using the Culturally Responsive Teaching Competences (Siwatu, 2006a) and Bandura's (1977) definition of outcome expectancies: "a person's estimate that a given behavior will lead to certain outcome" (p. 193). This 26-item scale was designed to assess teachers' beliefs that engaging in CRT practices will have positive student and classroom outcomes (Siwatu, 2006). Participants with higher scores were assumed to believe in the positive outcomes correlated to CRT as compared to lower scores of those who do not believe in the prospective outcomes (Siwatu, 2006). AR team members had this survey attached second in sequence to the other two scales, after the CRTSE scale (Figure 6).

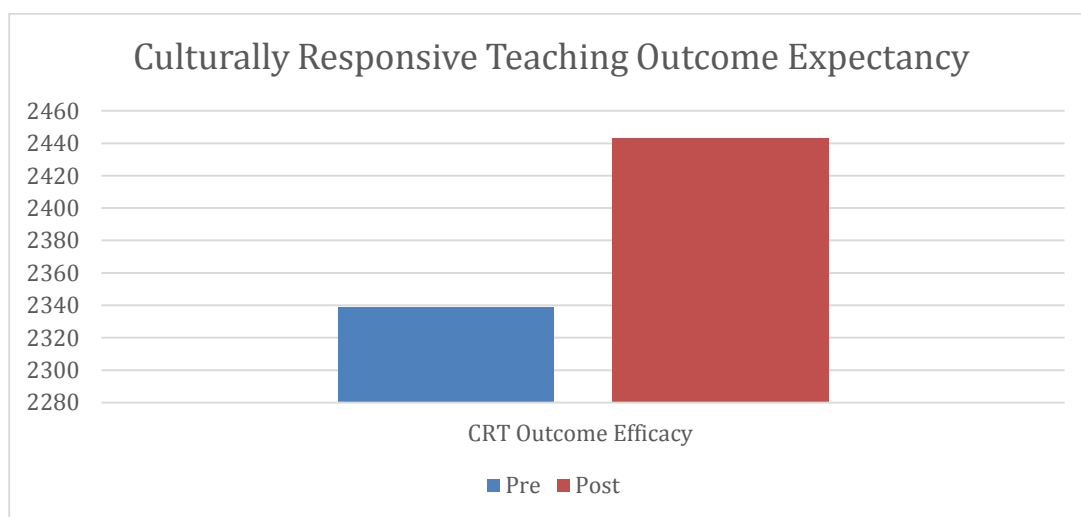


Figure 6. Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Expectancy Results

CRTOES Findings:

- A descriptive analysis of this CRTOES scale indicates that the AR team grew slightly by 4% from the pre to post administration.
- The AR team grew in their certainty that the behaviors detailed would lead to specified outcomes

Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Efficacy Scale

Table 15

Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome

| Pre- Assessment | Post-Assessment | Point difference | Percentage Difference (Rounded) |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1870 | 2248 | +378 | 20% |
| 1870 | 2410 | +540 | 28% |
| 2225 | 2528 | +303 | 12% |
| 2200 | 2275 | +75 | 3% |
| 2380 | 2570 | +190 | 7% |
| 2425 | 2400 | -25 | 1% |
| 2470 | 2560 | +90 | 3% |
| 2580 | 2600 | +20 | .77% |
| 2280 | 2430 | +150 | 6% |
| 2540 | 2400 | -140 | 6% |
| 2520 | 2080 | -440 | -21% |
| 2540 | 2600 | +60 | 2% |
| 2510 | 2530 | +20 | .79% |
| N/A | 2530 | N/A | N/A |

Individual CRTOES Findings:

- Overall AR team efficacy total scores on the CRTES increased from for 12 out of 13 AR team members from August 2017 to January 2018.
- One AR team member on this scale decreased by 21%.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy Scale (CRCMSE)

The original development of the Culturally Responsive Management Self-efficacy scale (CRCMSE) was created due to an alarming awareness of differential administration of discipline for African American and Hispanic students (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Skiba, Michael, Nardo & Peterson, 2002). Researchers of the Harvard Civil Rights Project (2000) reported that although African American students make up 17% of U.S. public school enrollment, they constitute approximately 32% of those who are suspended. With Black students being 2 to 3 times as likely to be suspended from school than white students (Wallace, Goodkind Wallace & Bachman, 2008), a trend referred to as the discipline gap has ensued (Monroe, 2005). All of these facts have significant implications on student learning. This scale was connected to two theories: Culturally Responsive Classroom management practices (CRCM) and social cognitive theory. Participants with higher scores believe in the positive outcomes correlated to CRT as compared to lower scores of those who do not believe in the prospective outcomes (Siwatu, 2006). AR team members had this 15-item survey attached as the last administered scale after the CRTOE scale (Figure 7, Table 18).

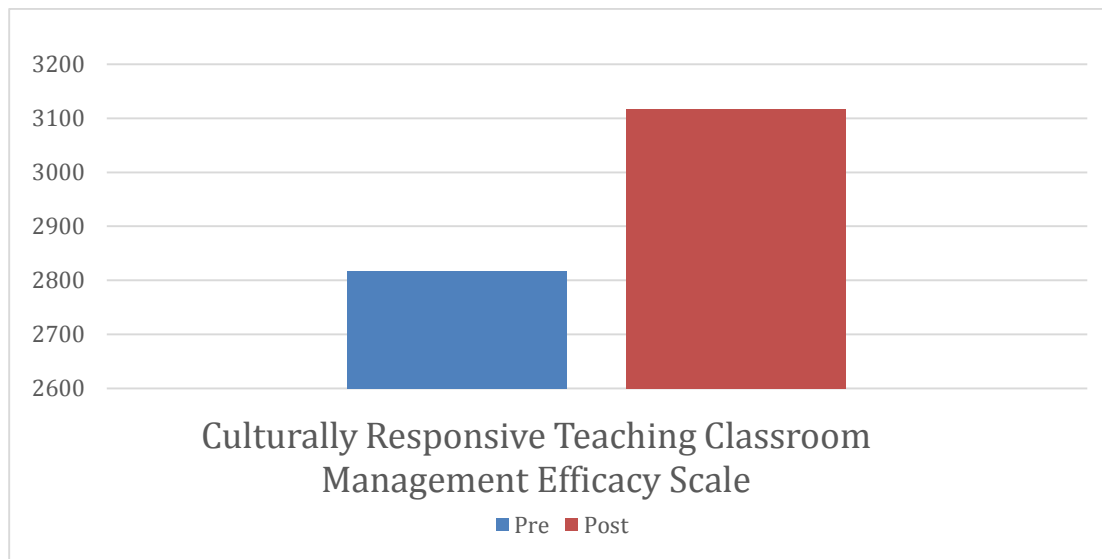


Figure 7. Culturally Responsive Teaching Classroom Management Efficacy Scale

CRCME Findings:

- A descriptive analysis of this CRTTOES scale indicates that the AR team grew by 10% from the pre to post administration.
- The AR team grew in their ability to successfully accomplish classroom management tasks

Table 16:

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy Scale (CRCMSE)

| Pre- Assessment | Post-Assessment | Difference in Points | Difference in Percentage (Rounded) |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2360 | 2780 | +420 | 15% |
| 2300 | 3020 | +720 | 23% |
| 1860 | 3088 | +1,228 | 39% |
| 2620 | 2995 | +375 | 13% |
| 3240 | 3410 | +170 | 5% |
| 3035 | 3210 | +175 | 5% |
| 2510 | 2880 | +370 | 13% |
| 3480 | 3490 | +10 | 0.29% |
| 2704 | 2960 | +256 | 9% |
| 3263 | 3150 | -113 | 4% |
| 3120 | 2790 | -330 | 12% |
| 3150 | 3310 | +160 | 5% |
| 3000 | 3440 | +440 | 13% |
| N/A | 3070 | N/A | N/A |

Individual CRCMSE Scale Findings:

- A descriptive analysis of this CRCMSE scale indicates that the AR team grew from 0.29% to 39% from the pre to post administration.
- The AR team grew in their ability to successfully accomplish classroom management tasks

The study involved the collection and analysis of quantitative data that assisted me in answering research question one that related to the attitudes and beliefs of the AR team members. Furthermore, it helped the AR team members understand areas where they were strong and areas that needed change in their areas of self-efficacy and confidence in relating to CRT characteristics. The findings below from the quantitative phase of the study provide a view into the nature of their beliefs for each scale administered at post administration in

January. The rationale for highlighting this data is in hopes of revealing the variances among the top five highest and lowest efficacy scores that the AR team scored. These results were one of the most compelling data points for this case study. The reason, in part, was that it offered a pathway of discussion of areas of strength and weakness during member checking for the AR team. The results were also critical in supporting themes and possible professional learning opportunities for future studies and PLCs for CRT.

Table 17

Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Variance

| Culturally Responsive Classroom Self-Efficacy Scale (CRTSE) (41 Questions on a 0-100 Likert Scale: 0 No Confidence At All- 50 Moderately Confident-100 Completely Confident) Highest Efficacy Scores I am able to: | Results |
|---|----------------|
| Develop a personal relationship with my students | 2480 |
| Revising instructional material to include a better representation of the students' cultural group will foster positive self-images | 2470 |
| Help students feel like they are important members of the classroom | 2455 |
| Establish positive home-school relations | 2448 |
| Use a variety of teaching methods | 2420 |
| Lowest Efficacy Scales I am able to: | |
| Implement strategies to minimize the effect of the mismatch between my students' home culture and the school culture | 1865 |
| Praise English Language Learners for their accomplishments using a phrase in their native language | 1840 |
| Teach students about their cultures contributions to society | 1795 |
| Teach students about their cultures contributions to science | 1770 |
| Design a lesson that shows how cultural groups have made use of mathematics | 1630 |

Table 18

Cultural Responsive Classroom Outcome Expectancy Scale Variance

| Culturally Responsive Classroom Outcome Expectancy Scale (CRTOES) (26 Questions on a 0-100 Likert Scale) 0 Entirely Uncertain- 50 Not Too Certain-100 Completely Certain Highest Expectancy Scores | | Results |
|---|--|---------|
| A positive teacher-student relationship can be established by building a sense of trust in my students | | 1395 |
| Students' self-esteem can be enhanced when their cultural background is valued by the teacher | | 1385 |
| Providing English Language Learners with visual aids will enhance their understanding of assignments | | 1379 |
| Connecting my students' prior knowledge with new incoming information will lead to deeper learning | | 1375 |
| Helping students from diverse cultural backgrounds succeed in school will increase their confidence in their academic ability | | 1365 |
| Students will develop an appreciation for their culture when they are taught about the contributions their culture has made over time | | 1365 |
| Lowest Expectancy Scores | | |
| Student attendance will increase when a personal relationship between the teacher and students has been developed | | 1295 |
| Changing the structure of the classroom so that is compatible with my students' home culture will increase their motivation to come to class. | | 1285 |
| Establishing positive home-school relations will increase parental involvement | | 1285 |
| Acknowledging the ways that the school culture is different from my students' home culture will minimize the likelihood of discipline problems | | 1245 |
| Conveying the message that parents are an important part of the classroom will increase parent participation | | 1245 |
| The frequency that students' abilities are misdiagnosed will decrease when their standardized test scores are interpreted with caution | | 1165 |

Table 19

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy Scale Variance

| Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy Scale (CRCMSE) Scale (35 Questions on a 0-100 Likert Scale) 0 No Confidence At All 50 Moderately Confident-100 Completely Confident Highest Expectancy Scores I am able to: | |
|---|------|
| Clearly communicate classroom policies | 1365 |
| Encourage students to work together on classroom tasks, when appropriate | 1355 |
| Structure the learning environment so that all students feel like a valued member of the learning community | 1340 |
| Establish high behavioral expectations that encourages students to produce high quality work | 1330 |
| Use culturally responsive discipline practices that alter the behavior of a student who is being defiant | 1305 |
| Lowest Efficacy Scores | |
| Communicate with students' parents whose primary language is not English | 1175 |
| Develop an effective classroom management plan based on my understanding of students' family background | 1165 |
| Implement an intervention that minimizes a conflict that occurs when a students' culturally based behavior is not consistent with school norms | 1145 |
| Restructure the curriculum so that every child can succeed, regardless of their academic history | 1130 |
| Use culturally appropriate methods to relate to parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds | 1120 |

Summary of AR Team Members Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Beliefs

The tables above much more detailed results, however, there were some highlights that were worth mentioning to provide context and summary as the quantitative portion is concluded.

Strengths.

- AR team members understood the value of trust, teacher/student relationships and building an appreciation for their students' culture
- They believed they could establish home school relations, but may have needed development in this area
- The revision of instructional materials and use of differentiation in teaching was understood
- The positive impact of CRT practices on improving discipline was conceptualized
- The importance of explaining and modeling classroom management procedures was evident

Opportunities.

- Teaching students about their cultures' contribution to society, academia, etc. was noted
- Connecting students' home culture to school culture
- Bridging parent relationships to build home-school engagement
- Acknowledging the ways that the school culture is different from my students' home culture will minimize the likelihood of discipline problems
- Implement an intervention that minimizes a conflict that occurs when a students' culturally based behavior is not consistent with school norms

This AR team experienced just 10 hours of formal CRT professional learning whose purpose designed for a short portion of learning experiences and time to plan for future work. Despite this process of action research and the ability to read one book related to CRT, there

was still improvement overall. The small effect made a large impact that more hours and intentional professional learning could add even more additional growth.

The action research team discussed at the member-checking meeting that they had difficulty with the following statement, “My certainty that this behavior will lead to a specified outcome: The frequency that students’ abilities are misdiagnosed will decrease when their standardized test scores are interpreted with caution.

The statement was reviewed with an explanation that was reviewed for further understanding, resulting in why it may have been so low. The AR team did not discuss this, during the AR cycle, but it is recommended that it discussed in future professional learning.

AR Team members had various definitions of culturally responsive teaching. A question during the interview asked them to define what they felt culturally responsive teaching was. When reviewing all of their definitions and member checking the summative definition, they viewed the best understanding of the culturally responsive teaching pedagogy with the following characteristics after completing the action research experience:

- The acknowledgement that race, gender, ethnicity and class can affect students’ ability to function positively in a traditional school setting.
- A teacher must adapt their instruction to embrace the differences in their classroom.
- Teachers of diverse students believe that it is their job to work to be proactive in learning students’ culture, learning styles and needs.
- CRT is an approach to making all students not only feel welcome, but also included and engaged.

- Be conscious of your own bias and your attitude toward students and how negative and deficit minded thoughts could negatively affect student learning and student comfort in learning.

Some poignant comments from team members during individual interviews stated:

I feel that culturally responsive teaching not only recognizes the culture of our students but incorporates it into the fabric of our teaching. By incorporating the culture of our students, we are able to create the relationships that are needed for all students to be successful.

Culturally responsive teaching is taking that knowledge and moving forward with that and thinking about teaching and generating equity within the classroom and teaching style to help benefit the learner.

It is more than just presenting the accomplishment of each culture at the designated time and that school year because it is on the calendar...

Research Question 1: Pedagogical Beliefs and Attitudes

To determine the changes in pedagogical beliefs and attitudes that were changed by participating in this action research study, I utilized a mixed method measure. Quantitatively, the 14 AR team members completed the three different types of CRT efficacy scales (CRTES, CRTOES and CRCMES) in August and January to compare growth. CRT efficacy scale mean scores were compared to the focus group discussion results, experiential surveys and interviews to triangulate the data. In analyzing the CRT results, the following themes developed:

- **Theme 1:** Personal views of implicit bias affect teacher perceptions of student abilities

- **Theme 2:** Student behaviors are viewed more positively when teachers are equipped with the understanding of the culturally responsive teaching approach
- **Theme 3:** CRT helps teachers to increase their sense of self-efficacy to engage students academically, socially and emotionally
- **Theme 4:** The cultural autobiography experience can be an experience while learning CRT that strengthens the learning of the CRT approach
- **Theme 5:** An increased awareness of privilege based on the intersectionality of race, gender and class were revealed
- **Theme 6:** Perceptions of the home-school connection between teachers and parents with implementing culturally appropriate strategies require support and further professional learning

Research Question 1: What are teachers' pedagogical beliefs and attitudes relative to CRT and how do those beliefs and attitudes influence their teaching?

Theme 1: Personal Views of Implicit Bias Affect Teacher Perceptions of Student Abilities

The first theme identified for question one was that personal views of implicit bias affect teacher perceptions of student abilities "Psychologists estimate that our brains are capable of processing approximately 11 million bits of information every second" (Norretranders, 1999). This information informs implicit bias and how it can affect how individuals' unconscious system contributes to teachers' actions and decisions (Staats, 2016).

"The racial bias research centers on the Implicit Association Test (IAT), aims to measure implicit bias that operates beyond individual's conscious awareness, and may exist even among individual who genuinely believe themselves to be unbiased. Consistent with the criminal justice studies, the IAT research has found that race continues to be psychologically salient" (Banks R. R., Eberhardt, J.L, Ross, L., 2006 p. 1170)

All of the AR team members recognized quickly during the first class sessions experience that they did carry implicit bias. The experience of looking at pictures of various races and people in scenes played a large role on their perception and bias thoughts as they discussed their views. Through the experiences they were able to gain a deeper awareness of their own implicit bias and its' negative impact in the classroom. Some realized that through their personal views and experiences with the study that they became more patient and that children come with a different skillset. Members gained understanding of the direct correlation with building relationships and trust with teacher-student relationships. Additionally, they realized that various experiences and developmental characteristics might align to chronological age level expectations; however, you still need to view children through a culturally responsive lens. Race played a significant role on how they conceptualized their teaching and perspective.

Below are comments from AR team members relative to this theme:

And as a teacher, I was reflecting and thinking, well how has that impacted my teaching, that there have been missed opportunities because I have implicit bias So, that was very, very powerful and it has forced me to reflect and change my thinking and be more aware and compassionate toward others and other cultures.

I learned that a good teacher trusts his or her heart and not the eyes. So it is forcing me to realize that I need to look at my kids much more as individuals and not just assuming that just because your name is Sanchez, that you don't know the content, or that your proficiency level is lower.

I now know I have biases...and it was irresponsible for me to think that I don't.

Additionally, this teacher also felt that,

It's just knowing that you do have those biases and internalizing that so that the output is not reflecting necessarily what's going on in the inside.

They were able to reflect on their perceptions and misconceptions of their Hispanic students who were non-English speakers and how those thoughts affected relationships, perceptions of work ethic and motivation and ability to learn. Still, an African-American teacher reflected on her interactions with the White students and Black students in her class and how she could perceive certain interactions differently.

She was recorded saying,

I think it forced me to look at my white students differently because normally, of course I have always seen color, ...it wasn't so much I don't see color, but I think it was more realizing, that you know what, the white kids are socializing differently and I need to give them a little grace because they really might not understand that when I look at you, I'm saying stop.

The last interview afforded teachers to consider their implicit bias of the past and they transformed their interactions with their students. She reflected on how she is

now encouraging them to speak Spanish in class and in turn it is making them teach others.

This experience has given her more personal freedom to bridge freedom to her students to be themselves, speak in their native language and learn. She spoke of,

Just opening that up within my class in that very simple way has brought us all together. It's pretty powerful.

There was one AR team member who recalled having a student share student work and how uncomfortable she would feel and since participating in the study felt that the culture of the student and traditional view of how they perceive school needed to be considered. With the political climate that the United States is in now with a new president, one AR team member felt strongly about her political views. Though, not politically connected per se to culturally responsive teaching specifically, she felt compelled to comment on the change she has made to her political views since becoming engaged with the AR team experience. One AR team member was the only member recorded reflecting on her political views so explicitly. She felt that her newly perceived political views changed how she viewed her students and perception racially and economically.

She stated,

When I speak of Trump...this whole experience has changed my political thinking for sure. It's gone that far...I just want you to know how much that has meant to me and how my thoughts have changed so much...It's amazing. Seeing what other people are dealing with racially and economically. I felt like I was so greedy before this, I only thought about myself. I'm not naturally like that, I'm very empathetic, but I never analyzed culture.

Engaging in experiences and having time to listen to others' perspectives from others may have led to awareness of their implicit bias and how it could affect students in the classroom.

Theme 2: Student Behaviors Viewed Positively

The second theme identified for research question 1 was that student behaviors are viewed more positively when teachers are equipped with the understanding of the culturally responsive teaching approach. AR team members were observant of how their cultural lens affected how they disciplined their students. They realized that they had bias and that it included misconceptions that were not fairly guiding their discipline interactions, decisions and consequences. They began to look closer at the race of their students and the demographics and conceptualize their experiences regarding their responses and levels of consequences. They discussed being able to look at negative and positive behaviors of students and how there may be a disconnect between expectations and what they are actually doing. Overall, the AR team felt that they wanted to make the classroom a more positive place for learning. Many challenges that happen within diverse populations are the result of a mismatch between the student's cultural values and the school's expectations (McIntosh, Moniz, Craft, Golby, & Steinwand-Deschambeault, 2014). Therefore, it is essential for schools to employ interventions that meet the needs of the students at the school. AR team members realized that the interventions was more about their personal reactions to misbehaviors than the behaviors themselves. As a demonstration of this understanding, AR team members noted:

I don't jump to conclusions anymore. I don't discipline the way we used to. Now, when I see misbehavior, I don't react anymore in a negative manner.

I cannot just presume that they know it and their expected behavior should be like this, but I have tried to think about the causes for that behavior.

But my biggest aha for me was realizing my own cultural bias with discipline, It doesn't have to be the way I said it just because I said so because that's the way I see it.

Cultural biases can take so many forms because students come from cultures that say it's okay to be loud, it's okay to be disrespectful. It's ok not to say, yes ma'am and no ma'am...It's doesn't have to be that just because they weren't raised in Mississippi, like me.

These conclusions transformed every teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards discipline. They were continuously considering their own presence in the classroom. One observation made one member realize that a facial cue that one student from one culture may respond to may not transfer to all races. Therefore, she was able to view the non-responsiveness of one student to the facial cue as disrespect, but rather as sincerely not knowing. She realized that,

they really wouldn't know unless they've had experience with facial cues.

This revelation spoke volumes to her changed perspective from the AR experience.

UPS' district discipline office named HES as a school in Operational Status for the Positive Behavior and Instructional Support® program. This system for positive discipline posed a limitation to the study attributing to the many other causal effects of changes in thinking and student discipline. Additionally, many members on the team have begun learning about another approach to discipline called Responsive Classroom®, which is an approach that bridges four themes of positive environment, engaged academic, developmental characteristics, and classroom management (Responsive Classroom, 2016). Every AR team member has had a positive history of handling discipline and classroom management. Nevertheless, they

continued to show growth in their efficacy scales and their attitudes and beliefs regarding discipline.

Theme 3: CRT Helps Teachers to Increase Their Sense of Self-Efficacy to Engage Students Academically, Socially and Emotionally

The third theme was that CRT helps teacher to increase their sense of self-efficacy to engage students academically, socially and emotionally. AR team members desired to learn more about their students and how they think. They began to understand the socio-political barriers that students faced. When reviewing school data and discipline data for the school and southern region, AR team members were able to view how external barriers could affect student learning. Therefore, participants felt more inclined to consider not just students' academic needs, but also their social and emotional needs and how this affected teaching and learning.

Motivation and ability were concept discussed in meetings and in interviews. One teacher observed noticeable changes in her students' ability to attend to their learning at higher levels when she changed their grouping. They were able to exhibit higher levels of confidence in mixed ability groups. An AR team member connected to a webinar from Zaretta Hammond (2018) focusing on her comment in the webinar where she said, "Competence precedes confidence." The AR team members realized that supporting basic human needs helped students believe in themselves.

During interviews, some AR team members disclosed their desire to build trust with their students at a higher level. This desire enabled them to understand the value of being more student-centered in order to see positive outcomes for student achievement. One teacher was moved by how different same-age students could be in one classroom and due to race could

have many different experiences. Her goal was to have her students trust her more. She planned to do this by being intentional about making connections, asking about their birthdays and goals in hopes that these acts would build a stronger relationship. When sharing her views related to her beliefs about trust, she noted:

I look at them differently which I think my end goal is for them to trust me more. Then they're going to feel they they're allowed to start growing, because they trust me.

In short, some AR team members realized that they needed to focus on the understanding of the students themselves:

They're going to have to get themselves up, but we have to build the trust for them to believe us and let us push them there...it doesn't matter the child, it matters what's in their heart. How I respond to them, and it can be completely different than another student just based on culture.

One teacher on the AR team mentioned that after the study ended she was more student-centered more than content-centered. She realized that,

it doesn't mean you don't teach, but you just have to really focus on the students. I know when I do my planning I have to look at students and where are they and what are their strengths right now and where do we need to be.

The action research experience may have led AR team members to transform their beliefs and attitudes associated with their interactions with their students and how they plan and teach:

I think basically, I want to explore more now about my students. I want to take time, listen, to understand their world and that their educational world is bigger than what happens inside these walls. I have come to realize that there is a lot more that influences their education both from their background and well as from my background. So, I also believe that there is a—that it is broader than race.

Now, I analyze all content now for biases. When I teach a language arts lesson and I pull a reading passage, I try to make it of interest, not just racially but whatever, they are into... If they are into soccer, I try to pull a soccer article to keep them engaged and that has changed tremendously. Before, I would just think, what grade level are they on? Third grade, all right, we'll do this article. Now, I really think about their interests and background...

Just the content, thing about the children, where they are, not just academically but their social, emotional behavior also, their attitude toward teaching and learning. Even how do they talk, how do they interact with others, social things, it does.

I also feel that my beliefs about African-American culture have been challenged. I have grown past the oppression label to one that is really concerned about what is needed to help our student from this culture not just pass but exceed the standard.

Theme 4: The cultural autobiography experience can be an experience while learning CRT that strengthens the learning of the CRT approach

When AR team members participated in writing a cultural autobiography, all of them unanimously reported transformed pedagogical beliefs and attitudes. Several members commented that the experience was challenging, but helped them move forward in becoming

culturally responsive teachers. Several discussed memories from childhood and the privileges they didn't realize were indeed privileges until they talked and listened to team members. Terrell and Lyndsey (2009), say that, "some of us are very aware of our cultural identity in terms of race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, ableness, faith and socioeconomic status...[however] for many reasons, we are either unaware of our cultural identities or reject the importance of culture in our lives" (Terrell R. & Lyndsey R., 2009, p.30). This theme correlated directly with the findings from this experience. As a result, the act of cultural autobiography proved to be highly effective for our AR team's change in their beliefs and attitudes.

One AR team member spoke of growing up in the Jim Crow era in the mid-1960s when African-Americans were made to follow rigid anti-black laws. In her autobiography she shared a story about being parked on the side of the road and being approached by a group of white males in a car. They brandished a gun and made her feel terrified. Close to 35 years later, the cultural autobiography made her realize that she was still dealing with those emotions. It showed that her negative racial experience still affect how she views people and certain situations. She commented,

I remember it like it was yesterday. It helped me know that as an educator I have power over students and I don't want to ever assume that power or use that power negatively even unintentionally.

A cultural autobiography took me to a place that I don't let my mind rest for reasons that it keeps me neutral. To me that's more of what the culture response has taught me is that even though when I am unhappy with my most undesirable or most difficult child, I don't want to come across as I'm going to use my power over you. Because I do have

power as an adult, as your teacher, as someone who can make you feel threatened and that is a very raw feeling that don't ever want a child to have to associate with me or their education.

A limitation to this experience was that each team member was not required to submit his or her autobiography to me. They received limited guidelines to complete the task: (1) Describe when you first became aware of your race and/or ethnicity, and (2) Describe when you first became aware of your social class (Terrell & Lyndsey, 2009). Additionally, they were asked to comment in their writing about how race has affected them. Two members read excerpts from their journals, and two members handed in their journals for me to read about their cultural journey, which I used for document analysis for triangulation.

Theme 5: An increased awareness of privilege based on the intersectionality of race, gender and class were revealed

AR team members were given three articles titled, “Unpacking the Invisible Knap sack by Peggy McIntosh (1988), “White Fragility” by Robin Di Angelo (2011), and “Microaggressions” by Capodilupo et al. (2007) as a reading assignment. When asked about how those articles affected them, members found it to be eye opening and essential for their learning. Some White AR team members mentioned it being difficult to read or having to stop due to it being such a stark reality in the media and society.

AR team members connected to the disturbing feeling that ensued after reading it:

I think because those articles were so polarizing to me. I mean it was just so shocking and eye opening, just a lot of information. I had no idea that it was this pervasive. I didn't realize in my bubble of a world that some of these things were going on.

It just made me feel bad...I know the one thing I remember most was talking about being pulled over because of race...I mean you see it happen on TV shows but to realize that it happens in real life it just make you, I don't know, it make you want to cry. I feel upset about it. It's something that should never happen.

...but sometimes we have to have exposure to this so that we learn that we are not all the sane and some people had more advantages in their life than some others and this is the same with our classrooms.

Some children have more privileges than the rest of us but when they are at school we should look at each individual, look where they are, and build a relationship of trust with them.

McIntosh (1989) commented that “white privilege as an invisible package of unearned access which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious” (p. 165). This thought also aligned to some White AR team members having difficulty with seeing their whiteness as a racial identity when beginning the cultural autobiography (McIntosh, 1989). This conversation of privilege was an area that this AR team desired to explore further through dialogue in a PLC.

Theme 6: Perceptions of the home-school connection between teachers and parents with implementing culturally appropriate strategies require support and further professional learning

In eight areas across all three scales, there were comments that surfaced that all related to parents, home-school relations and parent participation. The AR team did not mention any of these in their focus group or interviews, but this result showed that more attention to parent

involvement was necessary. Specifically, I included all areas that the AR team scored the lowest in their areas of expectancy and efficacy related to this idea:

As an AR team on the CRTSE scale, they scored low efficacy in being able to:

1. Establish positive home-school relations.
2. Implement strategies to minimize the effect of the mismatch between my students home culture and the school culture.

As an AR team on the (CRTOE) scale, they felt less confident in their confidence that the following behaviors would lead to specified outcomes:

3. Conveying the message that parents are an important part of the classroom will increase parent participation
4. Establishing positive home-school relations will increase parental involvement
5. Acknowledging the ways that the school culture is different from my students' home culture will minimize the likelihood of discipline problems
6. Changing the structure of the classroom so that it is compatible with my students home culture will increase their motivation to come to class

As an AR team on the (CRCMSE) scale, they felt less efficacious in the following:

7. Implementing an intervention that minimizes a conflict that occurs when a students' culturally based behavior is not consistent with school norms
8. Communicating with students' parents whose primary language is not English
9. Developing an effective classroom management on my understanding of students' family background
10. Use culturally appropriate methods to relate to parents from culturally linguistic diverse backgrounds

These results reveal a high level of potential in addressing home-school relations and how it can aid in student and parent experiences resulting in outcomes that are more positive. For schools like ours that are Title I, many factors come into play that may affect how students try to change their behaviors. It is probable that having a school team explore these perceptions may result in stronger relationships between schools and parents.

Summary of Findings for Research Question 1

When reviewing quantitative scores and qualitative results, all revealed that the AR team members grew in some capacity in their overall self-efficacy, beliefs, and attitudes since learning about CRT. A point worth considering is that even with a small amount of time and engagement with professional learning protocols and experiences, growth occurred. One reason that growth occurred could be related to the book study, AR experiences, and the overall professional learning that the action research team engaged in. An emphasis on personal growth and transparency emerged as this group wrestled with their personal experiences and perspectives of others. Considering more experiences that are related to building efficacy could yield even higher results. These findings are promising in showing improvement for teachers and their relationships with students after learning a few CRT principles. “When multiple points of view are embraced, educators are better able to locate and understand racial conflict as well as become aware of racial bias” (Singleton G. E, 2015, p.118). AR team members embarked on the ability to “uncover the *counter narrative*, a critical perspective that reveals and explains the impact of racism” (Singleton G.E., 2015, p. 118). Finally, there were beliefs and attitudes that surfaced regarding home-school connections and parent relations. What was profound about all of the findings related to parents and home-school connections was that it has the potential to improve. Using a scale that addresses these concepts was important

because teachers could name the beliefs. Professional learning opportunities could be planned to discuss the ideas further. Consequently, the team's willingness and ability to build consciousness and awareness was a theme that related to growth in pedagogical beliefs and attitudes.

Research Question 2: Participation in a PLC

To determine what conceptual changes that were experienced by AR team members by participating in a PLC, I analyzed the results of the experiential surveys, focus group interviews and individual interviews to the question: How does participation in a PLC impact teachers' conceptual understanding and use of CRT strategies in the classroom? Upon analysis of all of the data collected, three themes emerged:

- Theme 1: Experiential learning contributes to higher application, understanding and connectedness to various races of students.
- Theme 2: Creating a brave space with norms for CRT PL can create a positive environment for adult learners to engage.
- Theme 3: CRT can help teachers understand that equality and equity are not synonymous.

Theme 1-Experiential Learning Yields Higher Application, Understanding and Connectedness to Various Races of Students

Theme 1 revealed that experiential learning yields higher application, understanding and connectedness to various races of students. The influence that this theory had on the adult learners in this study were largely due to the intertwining of various experiences into professional learning. (Appendix H)

One experience that the AR team was exposed to was the reading of a poem titled, “My name is Jorge!” Both the researcher/facilitator and Hispanic male AR team member read this poem. The context of the poem was to relate to how a non-English speaker feels about sitting in a classroom and they do not understand the language or comprehend the content of the lesson. It alludes to the teacher pronouncing the child’s name as George, not Jorge. It was a powerful experience for the AR members, resulting in one participant crying from an emotional memory a child in her class who felt the exact same way.

Still another AR team member thought of one her non-English speakers and how it must feel to sit in a classroom when a teacher is speaking another language. She took it upon herself to support the two students that she and another teacher share who are non-English speakers. She wants to build more connectedness and understanding toward the students.

Some AR team members felt that it helped open up their minds:

“My Name is Jorge,” that gives you the thought, okay this is in a different language and I don’t get anything of it, what am I going to do? When I think about the student point of view, sitting seven or eight hours in a classroom, not knowing the language, how are they going to feel the entire day? We get tired in 15 minutes...

What I was thinking, if we can see our demographics, if as grown-ups we can be taught some of the ways we could be greeting our students, like in Spanish. We have a lot ESOL population especially from Mexico. So, if we can have teachers have some staff development or professional learning on these, the other language spoken by a lot of your students in your school, we can have some basic lessons on those. I think it will bring the child and the teacher, closer together.

This is not something that you could get just from reading a book...You could read about it and it would be a great book, but having that time together person to person brings things to the table that a book can't and I really loved that.

Various experiences were intentionally considered for this study in hopes that it would evoke conversational opportunities for the group to experience learning as adults. The AR team felt that knowing one another helped them to feel more comfortable to engage in the experiences at a higher level. They were adamant that the Picture Perception Experience (Walker, C. 2017) spoke volumes to how they perceive student learning and personal perceptions of race and culture. Being able to view pictures, discuss personal perceptions while hearing other thoughts, was transformative to the study and worked to set a cultural lens for the duration of the study.

They were diverse; they took me off guard. They took me out of my comfort zone. They helped me think about a lot of things from a different perspective. Each experience taught me more about me, it taught me more about my coworkers. I was really quite surprised to hear some of the expressions and perceptions of some people and honesty that came along with it. They helped me to be introspective.

Theme 2 Creating a Brave Space with Norms for CRT Professional Learning Creates a Positive Space for Adult Learners to Engage

Norm making. During the first class session, I facilitated a norm making and meaning session knowing that this was an important experience for the group to feel comfortable and to set expectations for positive discourse. Additionally, I reminded the team that as a school we had already effectively established norms for our school, professional learning, and collaborative groups. Consequently, they were reminded that, “A learning environment thrives on learning

about their successes and failures and creating time to discuss them collaboratively as an organization (Nuri-Robins K., Lindsey, D. Lindsey, R., Terrell R., 2012). A PLC that involves sensitive subjects like race, culture and differences must navigate through the norming process. Before the groups conversed in table groups, I posed the question of: What will make you feel comfortable and what will you need to have in place to grow personally and professionally? This experience set the tone for the subsequent meetings and experiences. Norms were reviewed at each meeting and the team was asked if the norms needed to be revised. The team collaborated on norms and they remained as norms for the duration of the AR meetings:

1. Be honest & real
2. Be confidential
3. Be open to others' perspectives

One team member was recorded saying:

I think it laid the ground work. I think it freed us to know that it was an ok environment to do that. It helped that we all knew each other. I think it would have been different, had it been a group of educators that you were not already from a family of co-workers...I think the norms...helped us know that it was okay that I tell you I have a problem with certain sectors of the society without fear of being judged.

Several themes emerged. Collectively, the team wanted the conversations to be honest and transparent within a safe environment. The need for others to be respectful and empathetic was a value that helped foster a feeling nonjudgment. Instead, they would still be expected to have a positive relationship with outside of the AR team and not discuss matters from the meetings outside with anyone else at all. Comments such as, *What happens at the AR team,*

stays in the AR team, were heard in 3 groups. In three out of the four groups, the individuals were adamant about making sure that the focus stayed on student achievement. While keeping that at the forefront, they still desired that the AR team members honor different views and not be afraid to speak up.

One AR team member said:

We aren't clean slates and acknowledging that, we all bring a certain level of bias.

One AR team member said:

We may offend others, through this, but think about how much closer we will be.

Still another AR team member was quoted saying:

I feel that I will have a 2nd enlightenment as an educator.

One team member led a small conversation about feeling that this would be more difficult with strangers than with colleagues, where all members in that group agreed. Finally, the comments of my role as principal and researcher undoubtedly made them pause at first, but they trusted me to not allow comments from the meetings to overlap in their employment obligations and roles.

Some comments were made that added to this study that were worth adding:

Let's use the proper use of pronouns, like 'us' and 'we' instead of they and them.

When we signed the consent forms, we knew what we were getting into.

Ultimately, there were individuals who had already begun to consider how their personal bias and stereotypical thoughts were affecting the way they viewed and taught their students as they were creating norms:

I am becoming more aware of my face...

Just taking the time to learn, understand them and taking time to understand them [students], Finding a way to communicate with them. It takes time on our part and most of the time we don't do that...I know I don't.

Picture perception experience. AR team members thoroughly enjoyed the picture walk and felt that it was one of the most transformative experiences in helping them to understand themselves, their bias and society as a whole. Some however, felt that it was difficult or as one participant stated,

...it was just very painful...it was painful because I didn't think I had these preconceived judgments.

The pictures were all in black and white of various scenes (i.e. a girl with a suitcase and an old stuffed animal, two African-American boys holding a sign that says, "My mother is serving 12 years.")). Some members wondered if the pictures were given in color if it would have altered their perceptions. One member mentioned being tolerant and unbiased; however, after experiencing realized that though not malicious, that they are still there. As a first day experience during the study, a theoretical experience offered a baseline for their cultural lens through the study.

"I think that one was more powerful to me because it was the very first thing we did and that jarred you a little bit, it just turned your world upside down because everybody went in thinking, I don't need this, I don't see color and all that stuff, that was like a famous phrase...and then you actually start looking and then again with that conversation and one simple picture and maybe 50 people who look at it differently."

“I really like the picture walk. Just hearing the thoughts and seeing different things, that was my ‘aha’ moment because you see what—you are looking at the same exact picture but someone has a completely different explanation of that picture.”

“Even during that picture walk, I’m getting emotional and teary eyed, it just brought out so many more emotions and helps me realize, our kids are going through the same thing.”

“...if I had been reading a book and I hadn’t been able to discuss these things out loud and hear how other people perceive those pictures I wouldn’t have got it, it wouldn’t have hit me so deeply.”

Privilege walk. This exercise was originally adapted from Peggy McIntosh’s article “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” by Dave Stark. During the final AR team meeting, the group participated in the privilege walk that offered them the opportunity to move forward or backward according to several experiences that they may have experienced. One member had a unique experience with the process and felt compelled to share with the group how he felt being the furthest in the room. “I keep going back to the privilege walk...it definitely seemed like a disadvantage, but now I’m grateful for that because it has put me in a position to where I can make that connection with kids, with people that in the same room who will never be able to make because they’ve never been in those shoes.

Several of the White participants commented feeling uncomfortable and suggested being able to duplicate, but not in a visible way due to how uncomfortable, it felt to be exposed for having more privileges than many on the team. Still others felt that it was an essential experience that still brought about a really rich conversation at the table. Some AR team members were able to see that experiences that they took for granted were actually perceived as privileges to certain races, genders and in general.

...it was very uncomfortable for me...I felt guilty and somehow I wondered if other kids in my situation maybe felt that way. I didn't want anyone else to feel bad because of where I was and I certainly wasn't looking down on anyone else.

Cultural experience visits. AR team members were asked to visit at least two places that they have either been interested in visiting or in a place outside of their comfort zone that relates to a cultural experience. The rationale being, that this will give you a context and understanding of other cultures, and reveal a personal journey to you that relates to perception, bias and reflective learning practices. Some individuals on the team felt that they were difficult to arrange while others found difficulty with the purpose and rationale. Still others were able to visit key places that added context to their learning and understanding of culturally responsive teaching. A list of cultural visits that the AR team members reported to voluntarily visiting is included in Appendix H.

School Visits. Financial constraints at the local level prevented the entire AR team of 14 of being able to visit the schools. I drove the entire team in a van to the schools, which allowed me to capture all of the comments, thoughts and reflections of the seven participants who attended. From the AR team the following were present for the school visits: one assistant principal, one counselor, one speech pathologist, one instructional coach, two classroom teachers and one parent instructional coordinator. The participants visited two elementary schools, one high school, one middle school and one elementary school in another district. The premise of the visit was to visit schools with different demographics than HES and to be able to view equity in how teachers related to students, equity and leadership. The group was given below (Table 20) a seven question survey upon returning that they were given a week to

respond. The table below details a summary of the questions that were also part of the triangulation process of compiling themes for the study.

Table 20

Summary of Responses Related to School Visits

| Questions | Summary of Responses |
|--|--|
| What was your initial assumption about visiting the schools? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chaos and hostile environment; students disrespectful of teachers • No assumptions and looking for positive interactions and strong teaching • That there would be higher access to technology • Different interactions with minority students instructionally and behaviorally • Some misconceptions were apparent and transformed once they participated in experience of the visit • <i>"I thought I was going to see only African-American leaders at the predominantly African-American schools"</i> |
| What thoughts came to mind as you visited the schools? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impressed with the level of respect and mutual understanding between staff and students • Positive expectations • Teachers were making their best efforts to deliver the content with the tools they were comfortable using • Previous experiences led to no assumptions • Curious about students in hallways for discipline • Viewing interactions of parent relationships, aesthetics of the building • Personally connected with students at the middle school • Observed staff caring about the school and students • Students were respectful toward each other • Evidence of student engagement and enthusiasm for learning • Inequitable outcomes with resources and technology use |
| After visiting the schools, how did the experience add to your understanding of Culturally Responsive Teaching, if at all? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust is essential in building relationships with students • Understanding of CRT has grown because schools provided a context • CRT has a profound impact on producing independent learners • Awareness of teacher/student relationships • The core of culturally responsive teaching relies on the understanding of each other's boundaries, needs, etc. • Even our most challenging students need to feel cared for before any learning can take place |
| Do you recommend that teachers visit school that have different demographics than the school they work in? | <p>No, I believe schools should focus on their own schools</p> <p>Yes (3)</p> <p>(3) No answer</p> |
| What would you change about the school visits? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An opportunity to visit and speak with teachers • Less schools • A walk-through checklist for CRT • Student perspective |

| | |
|---|--|
| What surprised you about the school visits? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The positive respect for the students and teachers • Limited use of technology for student-created work |
| What did you learn about yourself? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observed more personal bias based on race • Low expectations of students • No interest in middle or high school levels • Validating • As an adult learner, I need to feel empowered to make things happen. |

Initially, some AR team members expected to see much more chaos, and students unfocused. At the middle and high school level, they spoke of expecting transitions to be loud and unorganized. They also expected to see different modes of technology used more frequently. Some limitations to this experience were that the schools weren't considered CRT schools per se and weren't representative of model schools, however, they were utilized for the AR team to observe students, teachers and school cultures unlike their own to garner new insights related to instruction, equity and bias.

Book study. The team believed that everyone who converged on this new learning, needed to read the book *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* by Zaretta Hammond. Thoughts related to how she helped them to understand the reason why this type of learning harbored student comfort in the classroom. Time and workloads of AR participants prevented the team from finishing the book. Consequently, the team agreed that this would have helped in offering more opportunity to bring specific strategies into the classroom and provide for planning and instructional conversation.

I liked it because it added a context to it because depending on where you are in your teaching journey, you may not understand that the whole purpose behind Culturally Responsive Teaching is really to acknowledge that these gaps that we've seen in achievement, they are not as connected to cognitive ability as people would think."

I feel that these monthly meetings added to my personal and professional growth because after learning how Culturally Responsive Teaching affects the brain, I became more interested in creating more positive relationships with all students, I feel that the knowledge gained through the use of CRT helps us learn about ourselves, about each other as teachers and students.

Online Learning Course Experience

In December, some staff on the AR team began to feel challenged with personal and professional responsibilities. The AR team suggested meeting online as an experience and intervention to discuss the chapter from the book and garner reflections from an online experience and hybrid model. This was a sound suggestion as this provided another data point and feedback measure related to adult online learning of CRT. The school system designed a platform for online learning for students and adults and it provided the workspace for our virtual meeting. At the time of the experience, the AR team consisted of [N=15] members with [N=12] participated in the online experience. AR team members were very familiar with the use of the platform and had little hesitation with using it. Questions were simple and complex and they required close reading and opportunities to cite the text, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, (Hammond, 2014). The questions below were utilized in the platform to guide conversations among the AR team members. They were able to view team members' answers and were encouraged to answer all questions and respond to at least two others on each question. A full list of the Online Learning Course questions are included below:

- What was something you learned from your reading in Chapter 5?

- Now that you have had an opportunity to read and discuss matters related to bias, what insights and understandings, are you bringing to your Culturally Responsive Teaching work?
- Using pages 28-35 in your text, *CRT and the Brain*, answer the following: What is examining one's own implicit bias not enough in becoming a Culturally Responsive Educator?
- What questions have been raised so far for you since engaging in this action research experience?
- Regarding privilege, do you feel that you have privileges that others may not have? If so, what are some of those and how have you learned about how privilege impacts students and our society as a whole?

Findings from the questions were integrated into research question findings for triangulation; however, the act of the online experience was reported for reporting data regarding the online experience. AR team members were asked questions on a Likert scale of: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA).

In response to their overall thoughts of the online experience, [N=12] 42% felt strongly satisfied, 17% satisfied, 8% neutral, 25% dissatisfied and 8% strongly dissatisfied with the overall experience. When asked if they gained new insights that were useful in grounding a deeper understanding of Culturally Responsive Teaching [N=12], results revealed that 42% strongly agree and 58% agree. As a researcher, I wanted to know if conversing online about CRT topics online was easier than face-to-face collaborative conversations. Respondents answered [N=12], 50% neutral, 8% agree, 33% Disagree and 8% Strongly Disagree.

When asked about the most valuable part of the online course [N=12], They were appreciative of the time, flexibility and access to the questions at a convenient time that worked with their schedule. AR team members are quoted as saying:

It gave everyone a chance to voice their opinion. Sometimes we run out of time when we meet face to face and not everyone gets a chance to speak.

To use a different form of communication to discuss CRT. I think it helped me to expand my comfort zone as a learner.

Having the time to reflect on my answers. I was able to take the time to express my ideas on my own time and at my own pace.

AR team members were asked about the effectiveness of the course and suggestions. Some desired fewer questions while others felt that being in smaller online rooms, to answer different questions may have been more beneficial to provide more variance for elaboration. Some poignant comments recorded were:

I personally prefer face to face discussions, as so much of communication is non-verbal. I like the instantaneous responding of discussions. However, knowing our team, as I was reading responses, I was able to hear each person's personality coming through. As much as I love the online experience, I enjoy being in a class. I enjoy being with people and sharing ideas where we have visual interaction. With CRT being such an emotional experience, I feel that it is important to look a person in the eye and feel comfortable addressing difficult topics face to face. You are somewhat anonymous online and have that safety net, kinda like being in a car. You feel anonymous but you really are not.

Summary of findings for online learning course. AR team members appreciated the time to pace themselves through the course on their own time due to personal and professional obligations. Overall, they enjoyed the experiences of being face to face at meetings more than online because of the comfort of relationships and experiences that they are able to have in a meeting.

Theme 3: Culturally Responsive Teaching Helps Teachers to Understand That Equality and Equity Are Not Synonymous.

Theme 3 stated that culturally responsive teaching helped teachers to understand that equality and equity were not synonymous. AR team members were able to understand the difference in equality and equity. Being exposed to the popular picture from Education Trust where the common misconception that equity and equality is the same thing, it helped individuals to become more reflective of this from school visits and study experiences like the Privilege Walk and focus group conversations.

It's helped me see that all things really aren't equal because in my mind, I know that outside of my classroom things aren't equal but somehow prior to this, I really thought if I give everybody the same experience here, we should all be able to get to a certain level. The class has taught me that no, because some people have already had similar experiences, at home, some people will never have this. So just this idea that even when you have equity in the classroom, the does not necessarily compensate for the inequities that the kids are just inherently coming with.

Summary of Findings for Research Question 2

Members of the AR team felt that the experiences all contributed to them transforming as educators, friends and family members. Through a review of findings, it appeared that many were able to exhibit a high level of self-discovery, realization and renewed commitment to the goal of embracing culturally responsive teaching. They became more reflective and aware of others and their perceptions. With the current events that are occurring within the political climate, it engaged the team to correlate this learning by committing to a higher level of execution in the classroom setting and school environment. Finally, one AR team member commented, “I go in and out of a lot of different cultural experiences in a day but this helped me see things through a different lens and it’s about that responsive piece that really resonated with me...and then teaching and the competence.

...we are living in an era right now that is so controversial. It’s scary and everybody is affected by it.

This sense of urgency led members to feel more efficacious and equipped to influence others in their school setting and community.

I’m just cognizant of their background and their family...I’m more compassionate before I just go and make a decision or say something or react in a certain way.

I got so much from this experience and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I feel like I am a different person.

I didn’t expect to go so deeply in it and I went into like I thought I already knew what this is...I learned quickly that I do not know what Culturally Responsive Teaching is.

I think it has been a very educational experience and its ground breaking. I left last night thinking this is really ground breaking territory, which takes education to a whole different level. It's not just teaching and doing therapy. It's exploring more about our students' about ourselves and I'm happy to have been included in the experience. It's going to be with me for the rest of my life. I think just the inner change, the inside, outside that you have to do. They don't teach us in school.

I am so glad that you included me in it, it's been just a lot of soul searching and coming to a lot of realizations...I was expecting just to come in and just start learning about all these different cultures and basically you're just going to apply it on your own. I didn't realize—I thought it was going to be more about everybody else, what I actually learned is that this experience is about you...It always starts with the man in the mirror.

Still, after the sessions ended I received text messages with such comments from various AR team members such as:

FYI: I'm sounding like a GENIOUS/VISIONARY here at my ESOL class because I keep chiming in with my learning from your CRT gatherings!

On a side note, the 4th and 5th grade teachers and I are going to have a cultural experience tonight. We are going to eat at Iron Age- Korean BBQ.

Please call me this weekend when you get a minute...a situation happened regarding race and...Thank you, it's definitely related to CRT.

Research Question 3: Action Research

The AR team members were recorded feeling that the experience of working on an action research team helped to understand different points of view that enabled them to feel more trust among their colleagues. To bridge the gap of adult practice in professional learning and student achievement, the AR team aligned the professional learning experiences with Bandura's (1977, 1986) definition of Collective Teacher Efficacy. It is defined as "the perceptions of teachers in a school that will have a positive effect on students based on social cognitive theory, a unified theory of behavior change" (Bandura, 1977, p. 202). Using a framework of collective efficacy and collective responsibility, has supported results when implemented intentionally, in part because the social environment is influenced by teachers' shared values and beliefs (Hoy & Miskel, 1996). Comparable to self-efficacy, collective efficacy is associated with tasks, level of effort, persistence, shared thoughts, stress levels, and achievement of groups (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy 2000, p.482) that can individually contribute to a whole school's progress. When implemented correctly the idea of self and collective efficacy is what makes a difference in a school's ability to make a difference in student performance. The following themes emerged from this third research question:

- Theme 1- Culturally Responsive Teaching means being responsive and actionable
- Theme 2- Culturally Responsive Teaching is about empowering students to learn differently to promote more independent learning opportunities

- Theme 3- Action Research involves adult learners becoming more engaged collaboratively in creating culturally responsive learning spaces for students
- Theme 4- Action research is most effective when all team members are open to varying perspectives

Theme 1: Culturally Responsive Teaching Means Being Responsive and Actionable

Theme one revealed that culturally responsive teaching meant being responsive and actionable. AR team members were encouraged through this experience to act. Many understood that this experience required action on their part first. They desired to keep learning and reading, but some realized that it was not just about being relevant through books and resources, but through the proactive and intentional manner in which they built relationships with students and also how they relayed their learning from the AR team experience to others. One AR team member mentioned the experience of learning as:

an adult, I think it is very awakening. I don't think you realize it until you really get into those conversations.

CRT means being responsive. Relationships are important but we have to teach the children how to think and everybody should be given equal opportunity to think, just not by looking at the skin color, I assume you will need a lot of help." Therefore, you have to create an environment so that everybody feels welcome. And we know these things; it's just to implement it. We're both here, we both care, we both want to do this and change this thing.

Topics to discuss. The AR team was able to have several different discussions at the monthly meetings. They found value in these discussions and had recommendations related to what topics were essential in helping educators improve their understanding of CRT and have the tools to apply while learning in the classroom. The topics recommended were the following:

1. A Review of Demographics
2. Culture definition and Cultural Bias/Stereotypes/Privilege
3. Perceptions and Misconceptions
4. Cultural Self-Awareness
5. Blended Families (Multiracial and Multi-gender)

Professional learning findings. During the November meeting, the AR team were given an hour to discuss a plan for professional learning. They were given markers and chart paper and were asked to have open discussions related to what they felt would be a viable professional learning experience. They were allowed to make organizational titles that would be relevant to their thinking. The following summary is a document analysis related to their discussions and findings.

Professional learning inclusivity. The AR Team suggested that there be school-wide participation with prior knowledge be obtained via a professional learning experience before the school year begins. They recommended that all community members be involved including cafeteria workers, front office, bus drivers and teachers to promote more positive interactions and awareness collectively. The recommendation for teachers is that it would support an idea of collectivism.

In reference to time and frequency of professional learning, the data was varied where some members felt that summer training was more beneficial to a small portion of attention at Working on the Work (WOW) days where teachers have vertical team planning. Additionally, an idea of discussing at weekly grade level discussions was a suggestion to provide more frequent and timely discussion. The team considered attendance and reflected on the purposeful interaction needed to be engaged. They recommended being able to miss one class and having to make up any missed class with an online component.

Management. To begin the process, there was an idea to make sure that future participants had an opportunity to engage in goal setting at the onset to be able to keep a goal in mind that would keep them vested in the learning and content. They desired for teams to be frequently exposed to the CRT conversation either monthly, the entire school year from the hours of 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM or weekly, were strongly suggested. A full day teacher workday preferably during pre-planning was proposed as a means to equipping all staff members with mindset resetting, strategies and ideas to be prepared for the New Year.

Student alignment. Throughout, the monthly sessions AR participants continued to reflect on how this associated with their current students. One major finding related to this, was having the ability to have a case study of a student or a focal student that they were able to be mindful of as they progressed through the learning. One participant stated:

I never thought of that before, you have a group, but then within that group you have a subgroup that you never think of.

Redelivery. The AR team was energetic about wanting others in the school to learn CRT. They were eager to plan how it could be delivered to others in a systematic way. Some

findings that were discussed during their planning sessions were to have grade level representatives deliver the information to their grade level after a summer workshop. They felt that check ins throughout the year would assist in knowledge learned would be remembered, implemented and transformative for student learning.

Participant experience. The participants connected to the experiential theoretical framework that this study was based on. As adult learners, they realized how their personal experience was challenged and infused into the topics and planned experiences. As a result of these variables, the AR team found that discomfort was an essential experience that should be expected and needed so that they could connect to being out of your comfort zone. They also indicated that there needed to be an intentional purpose toward acquiring cultural awareness regarding personal perceptions, but also driven to appreciate other cultures. This would also involve connecting to misconceptions and how those could influence negative cultural implications. They found that the process was an adjustment that they too desired for future participants to conceptualize. They regarded this process as: (a) honeymoon, (b) culture shock, (c) gradual adjustment of perspective, and (d) feeling at home. This process was observed by the researcher as the AR team progressed through the process.

The AR team indicated that future teams of learners begin to associate with a higher level of mindfulness, where they would connect to their classroom setting and certain situations. They might be able to bring those ideas to the group to discuss in real time at every session with a listening partner who also shares a moment of inquiry. Finally, adding media to the professional learning experience was helpful in building a context and visual representation. The idea of incorporating certain movies and documentaries related to race matters would prove to help in connection and dialogue experiences.

The terms empathy and sympathy were repeatedly documented during this session and heard from conversations in focus groups. The AR team found that being able to consciously confirm feelings of sympathy and empathy were critical as they transferred through what they called role reversal during the experiences. Finally, the AR team found that the modeling of a successful culturally responsive classroom lesson and time to share with peers was essential as a viable experience for amplified understanding and conceptual understanding.

I think the experience. It's the experiential part of it. If I wasn't touring the schools and getting to know each other and have those little conversations you have on the side, I'm not sure if I would have been as invested...it was very thoughtful with open conversations.

Data-driven. The AR team was unanimously connected to the results offered at the onset of the AR experience. Being able to indulge in data that was disaggregated for race, gender, and class allowed them to view the disparities in the data at a higher scale. Therefore, the team recommended that future teams analyze previous year's behavior data based on race before and after implementing the CRT professional learning. Additionally, they recommended that the present school population begin to analyze district assessments to show the different results organized by race, gender, and economic status. As one participant claimed, *Data, Data, is the key.*

Theme 2-Culturally Responsive Teaching is About Empowering Students to Learn Differently to Promote More Independent Learning Opportunities.

Theme 2 concluded that CRT is about empowering students to learn differently to promote more independent learning opportunities. As AR team members engaged in the

experiences they began to think of students in their classroom. One member purposefully focused on her Hispanic students and thought that if they were in the United States their entire life that they should be able to thrive. In contrast, a member also thought of the collectivist process in her class of thinking and how she wanted to avoid so many competitive activities in the classroom and refrain from having a winner and loser in all of her plans. Her thoughts from Hammond's book regarding collectivist and individualistic views caused her to think of building students to be collective with others while learning how to be independent learners.

Somebody is getting ready to get distinguished who's Hispanic in my room because... We have kids that have been in the country their entire life, they are high performing students, how come when it comes to standardized tests they aren't performing as well as some of their colleagues. So that's my personal goal this year.

I thought that Culturally Responsive Teaching is a positive-teacher student relationship that acknowledges and embraces the differences of race, culture, economic status, religious preferences and teaching with these differences in mind. I think cultural responsiveness is helping students focus on their differences as well as the differences of others without prejudice.

Theme 3- Action Research involves adult learners becoming more engaged collaboratively in creating culturally responsive learning spaces for students

AR team members were positive about the action research members and team. Some knew that this was from the conscientious plan to design group norms, while others believe in the deliberate work associated with choosing members who will participate professionally.

But what with this is the responsibility of us not just being culturally responsive to our students. We need to be culturally responsive to each other too and become understanding of where each other comes from.

I think it was almost a microcosm of implementing the things we read and you could do them almost on an adult level...it created a safe space. You get a chance to see things that you have never thought about or from different points of view and how different people process things and I just think it was great because then it creates more of almost a kumbaya thing among teachers that I don't know if we necessarily would have had outside of the setting.

Theme 4- Action Research Is Most Effective When All Team Members Are Open to Varying Perspectives

Theme 4 results revealed that action research is most effective when all team members are open to varying perspectives. As discussed in Chapter 4, the AR team was a diverse group of educators. Having a team that had various years of experience and different backgrounds and positions provided many opportunities to engage in thoughtful conversation that yielded diverse perspectives. When AR team members were asked whether it would have been as comfortable to complete this learning with others that didn't know, they all agreed that they liked doing this with a group of familiar individuals. They felt that they could be more transparent and real and that it allowed them to engage quicker due to the individuals and safety that they felt after norms were established. As an example of this engagement to the overall purpose, one AR team described the intentional connection to the work by her comments of:

Yes, because I felt like we had a goal to reach. We have to reach at goals to create something, so I felt more pressured to do the content.

Summary of Findings for Research Question 3

As the action research team worked collaboratively to develop consensus related to a CRT professional learning plan, they found the action research design to be successful. One major finding was that when developing a team for this topic, a diverse team is essential in adding context to the many opportunities that arise for conceptualization. Additionally, being able to connect the work to not only their personal journey, but also assuring that strategies and opportunities are applied directly to the classroom, was a productive way for the CRT professional learning to be applied most efficiently. Overall, the AR team was compelled to consider an action plan that would directly affect student outcomes. As a result, they would have a logic model and plan to proceed with applying specific strategies to lesson plans and instructional frameworks.

Summary

This action research case study was created to identify the impact of professional learning and CRT at an elementary school in the southeast. The findings were positive for determining that experiential professional learning enables participants to grow in their self-efficacy, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs. This study took place during 6 months. The time spent reading and engaging in experiences added to the strength of the study, but proved that with even a small amount of intervention based on experiential theory that teachers can grow and change the way they interact with racially and linguistically diverse students.

Participants with the most experience of (10-35 years) showed the most growth in their self-efficacy than those with less experience. This factor could be because of their engagement in education or due to their personal experiences. That is a gap in literature that would be interesting to seek related to the years of service, race, position and area of the country that self-efficacy is related and compared. This study has the potential to raise many questions for further research and study, but the hope is that it engages schools to consider the power of professional learning on adult learners when experiences are implemented on a consistent basis.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary of Findings

“Ignoring equity, not merely in education but in wages, housing, health and quality of life has contributed to widening levels of inequality and is undermining our well-being and our future as a nation” (Blankstein, Noguera, & Kelly, 2016, p. 5). Equity has been a widely used word in academia and as this study builds a case to incorporate CRT professional learning, it bears witness to consider the larger context that this is associated with. When the word equity is raised to an economically diverse audience, those with affluence and privilege often become concerned, while those in financial need are more engaged (Blankstein, Noguera, & Kelly, 2016). Sometimes, it spawns a “zero-sum scenario; a perception that if we do more for those who are disadvantaged, it will mean there will be less for the advantaged” (Blankstein, Noguera, & Kelly, 2016). It is recommended that a dialogue commence that settles the debate while offering additional support for understanding this assumption.

This action research case study sought to address the impact that professional learning had on teachers’ self-efficacy along with their understanding and learning of culturally responsive teaching in a professional learning communities. The findings revealed that the AR teams’ descriptions of their knowledge and understanding aligned with what previous research associates with CRT have assumed.

Three primary research questions guiding this study are as follows:

- What are teachers' pedagogical beliefs and attitudes relative to CRT and how do those beliefs and attitudes influence their teaching?
- How does participation in PLC impact teachers' conceptual understanding and use of CRT strategies in the classroom?
- What does an AR team learn through the use of CRT in the classroom?

This chapter will outline and provide conclusions resulting from the analysis of the literature discussed in Chapter 2 and the findings reported in Chapter 5. Finally, closing with the implications and recommendations for future schools, districts and future studies.

Analysis and Conclusions

The purpose of this action research case study was to analyze the impact that professional learning had on their self-efficacy and their learning engagement of culturally responsive teaching. Included in the following conclusions are analysis and findings from this action research study aligned to pertinent literature. There will be two organized categories: those related to culturally responsive teaching and professional learning communities and analysis correlated to action research. Additionally, there are reflections related to the conceptual and theoretical framework that guided this study and my position as a researcher.

This research helps others to connect. Not only connect to one another on a higher level during what Singleton (2015) has named *courageous conversations* but to connect in ways that cause students to thrive and improve academically and socially. Asa Hilliard (1995) suggests, providing quality education for all children is not a question of educators' experience or

academic degrees; rather, it is a question of their personal willingness to fulfill their professional responsibilities:

The knowledge and skills to educate all children already exists. Because we have lived in a historically oppressive society, educational issues tend to be framed as technical issues, which denies their political origin and meaning... There are no pedagogical barriers to teaching and learning when willing people are prepared and made available to children. (p. 200).

Singleton (2015) says that “to give all children the fair and equitable education they deserve, schools need to analyze how it is that are serving or not serving their students of color” (p. 59). Therefore, it was significant for our AR team to add in courageous conversations,” in a professional learning community about culturally responsive teaching. Singleton, in his book, *Courageous Conversations about Race* (2015), says that a courageous conversation “offers a protocol and a strategy for school systems to eliminate racial achievement disparities” (p. 2). Specifically, a Courageous Conversation, “(1) engages those who won’t talk (2) sustains the conversation when it gets uncomfortable or diverted and (3) *deepens* the conversation to the point where authentic understanding and meaningful actions occur (Singleton G, 2015, p. 26). Educators are then able to learn more about themselves and others and gain deeper understanding to participate in interracial dialogue about race and address racial issues in schools (Singleton, 2015). Thus, the ability to offer schools and educational entities protocol on this process contributes to school improvement efforts in building equity, by providing a pathway to hold these oftentimes avoided conversations in schools.

Pedagogical Beliefs and Attitudes

Students need to feel that they belong, and are significant in the eyes of the adults in the building while having a platform for enjoyable and fun activities. When teachers understand

their impact and how their partnerships and flexibilities can help students to achieve, classrooms will be places that children thrive in becoming successful citizens.

The hope is that teachers in HES school will use their learning from this experience to spread the knowledge they garnered to improve not only race relations, but improve the reading capacity of all students who feel that they are unable to learn and become successful readers and writers due to teachers who don't believe they can. An engaging, high-expectancy filled classroom, school and district will motivate students intrinsically to conquer their free education that they are guaranteed by law to have.

Conclusion 1- A Professional Learning Program That Enables Teachers to Develop Higher Self-Efficacy May Transform Beliefs and Attitudes

Prior research has identified important relationships between teacher self-efficacy and a teacher's ability to consider students' prior experiences, community settings, cultural backgrounds, and ethnic identities (Callaway, 2017). In addition to a strong sense of teacher self-efficacy, a teacher should have confidence in his/her ability to create a dynamic, culturally complex learning environment (Callaway, 2017). Therefore, it is critical to support teachers in developing a strong sense of self-efficacy before their formal teaching career begins and once they have begun teaching. In accordance with all of the research related to the influential nature of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1977), teachers should foster development in becoming competent and confident in their ability to execute the practices associated with culturally responsive teaching (Siwatu, 2009). Becoming engaged in activities that measure their self-efficacy like the instruments used in this study could inform teachers of areas that require attention or enhancement.

Conclusion 2- Creation of a Professional Learning Community Where Teachers Can Engage Others in Bias and Teacher Perception Discussions Can Improve Teacher/Student Relationships

A PLCs structure is composed of collaborative teams whose members work interdependently to achieve common goals (DuFour et al., 2004). The team serves as the driver of the work that drives the PLC effort. When creating a PLC for culturally responsive teaching, it is imperative for teachers could indulge in “courageous conversations that would possibly enable deeper understanding for all involved. The activities chosen for this study’s PLC were intentional in allowing teachers to personally connect to their own implicit bias and how that influenced their perceptions. The findings from this study concluded that none of the AR team members had previous training or professional learning in their pre-service teaching experiences or current positions. This connects to the need to provide carefully facilitated professional learning for teachers.

Building strong teacher and student relationships is one of the key levers of improving student learning. “To reach their fullest potential, students and teachers who know and understand them” (Wood, 2017, p.5). Only when we know and understand our students can we build the relationships with them that allow us to provide the safe, supportive learning environments that enhance their growth and help them develop into capable and productive adults (Wood, 2017). Additionally, being able to establish a viable professional learning community that delves deeply in culturally responsive teaching is essential. Schools and school districts must bring conversations related to race, bias and building relationships into the forefront of all professional learning opportunities. There must be an end to the current approaches and practices, where schools only focus on pedagogy and book sense and move

swiftly to understanding the social-political issues that surrounds the students in our classrooms. The AR team members' results revealed that efficacy of knowing how to inform students' of their cultures contributions to society, math and science were rated low. The conclusions that the AR team drew were that they needed to research this and proactively incorporate these facts into their learning throughout the year once they received their class lists. Their attitude changed regarding this because they realized that this knowing might help their students feel more valued by knowing more about their cultures contributions. The results and conclusions of the case study revealed that the use of action research proved to be beneficial in effecting transformational change in teacher efficacy. Due to school success being so highly correlated with success in life, this race-based disequilibrium in academic achievement continues to be one of the core social justice issues of our time (Howard, 2016). Therefore, a deepening of engagement on this practice of action research within a school's context could engage teachers and improve teacher/student relationships.

Conclusion 3- Participating in Cultural Experiences Has the Potential to Inform Teachers of Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices and Strategies.

Experiential learning theory defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 1984, p.41). Participating in the cultural experiences proved to be beneficial for the AR team members. Their ability to conceptualize their personal journey with the content of CRT made for a positive improvement in their self-efficacy and understanding of CRT. The AR team reported specifically that the picture walk, privilege walk and readings of articles, poems and assigned text offered them a sense of connectedness to the learning of CRT that they do not think they would have learned as much

in its absence. Journaling and online learning of CRT were two activities that were not favored by the AR team and may have been activities that future teams could adapt for implementation. Creating a professional learning program for CRT that employs experiences has the potential to increase understanding of culturally responsive teaching.

Conclusion 4- Engaging in Privilege Conversations Based on the Intersectionality of Race, Gender and Class adds Context to Cultural Conflict in Society

Participating in conversations related to privilege emerged throughout the study. Some conversations were directly related to white privilege specifically and others emerged based on race, gender and class. The AR team read three articles during the course of the study that offered them opportunities to engage at a higher level with this societal phenomenon. Many AR team members were compelled to include the impact of the white privilege articles in their final interviews. Regardless of race, they all find that privilege plays a part in their lives. Most poignant for the group was their participation in the Privilege Walk during the last class. They were moved by its transparency and how it affected their perception of their colleagues and their students. They concluded that this activity could be shared in the classroom to make more connections to their students and different views of their home and life situations. Furthermore, it forced them to consider the ways that they and their students were benefiting or not from the privileges that they had. Several AR team members, regardless of race, believed that White privilege was real and evident and after reading the characteristics of it through reading, realized that things they took for granted were indeed privileges. This quote speaks to the thoughts conveyed:

"White privilege is a hidden and transparent preference that is often difficult to address. Only on closer inspection do we see how it creates a sense of entitlement, generates perks and advantages

for white people and elevates our status in the world." (Holladay, 2000).

White AR team members commented that they were not aware of their privilege until reading the articles. "White skin privilege is not something that white people necessarily do, create, or enjoy on purpose" (Holloway 2000, p. 36). When we think of the impact that this could have for students in classrooms, knowing the high rate of White teachers in the teaching profession, it may go unnoticed that Whites may be immune to a lot of challenges that racially and linguistically diverse people face. White privilege shapes the world in which we live — the way that we navigate and interact with one another and with the world (Holloway, 2000). Discussing privilege based on race, gender and class could build higher understanding of how demographical characteristics influenced the lives of others.

Conclusion 5- Perceptions of the home-school connection between teachers and parents with implementing culturally appropriate strategies require support and further professional learning

As mentioned in the thematic review, the home-school connection posed a deficit for our team in their feelings of efficacy toward their ability to bridge. The AR team members at HES have grown to believe that parents are considered an outside component whose impact can support student learning. However, they have come to also believe that if parent support is not as evident as hoped, that focusing on this or parent involvement, as an excuse does not influence positive outcomes. The premise in the results reveal that there may need to be more intentional and proactive engagement with parents to build relationships and dissolve misconceptions between both factors. The strongest alliance you can build is that between teacher and parent. Research includes a vast amount of studies related to teacher expectations based on race and class background. Teachers have been known to view White and Asian

students as “easier to challenge intellectually than those that are Black and Latino and, similarly students of middle-or upper-class backgrounds are easier to engage than those from lower class backgrounds” (Sleeter, & Cornbleth, 2011, p. 6). With classrooms continuously evolving in ethnic and linguistic ways, it is imperative that educators have a non-biased view of the students in their schools and classrooms by not allowing stereotypes to influence their perceptions. “These expectations are based on teachers’ beliefs about the extent to which parents value education” (Sleeter, & Cornbleth, 2011, p. 6). This research however, further proves that perceptions and beliefs affect the rigorous learning that all students receive. When teachers hold high expectations for every student regardless of race, gender or class it helps students to accomplish more in a diverse society. AR Teams that focus on the home-school connections in their professional learning plan may be able to enhance and improve parent and school relationships.

Experiential Learning and Professional Learning

Conclusion 1- Creation of Experiential Learning Activities ay Yield Higher Understanding and Application of Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices and Strategies

AR team members were influential in their CRT learning based on their participation in the activities provided. The first activity that they engaged in was forming norms for the action research process. This process of norm making set the tone and supported members in feeling confident and comfortable with the new learning that would ensue. The act of purposefully discussing what was important to them in small groups aided in the group moving forward positively. Additionally, the process of implementing Kolb’s experiential theory with adults provided an environment where they felt that taking risks was possible. All AR team members spoke of how the activities like the norm creation, picture walk and outside activities added to their toolbox and conceptual understanding of CRT. Adding experiences to professional

learning programs could result in a higher level of learning for collaborative teams. Avalos (2011) defined the core of professional development to be about teachers learning, learning how to learn, and transforming their knowledge into practice for the benefit of their students' growth. The act of keeping their students in mind during each experience was a natural occurrence for the team. Having teams consciously consider how experiences could be adapted to work with the age groups they teach may be a positive way to transition the adult experiences to student experiences in the classroom.

Conclusion 2- The Facilitation of Culturally Responsive Teaching has the Potential to Increase Environments where Participants are able to be Transparent and Engaged

Dealing with racial challenges head on is a goal of ideal facilitation of CRT with adults. The idea of discussing problematic racial conditions causes discomfort. Therefore, the facilitation of CRT professional learning plays a pivotal role in the learning of this approach to teaching and learning. Typical diversity trainings are sometimes focused on figuring out ways we are alike as opposed to addressing our obvious differences (Singleton G.E. 2015). This traditional diversity training, has been unsuccessful in helping schools eliminate racial achievement disparities, in hopes of making sure people feel comfortable and not engaged in discomfort in interracial dialogue (Singleton, G.E. 2015). To begin to mend our nation, schools and teacher/student relationships, educators have great influence. With teachers' ability to give voice and meaning to the racial divide that is becoming more evident, it could begin the process of healing and transformation. The facilitator must provide a brave space (Arao, 2013) for staff to engage in authentic dialogue that encourages participants to be personally responsible for engaging in difficult conversations about race. Though shorter opportunities prevented long and deep conversations for this study, the potential for a facilitator to help participants to develop

collective efficacy in through experiential opportunities has great potential. “To develop authentic interracial relationships, we must break our collective silence” (Singleton, G.E. 2015, p. 75).

Conclusion 3-Defining Terms Relative to the Cultural Responsive Teaching Approach can Lessen Misconceptions

When preparing for the CRT professional learning process of this study, I was exposed to references, books, and literature that was filled with various perceptions and definitions for key terms. As a way of defining race and racial identity, it was found that research-based definitions were influential in building a context and understanding of what CRT meant. However, it is essential to consider how the definitions relate to the team. Giving them the power to conceptualize their own meaning of the words used was prevailing. AR team members appeared to be proud to recite their definitions at final interview sessions. This internal thought process allowed them to define their learning according to the content, and experiences that added to their learning. Furthermore, when definitions were provided it influenced their misconceptions, providing a gateway for corrected definitions based on research. As I read and gathered literature from different sources, I realized that many authors like Singleton (2015) who included words in his text like: racial complexity, interracial discourse and racial disparity added much to my personal knowledge of this CRT approach. The act of continuously being well read, making meaning and being associated with current and scholarly literature could increase the facilitation and conceptualization of the CRT approach.

Action Research

Action research was the preferred approach for this case study because it applied action to a problem that needed addressing. Improving student achievement while providing access to

equitable outcomes is an issue that continues to surmount in schools across the United States. Having the ability to apply strategies and interventions in real time is an ideal process for teachers. As a principal and insider researcher, I had a personal stake in improving student performance and the implementation of culturally responsive teaching, therefore utilizing a professional learning experience under an action research umbrella was the best choice.

Conclusion 1-The Implementation of Action Research Teams Could Affect Teacher Knowledge of Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

The purpose of action-oriented research is to generate knowledge that can be used to address practical concerns of local communities, organizations, and groups and incorporates local understandings of specific practices and issues (Small and Uttal: 2005). Action research distinguishes four kinds of knowing, reflecting different way in which we deal with and act within the world (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014):

1. experiential knowing-the knowledge arising as we encounter the realities around us;
2. presentational knowing-the knowledge expressed in our giving form to this experiential knowing through language, images, music, painting and the like;
3. propositional knowing- the knowledge of distilling our experiential and presentational knowing into theories, statements and propositions; and
4. practical knowing the knowledge that brings the other three forms of knowing to full fruition by doing appropriate things skillfully and competently (p. 44)

This act of knowing was a recursive process that the AR team experienced. At the duration of the study, the CRT awareness continued to permeate each team member where they were compelled to further conversations with me and with others about current trends in the media related to race. The act of working on a problem enabled team members to as one AR

team member stated, *We had a goal that we had to reach.* Participation in an action research team could have direct influence with problems of practice at schools and institutions.

Conclusion 2-Action Research Can Enhance the Involvement of Adult Learners' Approach to Student Improvement Efforts

Researchers have discussed student improvement efforts for decades. Furthermore, reform policies and discussions at the federal and state level, yield the desire to have student improvement at the top of all discussions. This AR team continuously connected to the data at the onset of the action research experience and they were compelled to connect students in all their focus group conversations and experiences. McKenzie & Skrla (2006) discussed two aspects of Equitable and Excellent Teaching (EET) that research conducted by scholars like themselves has identified as influential in helping students to perform at higher levels. The figure below (Figure 8) details this concept and how action research teams could address equity conscious teaching.

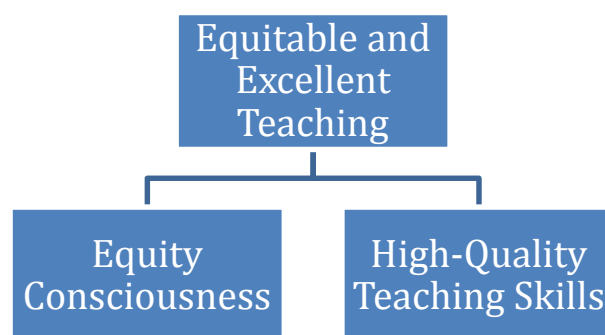


Figure 8.

Equitable and Excellent Teaching (EET). Adapted from McKenzie, Skrla, and Scheurich (2006)

This AR team realized that having a differentiated approach that was not only equitable and excellent needed to be grounded on equity consciousness and high-quality teaching skills. In

the empirical study related to the effectiveness of PL and CRT (Appendix A), it was revealed that the evaluation of professional learning would yield more connection and value of teacher needs and perception of the PL they receive (Smyth, 2013). Additionally, this study showed that evaluating PL would help to identify needs and implications of PL on teaching and learning (Smyth, 2013).

Conclusion 3-Action Research Teams that are Diverse and Open to Varying Perspectives of Others, have the Potential to Improve Teachers' Confidence in Employing Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

The development of a diverse AR team was intentional and purposeful. The AR team felt that knowing one another added to their ability to engage at a higher level. This comfort, though not always possible is something to consider when engaging in this work. Regardless, of the manner that relationships were built prior to the formal acquisition of training, a team that comes together for this work, will yield thoughts that are more diverse if they are varied in years of experience, race, and class. Naturally, a team will have various socioeconomic characteristics that can add background to various conversations. The AR team realized that though they were brought to the conversation displaying a perception that they were so different, they walked away realizing that their fears, misconceptions and reflections were quite the same in many areas. Nevertheless, being able to engage teams in multiple perspectives may increase teachers' confidence in this work.

Conceptual Theoretical Framework Reflections

The conceptual theoretical framework (refer to Figure 2) served as the foundation for this action research study. The AR team worked with the primary researcher to use this framework for the purpose of the study. The purpose statement led the action research team to

ensure that the team collaborated to unfold solutions for incorporating CRT professional learning. Based on the conceptual theoretical framework, the team successfully engaged in the process to finding meaningful solutions.

The AR team participated in professional learning based on adult learning theory and experiential theory to learn the tenets of CRT. The AR team was able to base their learning as adults by having a self-directed learning experience. They were given time to decide if this AR process fit with their goals and readiness for learning. One characteristic of Knowles' theory focuses also on the learning shifts that adults go through as moving from one of subject-centeredness to one of problem centeredness (Knowles, 1984). Therefore, the action research process of working on a problem of inequity and low student performance outcomes was a naturally aligned experience for them to participate. Finally, as a child continues to mature into adults, their motivation moves from external to internal (Knowles, 1984). This theory was a foundation of the AR study because its principles fit well with the association to professional learning and action research that note:

1. Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
2. Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for the learning activities.
3. Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and
4. Impact to their job or personal life
5. Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented (Kearsley, 2010)

Furthermore, AR team members were influenced and transformed by the experiences that they participated in that helped guide their learning of CRT. The focus group discussions and interview findings revealed that the experiences were new and pivotal to them learning about the approach.

As a result of their professional learning being shaped with adult learning theory and experiential theory in mind, they were able to learn the rationale of CRT and themselves. The ability to explore ways that their implicit bias and perceptions were influencing how they interacted with their students, was reached due to the theories being a mainstay for the action research process. One of the teachers was motivated to add an English for Second Language Learners (ESOL) endorsement because he wanted to connect more to his linguistically diverse students. Stories like this continue to surmount as AR team members continue to become moved to evoke changes in student outcomes.

Finally, the feedback during the evaluative process of the research design provided ample feedback that this conceptual theoretical framework was successful for the AR team members' learning. They were motivated intrinsically to share their learning with others while continuing to study the CRT approach for applicable implementation of strategies in the classroom.

Implications

The goal of this action research case study was to address the problem of inequitable outcomes for marginalized students through the influences of the teachers who serve them. The purpose of addressing the teachers' engagement of CRT professional learning was to influence change at HES. The impact of the action research teams' work has had an effect on future professional learning practices and designs.

Recommendations for Professional Learning

"We learn best by doing" DuFour R. DuFour, R., Eaker, 2006, p.1). Teachers need to have job-embedded learning that focuses on improving student achievement throughout the school year. Those who participated in this action research experience commented on the

meaningful interaction of the PLC, due to the influence of the experiences planned. They felt that it would have been meaningless if they were not allowed to discuss and hear the perspectives of others. Therefore, when designing professional learning, experiential theory should be considered as a foundation during planning. It is imperative that facilitators of culturally responsive teaching provide valuable experiences for educators to effectively learn cultural proficiency and ways to improve instruction. Providing professional learning that is episodic in nature does not provide lasting change for growth in our schools. Indulging in professional learning that is not transformative is not going to provide intentional purpose to narrow gaps and improve achievement for all students. This ethical and moral work must fall in the hands of the adults who view inclusion, equity and consciousness as important themes. The conceptual and theoretical framework of adult learning and the experiential theory work in tandem to create a flexible opportunity for schools and districts to follow. The action research team itself is the professional learning community that can be focused on learning the tenets to become culturally proficient teachers. This study proved that using an action research approach could be a practical and efficient process to create a viable professional learning community focused on becoming culturally proficient.

As schools have the autonomy to decide on behavior management systems, it is recommended that they carefully consider how systems support all students. Primarily, research has shown that token systems such as systems that reward students for good behavior may be counterproductive in building independent learners who are motivated intrinsically rather than extrinsically. A teacher's language and understanding of child development and cultural characteristics and needs must be proactively considered to counteract misinterpretations and misconceptions about the student behavior that racially and

linguistically diverse students may display. Students should be included in creating the norms and procedures in their classrooms so that it breeds an inclusive environment.

As local schools and districts consider implementing an AR team, it is imperative that the facilitator is highly skilled and capable of creating those brave spaces (Arao, 2013) where teachers can feel free and capable to personally connect to this work. It is also recommended that the team members be diverse and have varied experiences and perspectives to be able to participate fully in the dialogue and professional learning experiences. If the group holds a high level of inquiry, it will also add positively to the work. The kind of inquiry I am referencing derives from an attitude of interest and curiosity. It implies a desire to build a relationship that will lead to more communication. It also implies that one makes oneself vulnerable, and, thereby, arouses positive helping behavior in the other person (Schein, 2013).

Recommendations for Instruction

Student achievement is the outcome that schools are expected to obtain. The pathway to student achievement involves a high level of teacher knowledge, passion, practice and persistence. Schools are charged with making safe, joyful and challenging learning environments for all students. The adults in the building are morally and professionally responsible for the education of our students to reach their highest potential. Therefore, it is imperative that administrators and teachers are equipped with a viable proper professional learning experience that would support their growth and understanding of this approach to learning. The way that teachers deliver instruction is key to positive outcomes. Students are conscious of what their teachers' language whether verbal or non-verbal conveys. If they are receiving feedback through this language, that they are smart or not, it could affect how they learn. This is a connection in the literature to expectancies for success. It is imperative that

teachers who embed this approach into their daily work, help students see themselves differently, while creating a counter narrative, to whether they are good enough or smart enough (Hammond, 2018). Milner and Howard (2015) added in his book recommendations from Gloria Ladson-Billings, Geneva Gay, Carol Lee and Tyrone Howard who have stressed the importance of teaching curriculum from a responsive and relevant mindset.

Recommendations for practices include the following: (a) locate curriculum sites that relate to students and excite them about upcoming learning, (b) relate learning to students' life experiences and point of view explicitly, (c) expose students to a curriculum that has some references outside the students' own world view, cultural, and belief experiences to draw connections and lessen misconceptions, and (d) view students themselves as curriculum texts and utilize them for making connections to the curriculum (p.62).

The AR team realized that they needed to be more student focused rather than content focused and they were encouraged to reevaluate how they teach and organize instruction. The CRT approach can work in districts, schools and classrooms if teachers couple this approach closely with the delivery of instruction.

Recommendations for Colleges and Universities

To note, this action research case study used three empirical studies derived from college, under the leadership of a professor who was curious about the learning of CRT with pre-service teachers (Siwatu, Putnam, Starker, & Lewis, 2015). That inquiry and other empirical studies like it, spawned studies that showed that having CRT courses would make a large impact on how students learn. It is imperative that all students whether in education courses or not, be mandated to register for classes that fully embed the culturally responsive pedagogy into its matriculation track. Teacher preparation courses should have at least two

courses that are taught by instructors who are well prepared to facilitate culturally proficient dialogue and experiences that are grounded in the adult learning theory and tenets of experiential theory. Additionally, as teacher-interns prepare to integrate into schools for onsite learning experiences, it is imperative that the assigned mentor be a model of culturally proficiency. Bandura's social cognitive theory provides a helpful framework from which to understand the influence of mentor beliefs on the ways in which teacher-interns come to view their students (Bandura, 1977). This theory is grounded in the principle that we learn best by observing others in an action-oriented experience.

Providing a purposeful rationale for PLCs could mirror also, what is needed for pre-service programs. Based on Siwatu's findings, three tenets to consider are to: (a) assist teacher education programs that culturally responsive teaching is a topic that needs to be included throughout the curriculum (b) devise ways to infuse teacher education curriculum with the scholarship of culturally responsive teaching, and (c) identify the types of activities and experiences that assist in the development of preservice teachers beliefs (Siwatu, 2009). This recommendation is under the assumption that the faculty members, who lead these discussions and trainings, have been trained in ways to facilitate culturally responsive training after personal experiences, implicit bias and equity development have been sought. Knowing the relevancy and socio-political climate facing racially and linguistically diverse students is essential in integrating CRT pedagogy into course content.

There are several colleges and universities who have valued this sentiment; however, there are several more that need to follow this model. Perhaps a dialogue is continuously needed at the federal and state levels to require this addition be added to all programs, especially those that prepare students to become teachers.

Recommendations for School Districts

Ubuntu school district is already taking steps in a positive direction related to this work. There are district personnel who have gathered a diverse group of principals to lead sessions for leadership and counseling staff that has proven to be successful. Additionally, the discipline office has collaborated with district personnel and schools to review discipline practices and deploy new practices that would eliminate any subversive consequences for students of color. Disaggregating data among different demographic groups has always been held as a value in Ubuntu school district. The district and local school leadership teams are expected and encouraged to review data with staff along these practices frequently.

In preparation for this study, I previously participated in a 300-hour course and at least six college courses that focused on race relations. Such undergraduate and graduate courses, like the history of race in America to the History of Hip-Hop to Leadership in a Diverse Society and Community Relations supported my background knowledge in this important work. To that note, it is highly recommended that facilitators be trained in the research and approach of CRT to learning how to embed an action research team through the cyclical design before suggesting schools to implement this type of program. The processes that the participants travel through during this process need to be nurtured and challenged by a strong facilitator. In the empirical study authored by Voltz, Brazil, & Scott (2003) (Appendix A), the conclusions revealed and substantiated the results from this case study that professional development can influence how teachers view cultural differences while expanding their understanding of diversity relates to various aspects of schooling (Voltz et al., 2003). This preparedness coupled with PL evaluation could make a compelling difference in how teachers interact with students.

Milner and Howard (2015) challenge leaders to identify and build on the many assets of teachers and to support them, just as we do students, in getting better. This reminds us however, of not quickly entering school and districts to rescue them and save them creating such a sense of urgency that it is counterproductive (Singleton, 2015). Rather, it serves to help us to be reflective through facilitation and professional learning of how best to improve teachers, schools and districts from the inside out.

Recommendations for Teacher and Leader Standards

Every educator is evaluated utilizing standards of instruction and due to its constant association with teacher; performance a school district could consider utilizing the teacher and leadership performance standards as an option for improvement considerations. When reviewing the need to improve student performance, there is a relative alignment to a teacher's performance. When viewing teacher and leader standards there may be apparent avenues to embed discussions of improving culturally responsive teaching within. It would be ideal to have a standard firmly detailed as CRT. If not possible, then a recommendation is to embed culturally responsive teaching comments for every standard so that there is constant attention and accountability for each standard in every school. Additionally, school administrators need to also "promote culturally responsive school environments" (Kalifa, M. A. et al, 2015, p. 1246). Having the standards alone will not affirm the conscientious use of CRT organically with fidelity in the school environment.

Recommendations for Parents

This study had no direct connection to parents, however, for purpose to engage at higher levels, we contend that this should be included as a possible portion of future professional learning. The results of the self-efficacy studies, proved that the AR team members felt

disconnected from their parents and methods to bridge the relationships. Many articles and books speak to how important the parent and school relationship is. We also know that oftentimes, parents may feel disconnected as well with how to build those relationships. As a result, perhaps a session related to the Home/School environment may be worth exploring.

This case study could be partly related to the empirical findings from the Hughes and Kwok (2007) study (Appendix A) that related to several factors relating to building stronger alliances with African-American students and parents. One of the findings the study revealed was that African American children and their parents were “less likely to experience home school relationships and student-teacher relationships that support children’s achievement” (Hughes & Kwok, 2007, p. 47). The study referred to how teacher perceptions of behavior and learning abilities influenced lower teacher relationship quality between teachers and students. This was reciprocated in how they connected with their parents. A variance in parenting practices, communication styles, and educational beliefs may be related to “lower teacher relatedness for African American students and parents” (Hughes & Kwok, 2007, p. 47). The results from this case study resulted in the same conclusions revealed from this empirical finding, that teachers may need additional support in how to build stronger relationships with racially and linguistically diverse families. Hughes and Kwok (2007) offered a suggestion that uniformly fits with this case study findings as well. The undergirding theme is that “teachers receive very little or no preparation in building successful alliances with parents or supportive and warm relationships with students” (Hughes & Kwok, 2007, p. 48). Therefore, increasing professional learning opportunities for teachers to connect with students and their parents could help students have higher academic success and build stronger alliances.

Researcher Self-Reflection

Leading this action research case study was a challenging, yet rewarding experience. My positionality may have posed an impact on the data collected and findings from this study. Nevertheless, I was able to affect personal and professional change with a group of teachers and teacher leaders. This study has the impact to affect transformation with not just children in schools, but for the adults who engage with them. The AR team members were very interested and curious about racial discussions and issues and the weight of the work never interfered with the study or the process, it added positively to the study. I had a visceral fear of this process complicating my principalship role and how the team would conceptualize their learning. At times, the topics and experiences made our team emotional, confused and even sad, yet, I took risks when planning the use of articles, experiences and conversations. The tears that were shed by many on the team were just a glimpse into their yearning to learn more and help their students learn at higher levels. They reflected on specific students through the study and having them, return to their classrooms to build trusting relationships with their students was realized even without intent. This work provided a pathway to transform and build viable consciousness. At the end, it proved to improve my facilitation as a professional learning presenter and guided me through the complicated work for of transforming minds for future consideration. “Rather than blaming factors external to schools for causing the racial achievement gap, educators should address the critical factors within their control that influence student achievement” (Singleton, G.E., 2015, p. 87). Reviewing qualifications, expectations, and cultural proficiency of educators, the rigor of the curriculum, and the effectiveness of instruction should be the focus (Singleton, G.E, 2015). Beginning with self is the purpose behind this work, and regardless if policy states it at the federal level or not, the

goal is to do the inside work first. As Singleton (2015) states, we need to “establish a racial context that is personal, local and immediate” (p. 87).

There were times I felt guilty about having teachers attend sessions after school after such a busy day of work, to support me in completing my study. However, as the study moved forward, I witnessed team members coming with energy, excitement and a desire to connect and engage. Even when I felt apologetic about holding meetings, I would always be corrected with statements like, “*Oh, Mrs. Thompson, I love coming and actually wish we could meet more.*” Comments like these help to fuel me to remember that this work is needed to save our children and it has a moral and ethical purpose. Once, I was reminded of how much this work could mean for our students, I was able to deliberately find a deeper purpose for this work. Being able to help teachers understand diversity, equity and inclusion and how they can use all three concepts for good is essential.

Consequently, as a dual-role action researcher, I felt that I was able to aid in transforming minds and helping teachers connect to himself or herself which in turn benefited our school and the students that dwelled in it. “Culturally Responsive Teaching alone cannot solve all the problems of improving the education of marginalized students of color (Gay, 2010). There are systemic issues that have continuously undergirded efforts to move student performance forward related to inequitable policies and funding along with our polarizing current political administration. Without true reform, this improvement conversation will be dismal, significant and long lasting.

Recommendations for Future Research

This case study was purposeful and necessary for educational research. Although it was written as a doctoral requirement, I was emboldened to pursue a study that was transformative

for adults and students. It was a genuine and actionable process that will continue through my tenure at HES and beyond. So far, two individuals have shown interest in following this study to create a professional learning series for schools. Additionally, the findings will be offered to district personnel as a possible program for upcoming new teacher professional learning sessions. The action research team is interested in seeing how student data will be affected in action research team members' classroom. Therefore, the goal is to see if even the small amount of professional learning impacted student learning. Though not entirely causal, the team has an interest in how the new teacher development could possibly positively affect student behaviors, teacher/student relationships and learning outcomes.

I have continued to read and research throughout my study and have interest in how teachers of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds view their students and how their view of them helps or hinders social emotional learning and academic progress. I also think it would be a telling experience to have a research team follow students through different classes to see how their experiences add to the work of racial inequity research. Receiving feedback about how elementary aged students view learning and teacher impact would be helpful in getting more research related to the impact of this study.

Perhaps, further research could concentrate on replicating the findings from the study at colleges, schools and other various entities with novice and veteran teachers utilizing the self-efficacy scales utilized. Future research could reveal how different types of professional learning activities compare to how teachers connect and engage with this new learning of CRT. Additionally, the efficacy areas where the staff performed lower in could be how the school plans their CRT professional learning.

Summary

Academic failure and success have been at the center of education policy development and implementation in U.S. K-12 schools for many years (Nieto, 2010). The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Goals 2000 and No Child Left Behind Act were manners in which policymakers attempted to address concerns of equity with academic achievement among marginalized students. The achievement and underachievement of low SES students from various ethnic and racial backgrounds also has deep roots in the history of the United States (Nieto, 2010; Noguera & Wing, 2008).

Currently, conscientious efforts continue to assist in improving student learning, despite the changes that policy makers have pursued in the past. We still have the potential to ameliorate the dilemmas to ensure a brighter future for racially diverse and linguistic students who are faced with additional societal barriers. Therefore, it is essential to investigate how educators and leaders conceptualize race in schools and additional ways to improve academic performance. Equally important is the need to capture what outside barriers exist in implementing teaching practices in all types of schools regardless of societal views and opportunity gaps that have enlarged the education debt for marginalized students.

Teachers are awarded the unique opportunity to make a difference with students every day. Although school curriculum is not always inclusive of the hidden stories of cultures represented in our schools, the teacher has the ability to reflect the cultural and linguistic sensitivity of those students that is lacking through intentional implementation and support. Consequently, teachers and leaders in schools should be equipped to institute CRT acts through their relationships, delivery, utilization of materials and examples and engagement in

practices. They should demonstrate and value inclusiveness and socio-political understanding of the larger context of the system.

There are important conclusions that were derived from the findings for the teachers' engagement of CRT professional learning. For CRT professional learning, the study encapsulated the following conclusions related to their pedagogical beliefs and attitudes:

1. A professional learning program that enables teachers to develop higher self-efficacy may transform beliefs and attitudes.
2. Creation of a PLC where teachers can engage others in bias and teacher perception discussions could improve and enhance teacher/student relationships.
3. Participating in cultural experiences has the potential to inform teachers of culturally responsive practices and strategies.
4. Engaging in privilege conversations based on the intersectionality of race, gender, and class adds context to cultural conflict in society.
5. Creating professional learning opportunities for teachers in building home/school connections may increase a teachers' self-efficacy and confidence in the sustainment and fulfillment of the relationship.

With regard to the conceptual theoretical framework of professional learning based on adult learning theory and experiential learning the study revealed the following conclusions:

1. Creation of experiential learning activities may yield higher understanding and application of culturally responsive teaching practices and strategies.
2. The facilitation of CRT has the potential to increase environments where participants are able to be transparent and engaged.

3. Defining terms relative to the CRT approach can reduce misconceptions.

When viewing action research findings, the study revealed the following conclusions:

1. The implementation of AR teams could impact teacher knowledge of CRT practices.
2. Action research can enhance the involvement of adult learners' approach to student improvement efforts.
3. AR teams that are diverse and open to varying perspectives of others, have the potential to improve teachers' confidence in employing culturally responsive teaching practices.

The conclusions revealed implications for local schools and districts who may have inequitable outcomes for racially and linguistically diverse students. The following recommendations could be considered:

1. Design a diverse AR team who is willing to engage in CRT professional learning before and during the school year.
2. Incorporate CRT strategies and skills into teacher and leader standards based that motivate teachers to focus on individual student needs.
3. Plan a CRT professional learning with experiential learning and adult learning theory as a foundation with a skilled CRT facilitator.

This study has already had an impact on other schools through opportunities I have had to share to other staff members, principals, and colleagues. Based on the results of this action research study, I believe the AR team successfully answered the research questions to transform their attitudes and beliefs through a viable CRT professional learning community. The AR team was intrinsically motivated to reflect on their own practice and make needed changes for their students by reviewing their lesson plans and by building stronger relationships

with students to build more equitable environments. This study proved that taking risks and implementing dialogue and experiences could provide deeper awareness to the intersectionality of race, gender, and class and its effects on teaching and learning. There is continuous improvement; however, with effort, the impact of just one conversation could empower school environments to become places where *all* students thrive equally under teacher sponsored culturally responsive teaching practices.

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Appendix A Empirical Findings Analysis Table

| Reference | Purpose | Method (s) | Sample | Results | Conclusions | Implications |
|---|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| Siwatu, K.O (2007). Preservice teachers' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy and outcome expectancy beliefs. Teaching and Teacher Education, 23, 1086-1101 | To identify the types of culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy forming experiences that preservice teachers encountered during their teacher preparation program and the perceived influence that these experiences had on the development of their self-efficacy beliefs | Explanatory Mixed methods (Quantitative & Qualitative) | 192 preservice teachers with 45% in year 3 of their undergraduate program, majoring in elementary, middle level and secondary education | Participants were found to be efficacious in 9 areas that primarily focused on general teaching practices and less efficacious in 8 areas that were primarily more specific to culturally responsive teaching; Those with higher self-efficacy had the most exposure to the theory and practice of CRT; | Easier items on the self-efficacy beliefs related to general teaching practices, specific to culturally sensitive and responsive teaching practices, that may not require the integration of students' cultural and linguistic background; Opportunities to practice in courses/field experiences or observe CRT were few | Incorporate self-efficacy building activities in the preparation of CRT teachers that are specific to CRT Build comprehensive faculty development in CRT |
| Siwatu, K.O (2007) Preservice teachers' | To identify how teachers perceive their confidence to be instructionally effective, manage effective learning | Quantitative | 275 Preservice teachers enrolled in | Preservice teachers' culturally responsive | Preservice teachers are more efficacious in their ability to | When offering surveys, consider item-specific |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|---|--|
| culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy and outcome expectancy beliefs. Teaching and Teacher Education, 23, 1086-1101 | environments and influence student learning Research Questions: (1) How efficacious are preservice teachers in their ability to execute the practices of culturally responsive teaching? (2) Do preservice teachers believe in the positive outcomes associated with culturally responsive teaching? (3) What is the factor structure of the culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy and outcome expectancy scales? (4) What is the relationship between preservice teachers' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy and outcome expectancy beliefs? | two teacher education programs in the Midwest | teaching self efficacy was highest for ability: "help students feel like important members of the classroom" and develop a personal relationship with my students"; Item-specific were lowest for their ability to: " greet English Language Learners with a phrase in their native language" | help students feel like important members of the classroom and develop positive, personal relationships with their students, than they are in their ability to communicate with English Language Learners | responses rather than global; Focus on areas where there was less self-efficacy to build efficacy-building intervention and justify the need to develop new courses or revise existing courses; To build higher efficacy, the intervention should contain mastery and vicarious experiences. |
| Douglas, B., Lewis, C. W., Douglas, A., Scott, M. E., & Garrison-Wade, D. (2008). The impact of White teachers on the academic achievement of Black students: An exploratory qualitative analysis. <i>The Journal of</i> | What role do White teachers play in facilitating Black students' success or contributing to their academic success? Do White teachers' view of black students allow them to address the educational needs of these Black students? Do Black students have perceptions of White teachers' ideas, beliefs, values that get in the way of their academic achievement? | Qualitative | Purposive Sample including eight Black students, five females and three males who were in grades 10-12. Each students was taught at minimum | Four themes emerged: A) Respect: I need respect B) Stereotypes: Don't Pass Judgment on Me C) The Administrators Need to Check Themselves; and D) We Like This Environment | A)Students feel they are treated differently because of cultural background and different beliefs and values that are not in line with the majority of the school population. B) Teachers need to be aware |
| | | | | | Larger efforts are needed to reverse stereotypes that some White teachers have of Black students and they need to become more knowledgeable of specific needs of Black students. |

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| <p><i>Educational Foundations</i>, 22 (1/2), 47.</p> | <p>one White teacher. All students maintained a minimum of a 2.5 on a 4.0 scale.</p> | <p>of personal frames of reference and not let their personal feelings interfere with their profession. C) The classroom environment should be free of prejudices of all types. D) White teachers need to be more sensitive to the specific needs of Black students and attend professional development workshops in schools. E) Administrators, counselors and teachers to realize the important role they play in the academic achievement of all students –</p> | <p>Teachers need to participate in professional learning that will help to improve their understanding of different cultures other than their own.</p> <p>A teacher's personal epistemology (origin, nature and methods) of human knowledge can affect the academic success of Black students while being aware of their personal frames of reference.</p> <p>Teachers need to hold Black students in particular need to be held to high standards, while holding all individuals in schools to be</p> |
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| | | | | | Blacks in particular | responsible in equipping schools to be places that don't breed hatred and deception, but promote equality and academic achievement and success. |
| Hughes, J., & Kwok, O. M. (2007). Influence of student-teacher and parent-teacher relationships on lower achieving readers' engagement and achievement in the primary grades. <i>Journal of educational psychology</i> , 99(1), 39. | To determine the influence of student, parent and teacher relationships on reading achievement using Social Relatedness Academic Motivation Engagement Transactional Theory | Mixed methods longitudinal study | A diverse sample of first grade children at risk for school difficulties because of low literacy skills; 443 first grade children (52.6% male, 47.4% female) attending one of three school districts (1 urban, 2 small city) in southeast | Examine the associations between student background variable, the quality of early school relationships (i.e. student-teacher and parent-teacher relationships), and changes across academic years in measured academic ability in a diverse sample of first grade children at risk for school difficulties because of | African American children and their parents relative to Hispanic and Caucasian children and their parents, had less supportive relationships with teachers. Differences to relatedness may be implicate in African American children's lower achievement trajectories in the early grades. | A) The quality of teachers' relationships with students and their parents mediates the associations between children's background characteristics and teacher-related classroom engagement B) Child classroom engagement, in turn mediates the associations between |

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| | | | and central Texas | relatively low literacy skills | | student-teacher and parent-teacher relatedness and child achievement the following year C) Teachers receive little professional learning on how to build successful relationships with parents and need to increase professional learning |
| Smyth, H. (2013). What does research say about the effectiveness of professional learning and development for culturally responsive teaching at primary school level. <i>New Zealand Journal of Teachers'</i> | To determine what training is most effective for primary teachers to incorporate their students' cultures into their learning opportunities? | Four databases were systematically searched for relevant literature between 2004 and 2012. | 1.Eight studies were found according to samples and settings, description of professional development, and study design. | Of the eight studies found with the prospective criteria, half of the studies assess the effect of the training on teacher practice and student outcomes; A lack of studies that assess each step of PD implementation; methodological issues, lessons implicit in | Only half the studies assessed the effect of the training on teacher practice and student outcomes There was a lack of studies that assessed each step of professional development on student achievement | Ways to assess changes in teachers thinking and classroom behavior and student outcomes need to be identified and utilized. Establish ways for teachers to design evaluation measures for monitoring their |

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| <p><i>Work, 10(1), 169-189.</i></p> | | | | <p>experiences or strategies taught explicitly, professional development reflecting principles being taught.</p> | <p>Out of the eight studies, only three studies assessed the impact on student achievement; methods interfered with the validity of these findings</p> | <p>own learning and teaching practice.</p> <p>Reflecting on how teachers transfer their learning from PD courses into classrooms may help teachers receive most from their training and determine whether the training was valuable.</p> <p>Professional learning and development need evaluation measures to assist in monitoring teacher learning and practice</p> |
| <p>Voltz, D. L., Brazil, N., & Scott, R. (2003). Professional development for culturally responsive instruction: A promising practice for</p> | <p>Describes the implementation and outcomes of teacher-directed professional development program designed to increase teachers' awareness of CRT.</p> | <p>Mixed Methods (Quantitative and Qualitative)</p> | <p>33 teachers who participated in Project CRISP from a large, metropolitan school district who were general</p> | <p>The majority of general education teachers felt prepared to work collaboratively with parents from diverse cultures and cultural groups in the classroom, but less</p> | <p>Many teachers felt unprepared to address the educational needs of culturally diverse students; Special Ed. Teachers in the study seemed to</p> | <p>Professional Development opportunities can influence how teachers think about the issue of addressing cultural differences in the classroom, and</p> |

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| addressing the disproportionate representation of students of color in special education. <i>Teacher Education and Special Education</i> , 26(1), 63-73. | | | ed. And special ed. teachers | confident in their preparedness to adverse students; distinguish between culturally based learning differences and disabilities' and teach with a multicultural perspective; Growth occurred on post assessment and involvement in the CRISP professional development was influential in the increased knowledge and skills gained. | have a high level of self-efficacy, prior to participating; General ed. Teachers felt that they had a broader amount of factors to consider when referring now for sped. services | can expand their understanding of the diversity versus disability conundrum. |
| Warren, C.A. (2013). The utility of empathy for White female teachers' culturally responsive interactions with Black male students Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and | To examine how empathy benefits student-teacher interactions between teachers and students in classroom settings | Qualitative 3-4 Observations and follow-up and exit interviews | Four white female educators and a group of Black male students (Juniors and Seniors) | -Prior to the study, teachers had never discussed empathy in detail -Perspective taking enabled teachers, regardless of race and ethnicity to make culturally appropriate and affirming interpretations of student difference. | Three benefits of the Utility of Empathy emerged: A)Willingness to routinely adjust personally and professionally to produce more positive outcomes for individual students which | Two conflicts emerged; The conceptions of empathy surfaced as personal philosophies that framed significant aspects of their career. A dominant social and cultural |

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| <p>Learning, 3(3), 175-200.</p> | <p>-Perspective taking is at the core of empathetic application in social relationships -Empathy is the gateway that allows teachers to be sensitive to the needs of individual student within a homogenous culture group</p> | <p>contradicts social and cultural norms B) Merge students' learning and social interaction preferences to inform lesson plans and the instructional environment C) When designing the instructional program, the interventions included are forward thinking and support the values of students</p> | <p>perspective emerged. Teachers were influenced by their personal, professional and moral convictions.</p> <p>Empathy provided a transactional relationship resulting in a teacher's willingness to take risks and demonstrate flexibility in interactions with Black male students.</p> <p>Teachers who share affectively with students and who make active attempts to adopt their students' point of view, it is likely that evidence of culturally responsive teaching will be revealed.</p> |
|---------------------------------|---|--|---|

Appendix B: AR Team Interest Powerpoint Slide from Faculty Meeting

Research Opportunity

I am interested in forming a team of teachers who might be interested in diving into some professional learning with me related to improving teaching and learning for our most challenging students!

- Have you ever wanted to dig deeper into barriers facing our students?
- Have you ever wanted to take some time to view life through the life of our students but didn't know how?
- Have you ever wanted to join a small team for a short period of time to address some critical issues facing our students?

If you answered yes, to any of these questions, then you are needed!

Join Me:

Tuesday, August 4th @ 7:45 AM in the Media Center



Appendix C Approved Consent Letter to IRB

August 29, 2017

Dear Staff Member,

I am an Ed.D. graduate student under the direction of professor Dr. Karen Bryant in the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration and Policy at the University of Georgia. I invite you to participate in a research study titled “The Impact of Professional Learning Communities on Teacher Engagement of Culturally Responsive Teaching,” that is being conducted as a partnership between Gwinnett County Public Schools and Department of Lifelong Education, Administration and Policy at the University of Georgia. The purpose of this study is to explore cultural factors affecting teaching and learning, as well as designing, implementing, and evaluating interventions to manage and improve Culturally Responsive Teaching and professional learning for teachers. The study’s research questions are as follows:

1. What are teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and attitudes relative to Culturally Responsive Teaching and how do they influence their teaching?
2. How does participation in a professional learning community impact teachers’ conceptual understanding and use of culturally responsive teaching strategies in the classroom?
3. What does an Action Research team learn through the use of Culturally Responsive Teaching in the classroom?

Your participation will involve being part of an Action Research Team that will meet once a month for two hours. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. No individually-identifiable information about you or provided by you during the research will be shared with others without my written permission. The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used. In fact, the published results will be presented in summary form only. Your identity will not be associated with your responses in any published format.

The findings from this project may provide information on the factors affecting culturally responsive teaching and help develop a professional learning community plan that utilizes best practices that respond to the specific needs of the school population. Extensive research links lack of culturally responsive teaching to several problems such as: Low academic achievement, dropout rates, low reading achievement, low student engagement, increased disruptive behavior, poverty, and anti-social and disruptive behavior. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at 678-656-8396 or send an e-mail to ccooper1@uga.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 612 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

Thank you for your consideration! Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Crystal Cooper Thompson
Principal Investigator
University of Georgia

Appendix D Participant Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

CONSENT FORM:

Culturally Responsive Teaching and Professional Learning Community Team Member

TITLE OF THE STUDY:

The Impact of Professional Learning Communities on Teacher Engagement of

Culturally Responsive Teaching through Action Research

We are asking that you, _____, participate in a research study. Before you decide if you will participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether you will be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the investigators if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to participate in the study or not. This process is called “informed consent.” A copy of this form will be given to you.

Principal Investigator:

Karen Bryant, Ed.D.
Educational Leadership Certification Program Coordinator
Clinical Assistant Professor
Department of Lifelong Education, Administration and Policy
850 College Station Road
307 River's Crossing
Athens, GA 30602
office phone: 706-542-4154
bryantkc@uga.edu

Co-Principal Investigator:

Crystal Cooper Thompson
Sycamore Elementary School
Gwinnett County Public Schools
5695 Sycamore Road
Sugar Hill, Georgia 30518
Office phone: 678-514-6775
crystal_cooper_thompson@gwinnett.k12.ga.us

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to explore factors affecting Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) and professional learning communities as well as engage in a Culturally Responsive Teaching Action Research Team in designing, implementing, and evaluating interventions to manage and improve teaching and learning, taking into consideration the specific needs of the population the school serves. The possible factors could include family, community, and school culture and organization. Ultimately, the Action Research Team will begin to develop a professional learning design for teachers that could inform teachers of the conceptual and theoretical understanding of Culturally Responsive Teaching.

Study Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- 1.) Be part of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Action Research Team, led by the Co-Principal Investigator, which will meet once a month for two hours to engage in cycles of action research to study culturally responsive teaching through professional learning communities. (September 13, October 11, November 15, December 13, January 17 from 3:45 PM-5:45 PM).
- 2.) As a member of this team you will engage in collaborative work with team members doing any of the following:

- Literature reviews and book study about Culturally Responsive Teaching and professional learning communities
 - Review of school academic, discipline and student engagement data
 - Review of data collected from meetings where the AR team answers the questions:
 1. How can I adapt my teaching style to impact student learning?
 2. How can my learning of culturally responsive teaching change my view of teaching?
 - Evaluation of school existing practices of experiential learning during professional learning communities as well as the development of new professional learning opportunities
- 3.) Participate in a forty-five-minute audio-taped interview consisting of questions regarding your experience as a member of the Action Research Team
 - 4.) Engage in 2-3 cultural experiences outside of the local school
 - 5.) Take a pre and post survey(s) for quantitative data collection (anonymous)
 - 6.) Participate in “member checking” (Review of transcripts of documents related to the Action Research Team work for study accuracy)

Risks and discomforts:

We don’t anticipate any risks from participating in this research.

Benefits:

The benefit of this study is to understand the factors affecting culturally responsive teaching and to develop a professional learning community that utilizes best practices that respond to the specific needs of the school population.

Privacy/Confidentiality:

No individually-identifiable information provided during the study will be shared with others without your written permission. You will be assigned a pseudonym in any reference, publication, or document that comes from this research. All the documentation generated during the study will be locked and digitally protected by passwords only known to the two principal investigators. All identifiers will be removed upon completion of the study. The investigators will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent unless required by law.

Taking part is voluntary:

I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse participation or ask that my participation stops taking part without giving any reason and without consequences. I can ask to have all of my information returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Research Subject’s Consent to Participate in Research:

Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, GA 30602-7411; 706-542-3199; IRB@uga.edu

Appendix E Culturally Responsive Teaching Efficacy Scales



Permission To Use Instrument(s)

Dear Researcher:

You have my permission to use the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale, the Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Expectations Scale, and/or the Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy Scale in your research. A copy of the instruments are attached. Request for any changes or alterations to the instrument should be sent via email to kamau.shwatu@ttu.edu. When using the instrument(s) please cite accordingly.

- **Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale**

Shwatu, K. O. (2007). Preservice teachers' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy and outcome expectancy beliefs. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 23*, 1086-1101.
- **Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Expectations Scale**

Shwatu, K. O. (2007). Preservice teachers' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy and outcome expectancy beliefs. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 23*, 1086-1101.
- **Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy Scale**

Shwatu, K. O., Putnam, M., Starker, T. V., & Lewis, C. (2015). The development of the culturally responsive classroom management self-efficacy scale: Development and initial validation. *Urban Education*. Prepublished September 9, 2015.

Best wishes with your research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kamau Shwatu".

Kamau Oginga Shwatu, PhD
Professor of Educational Psychology

Box 41071 | Lubbock, Texas | 79409-1071 | T 806-834-5850 | F 806-742-2179

An EEO/Affirmative Action Institute

Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale

Rate how confident you are in your ability to successfully accomplish each of the tasks listed below. Each task is related to teaching. Please rate your degree of confidence by recording a number from 0 (no confidence at all) to 100 (completely confident). Remember that you may use any number between 0 and 100.

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------|----|----|----|----|------------|----|----|----|----|------------|
| 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 |
| No | | | | | Moderately | | | | | Completely |
| Confidence | | | | | Confident | | | | | Confident |
| At All | | | | | | | | | | |

I am able to:

1. adapt instruction to meet the needs of my students.
2. obtain information about my students' academic strengths.
3. determine whether my students like to work alone or in a group.
4. determine whether my students feel comfortable competing with other students.
5. identify ways that the school culture (e.g., values, norms, and practices) is different from my students' home culture.
6. implement strategies to minimize the effects of the mismatch between my students' home culture and the school culture.
7. assess student learning using various types of assessments.
8. obtain information about my students' home life.
9. build a sense of trust in my students.
10. establish positive home-school relations.
11. use a variety of teaching methods.
12. develop a community of learners when my class consists of students from diverse backgrounds.
13. use my students' cultural background to help make learning meaningful.
14. use my students' prior knowledge to help them make sense of new information.
15. identify ways how students communicate at home may differ from the school norms.
16. obtain information about my students' cultural background.
17. teach students about their cultures' contributions to science.
18. greet English Language Learners with a phrase in their native language.
19. design a classroom environment using displays that reflects a variety of cultures.

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------|----|----|----|----|------------|----|----|----|----|------------|
| 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 |
| No | | | | | Moderately | | | | | Completely |
| Confidence | | | | | Confident | | | | | Confident |
| At All | | | | | | | | | | |

I am able to:

20. develop a personal relationship with my students.

21. obtain information about my students' academic weaknesses.

22. praise English Language Learners for their accomplishments using a phrase in their native language.

23. identify ways that standardized tests may be biased towards linguistically diverse students.

24. communicate with parents regarding their child's educational progress.

25. structure parent-teacher conferences so that the meeting is not intimidating for parents.

26. help students to develop positive relationships with their classmates.

27. revise instructional material to include a better representation of cultural groups.

28. critically examine the curriculum to determine whether it reinforces negative cultural stereotypes.

29. design a lesson that shows how other cultural groups have made use of mathematics.

30. model classroom tasks to enhance English Language Learner's understanding.

31. communicate with the parents of English Language Learners regarding their child's achievement.

32. help students feel like important members of the classroom.

33. identify ways that standardized tests may be biased towards culturally diverse students.

34. use a learning preference inventory to gather data about how my students like to learn.

35. use examples that are familiar to students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

36. explain new concepts using examples that are taken from my students' everyday lives.

37. obtain information regarding my students' academic interests.

38. use the interests of my students to make learning meaningful for them.

39. implement cooperative learning activities for those students who like to work in groups.

40. design instruction that matches my students' developmental needs.

41. teach students about their cultures' contributions to society.

Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Expectancy Scale

Read each statement below and rate your degree of certainty that the behavior will lead to the specified outcome. You may indicate your certainty by rating each statement on a scale of 0 (entirely uncertain) to 100 (completely certain). The scale below is for reference only; you do not need to use only the given values. You may assign ANY number between 0 and 100 as your degree of certainty.

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|----|-----------------------|--------------------|----|---------------------|-----------------|----|-----------------------|-----|
| 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 |
| Entirely Uncertain | Very Uncertain | | Somewhat Uncertain | Not Too Certain | | Somewhat Certain | Very Certain | | Completely Certain | |

1. A positive teacher-student relationship can be established by building a sense of trust in my students.
2. Incorporating a variety of teaching methods will help my students to be successful.
3. Students will be successful when instruction is adapted to meet their needs.
4. Developing a community of learners when my class consists of students from diverse cultural backgrounds will promote positive interactions between students.
5. Acknowledging the ways that the school culture is different from my students' home culture will minimize the likelihood of discipline problems.
6. Understanding the communication preferences (e.g., the value of eye-contact; protocol for participating in a conversation) of my students will decrease the likelihood of student-teacher communication problems.
7. Connecting my students' prior knowledge with new incoming information will lead to deeper learning.
8. Matching instruction to the students' learning preferences will enhance their learning.
9. Revising instructional material to include a better representation of the students' cultural group will foster positive self-images.
10. Providing English Language Learners with visual aids will enhance their understanding of assignments.
11. Students will develop an appreciation for their culture when they are taught about the contributions their culture has made over time.
12. Conveying the message that parents are an important part of the classroom will increase parent participation.
13. The likelihood of student-teacher misunderstandings decreases when my students' cultural background is understood.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|----|-------------------|----|-----------------------|----|--------------------|----|---------------------|----|-----------------|-----------------------|
| | 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 | |
| | Entirely Uncertain | | Very Uncertain | | Somewhat Uncertain | | Not Too Certain | | Somewhat Certain | | Very Certain | Completely Certain |

14. Changing the structure of the classroom so that it is compatible with my students' home culture will increase their motivation to come to class.

15. Establishing positive home-school relations will increase parental involvement.

16. Student attendance will increase when a personal relationship between the teacher and students has been developed.

17. Assessing student learning using a variety of assessment procedures will provide a better picture of what they have learned.

18. Using my students' interests when designing instruction will increase their motivation to learn.

19. Simplifying the language used during the presentation will enhance English Language Learners comprehension of the lesson.

20. The frequency that students' abilities are misdiagnosed will decrease when their standardized test scores are interpreted with caution.

21. Encouraging students to use their native language will help them to maintain their cultural identity.

22. Students' self-esteem can be enhanced when their cultural background is valued by the teacher.

23. Helping students from diverse cultural backgrounds succeed in school will increase their confidence in their academic ability.

24. Students' academic achievement will increase when they are provided with unbiased access to the necessary learning resources.

25. Using culturally familiar examples will make learning new concepts easier.

26. When students see themselves in the pictures (e.g., posters of notable African Americans, etc) that are displayed in the classroom they develop a positive self-identity.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy Scale

Directions: Rate how confident you are in your ability to successfully accomplish each of the tasks listed below. Each task is related to classroom management. Please rate your degree of confidence by recording a number from 0 (no confidence at all) to 100 (completely confident). Remember that you may use any number between 0 and 100.

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|----|----|----|----|-------------------------|----|----|----|----|-------------------------|
| 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 |
| No Confidence At All | | | | | Moderately Confident | | | | | Completely Confident |

I am able to:

- _____ 1. Assess students' behaviors with the knowledge that acceptable school behaviors may not match those that are acceptable within a student's home culture
- _____ 2. Use culturally responsive discipline practices to alter the behavior of a student who is being defiant
- _____ 3. Create a learning environment that conveys respect for the cultures of all students in my classroom
- _____ 4. Use my knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds to create a culturally compatible learning environment
- _____ 5. Establish high behavioral expectations that encourages students to produce high quality work
- _____ 6. Clearly communicate classroom policies
- _____ 7. Structure the learning environment so that all students feel like a valued member of the learning community
- _____ 8. Use what I know about my students cultural background to develop an effective learning environment
- _____ 9. Encourage students to work together on classroom tasks, when appropriate
- _____ 10. Design the classroom in a way that communicates respect for diversity
- _____ 11. Use strategies that will hold students accountable for producing high quality work
- _____ 12. Address inappropriate behavior without relying on traditional methods of discipline such as office referrals
- _____ 13. Critically analyze students' classroom behavior from a cross-cultural perspective
- _____ 14. Modify lesson plans so that students remain actively engaged throughout the entire class period or lesson
- _____ 15. Redirect students' behavior without the use of coercive means (i.e. consequences or verbal reprimand)

Appendix F AR Team Interview Protocol

Good morning/afternoon!

Thank you for taking this journey with me on our AR team to discover culturally responsive teaching and professional learning communities. I appreciate your time, support and willingness to add this additional professional learning experience alongside your current work and family responsibilities.

As you know, I am approaching the end of my doctoral studies at the University of Georgia, and the last event includes formal interviews where I ask all AR team members questions that relate to our action research questions.

My data collection involves capturing all of your feedback; therefore, I am also recording this interview, so that I can go back and collect all information for my study, while taking notes. I ask that you speak directly into the microphone, so that I can capture all words also in google docs.

As stated, in our formal invitation and consent form discussion, all information collected during this process will be confidential and no recordings, notes and/or names will be collected for any purposes. The information gathered will be collected, transcribed or written, so that I can code and collect themes regarding our discussion today.

There are no wrong answers, and I ask that you are completely transparent, and honest regarding your thoughts to the questions so that I can capture all points of view.

Do you have any questions or concerns regarding our time today?

Personal Information from AR Team Member:

- a) How many years have you been in education? State what you teach and where you have taught (7 years in Paterson, 1 year for the state, 13 years in GCPS)
 - b) Do you remember taking any classes in college regarding diversity, culture, etc? If so, explain
 - c) Do you remember taking any professional learning experiences outside of college at either your job or other place regarding diversity and/or culture? If so, explain
- 1. During our work together, you wrote a cultural autobiography, please speak to how that experience helped you learn about yourself and what CRT means to schools and classrooms?**
 - 2. How would you define culturally responsive teaching?**
 - 3) What are your pedagogical beliefs and attitudes relative to CRT and how have those beliefs and attitudes influenced your teaching or job?**
 - a) Since our first meeting in September, what have you learned about culturally responsive teaching regarding what you believe and what attitudes, you have developed regarding this learning? How has it affected your teaching or job?
 - 3. How does participation in a PLC impact your conceptual understanding and use of CRT strategies in the classroom?**
 - a) How did our monthly meetings and the format of how we worked, add or detract from your learning. You may consider the experiences in class or outside that affected your learning.
 - 4. What do you feel an AR team, specifically learns through the use of CRT in**

the classroom?

a)This is question that can include any challenges or aha moments that you recall while being on this AR team.

- 6. In planning a culturally responsive teaching PLC for other teachers, what would you like to suggest is needed or not needed to make it a viable and productive program?**
- 7. What are your next steps regarding this work?**
- 8. Any other comments?**

Appendix G Online Learning Course for CRT

Protocol: Respondents are given one week to respond to questions during course and reflection questions afterward. After one week of discussion and access, the course closes.

CRT Course Questions: Open-Ended Response

- What was something you learned from your reading in Chapter 5?
- Now that you have had an opportunity to read and discuss matters related to bias, what insights and understandings, are you bringing to your Culturally Responsive Teaching work?
- Using pages 28-35 in your text, CRT and the Brain: Answer the following: What is examining one's own implicit bias not enough in becoming a Culturally Responsive Educator?
- What questions have been raised so far for you since engaging in this action research experience?
- Regarding privilege, do you feel that you have privileges that others may not have? If so, what are some of those and how have you learned about how privilege impacts students and our society as a whole?

CRT Reflection Questions: A mixed method of Likert Scale 0-10; SA, A, N, D, SD; Open-Ended Response

- Rate your overall satisfaction with this online class
- This online course discussion had content that was clear and easy to understand
- The online course length and pace was appropriate for me to engage with my AR team
- I gained new insights that were useful in me grounding myself in a deeper understanding of Culturally Responsive Teaching
- The most valuable part of this online class was
- This online course would have been more effective if
- As an adult learner, this online format was positive for me
- Any other opinions, improvement or suggestions, please specify

Appendix H CRT Cultural Experience Log

| AR Team Member | | AR Team Member | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Cultural Visits Chosen by AR Team Members | | Cultural Visits Chosen by AR Team Members | |
| R1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Shopping store in northern town | R8 | N/A |
| R2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Baptist African-American churchChristmas Around the World in local town | R9 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Flea Market,Buddhist Temple |
| R3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Hindu TempleAffluent social party | R 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Hindu TempleChinese New Year |
| R4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Christmas Around the World in local townRead a book about a Japanese Internment CampVisited a homeless shelter | R11 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Past Hispanic student’s birthday eventVolunteered at a homeless event |
| R5 | N/A | R 12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Hanukkah eventLocal restaurant/bar |
| R6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Party event with affluent partygoersAfrican-American wedding | R13 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Asian supermarket |
| R7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Buddhist Meditation Center | R14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Hindu Temple |