TRANSFORMATIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR LEARNER-CENTERED

ADULT EDUCATION: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

by

SONYA MCCOY-WILSON

(Under the Direction of Karen Watkins)

ABSTRACT

Freire interrogated what he called the *banking model* of traditional education, which, according to Freire, negates and oppresses the student. However, in American colleges and universities, the banking model persists. Consequently, colleges and universities still struggle to engage students in the one place that ultimately dictates the student experience, the one place that determines whether or not students stay or go—the classroom. This research study explored a transformative faculty professional development approach to addressing student departure and the college completion crisis. The purpose of this action research study was to explore how and whether transformative professional development that emphasizes cultural responsiveness and learner-centeredness changes faculty perspectives. The action research team aimed to determine (a) how professional development interventions impact faculty perspective shifts toward learner-centeredness, and (b) what is learned at the individual, group, and system levels about changing faculty mindsets through an action research study focused on learner-centered pedagogy. As one of its quantitative measures, this study used the Self-Assessment of Learner-Centered Instruction (SALCI). The findings indicated that diversity and cultural responsiveness in classrooms help faculty and students to bridge relationship gaps; classroom community-building strengthens

relationships and builds trust between faculty and students; learner-centered approaches encourage student engagement in rich discussion and dialogue; faculty mindsets changed regarding teaching, learning, and their organization; working on an action research team was the catalyst for college community learning; and the college culture shifted to one that values faculty professional development. The study concluded that (a) transformative professional development that emphasizes cultural responsiveness and learner-centeredness changes faculty perspectives, (b) in order to transform post-secondary practice, we must transcend the covert barriers that racist ideologies have created, and (c) action research provides an appropriate methodology to facilitate organizational change in two-year technical colleges; however, organizational capacity is necessary for long-term sustainability.

INDEX WORDS: Transformative learning, Transformative professional development, Learner-centered pedagogy, Cultural responsiveness, Culturally relevant teaching, Action research

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to little marginalized brown and black girls and boys who are taught to believe their inferiority, who are taught to accept their subjugation and oppression. I want them to believe, instead, in their true Selves. I want them to transform the world into a place that represents its greatest potential for all humanity.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

During the latter part of the 20th century, colleges and universities became legitimately

concerned with not only enrolling students but with retaining them and graduating them. Tinto

(1975) sounded the call to post-secondary institutions to focus more attention on student

departure. By 2012, the student engagement and student retention literature identified a national

college completion crisis. In August of 2013, President Obama sought to address the national

college completion crisis by encouraging colleges across the nation to provide smoother

pathways for students from state to state, which meant more national reciprocity and more

intrastate articulation, so that students could not only enroll in college but also complete college.

In accordance with President Obama's attempts to address the college completion crisis, the

Governor of Georgia announced the launch of Complete College Georgia, a statewide effort to

increase attainment of high-quality certificates or degrees. Since that announcement, the

University System and the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) have partnered to

implement efforts that drive the primary goal of Complete College Georgia—improving student

success and improving the college graduation rate (Complete College Georgia).

Situational Context

City Technical College (CTC) is the focus of this action research study. The college has

experienced the college completion crisis to a greater extent, because, demographically, the

college's students are statistically less likely to complete college. CTC is an open access

institution, which means it is non-selective, non-competitive, and admits over 80% of its

applicants. In 2017, 90% of CTCs students were African American. Over 68% of CTCs

students were receiving the PELL Grant, which means they are considered economically

disadvantaged. Finally, over 42% of CTC students were first generation college students (IPEDS, 2017). CTC is a small, urban, two-year technical college located in a large, metropolitan southern city. The college has an annual enrollment of 7,578 (IPEDS, 2017) and offers associate degrees, diplomas, and technical certificates of credit. Over the past few years, City Technical College has suffered from a decline in enrollment and retention and has suffered from internal organizational struggles.

Further, during Cycle 1, the problem framing cycle of the study, the action research team at CTC gathered both qualitative and quantitative data, consisting of customer satisfaction surveys, employee satisfaction surveys, and campus-wide student retention data. The customer satisfaction surveys are distributed annually to all students via the college's Banner student database. The submissions are anonymous. The employee satisfaction surveys, also anonymous, are distributed annually to full-time faculty and staff during the college's fall convocation event. The campus-wide retention data is housed in the state technical college Knowledge Management System (KMS), as well as in the national database—Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE).

The data showed that City Technical College was losing 42-45% of its students from fall to fall and approximately 15% of its students from fall to spring. Table 1 illustrates this trend. As a result, the college was not meeting its retention benchmark.

Table 1

City Technical College Student Retention Data, 2014-2016 Academic Years

Terms	Retention Rate
Fall 2014 to Fall 2015	58%
Spring 2015 to Spring 2016	58%
Summer 2015 to Summer 2016	50%
Fall 2015 to Fall 2016	55%

In 2014, the system-wide student retention data (an average of the 22 colleges in the system) was 63.3% (TCSG, n.d.). In 2015, the system retention rate was 64% (TCSG, n.d.), and in 2016, the system retention rate was 66.4% (TCSG, n.d.). The statewide retention data was not vastly higher than the CTC retention data; however, while there has been a steady rise in the system data, the CTC retention data has stagnated for three consecutive years. Because the state of Georgia has a performance-based funding model, the repercussions for failing to meet enrollment and retention benchmarks year after year are college budget cuts, which could result in layoffs, loss of accreditation, and ultimately college closure.

In 2017, amid organizational turmoil, due in part to the retention deficit mentioned above, the president of eight years was reassigned to another college within the technical college system, and a new president was appointed to lead CTC. The new president, Vincent Stephens[1], took the helm amid an accreditation body warning, a program warning from a field certification board, and a program suspension. Shortly after his arrival in early 2017, he announced a plan to reorganize the institution around a new mission, new goals, new core values, and a new strategic plan.

Gap in Professional Development

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[1] All names used in this study are pseudonyms.

This research study explains the relationship between the situational context discussed above and the lack of faculty professional development focused on learner-centered instructional methods. This is an organizational gap and a system-wide gap. At CTC, the Human Resources department has historically led "staff development" efforts. Prior to the start of this action research study, there was little discussion of faculty and the distinct professional development needs of faculty. The goals of staff development were as follows:

- To promote an understanding of the school's mission and goals

- To encourage a meaningful personal relationship to the school's goals

- To create a work environment where individual achievement is encouraged

- To foster good institutional communication

- To provide a mechanism by which personal and professional goals are realized.

Prior to the start of this study, the staff development plan for CTC had not been updated since 2012 and did not include a distinction between faculty and staff. The implication was that the two terms are interchangeable, or that faculty needs were synonymous with staff needs.

At the system level, there are faculty development activities that are required for all new faculty. However, those activities are relatively brief and include one-day, one-time events that mostly seek to acclimate and align faculty with system goals and policies. Below are the learning outcomes for the first phase of faculty development delivered through the system office. This first phase is a one-day faculty development designed for all new faculty and must be completed within the first six months of employment. Faculty are only required to complete this first phase once throughout their tenure. The outcomes are as follows:

- Discuss the history and mission of the technical college system.

- Develop and discuss strategies for teaching adult learners, for teaching students with different learning styles, and for teaching students from different generations.

- Write performance objectives using the three domains. Understand Bloom's taxonomy (original theory and new theory) and how it applies to education.

- Respect and appreciate cultural diversity in the classroom.

- Discuss the importance, function, and use of syllabi and lesson plans.

- Review and discuss program and course standards including semester courses and the curriculum database.

- Discuss classroom management and professionalism.

- Discuss effective teaching methodologies for classroom success.

- Discuss how to make an online course effective.

- Determine appropriate assessment and evaluation methods and tools.

- Discuss student advisement for academic success and retention.

- Discuss advisory committees, work ethics, copyright laws, and professional development.

While these learning outcomes should be a part of any effective teaching discourse, the outcomes neither illustrate professional development that seeks to develop teaching as a reflective transformative practice nor the development of learner-centered instructional methods. The one-day, one-time delivery method does not facilitate teacher learning, specifically for faculty who have not yet been exposed to the discipline of education or have not been enrolled in an education course.

The second phase is also delivered in one day, only once, and is meant to apply the outcomes from phase one. The learning outcomes of the second phase are as follows:

- Develop and deliver a 5-7-minute presentation; this presentation will provide a short (5-7 minute) lesson from your program. You must use some type of visual aid when presenting this 5-7-minute lesson. Details will be provided in an email to participants.

- Observe and be involved in new instructional methods.

- Learn about web tools, student services processes and procedures that impact teaching and legal issues (information provided by guest speakers or recorded videos).

These two phases conclude the faculty development opportunities provided by the system level office for the entirety of a faculty member's tenure at any of the technical colleges in the system. Other faculty development programs are left to each individual college's discretion. The professional development intervention for this study was a half-day intervention offered at the start of every semester in perpetuity. As will be seen later in this study, based on data collected from both the action research team and faculty, professional development was ultimately delivered in a full conference style format.

Personal Context

I'm a pessimist if I'm not careful, a feminist, a Black, a former Baptist, an oil-and-water combination of ambition, laziness, certainty, and drive.

—Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*, 1993

Laloux (2014) argued that in his Evolutionary Teal stage of human and organizational development, there are essentially two ways to live: "from fear and scarcity or from trust and abundance" (p. 44). The epigraph above is an autobiographical description that Octavia Butler included in her 1993 novel *Parable of the Sower*, in which she magnified the essence of Laloux's two ways of being. I, too, am a "pessimist if I'm not careful, a feminist, a Black, a former Baptist, an oil-and-water combination of ambition, laziness, certainty, and drive." As a leader

and as a human being, I wage a daily psychological battle negotiating fear and scarcity or trust and abundance. I suspect too that within my organization, there is an antagonistic pull between these two ways of being.

My interest in this research is deeply rooted in my own experiences as a member of the faculty at City Technical College. As the data in the previous section suggests, the students of CTC are severely economically disadvantaged. Socioeconomically disadvantaged and marginalized groups often suffer from many non-cognitive maladies that are a direct result of their marginalization. These afflictions of poverty and marginalization play out in a post-secondary, open access environment in troubling ways (Cuseo, 2015). Therefore, teaching underrepresented and underserved students presents many challenges. In my advising, teaching, and counseling the students at CTC over the past nine years, it became clear that many of their previous experiences with educational institutions had left them feeling mistrustful and disillusioned. As a result, the students at CTC are often slow to trust and quick to anger. Having been faculty, then Department Chair, now Dean at CTC, I have been intimately connected to how these dynamics play out in classrooms. Often those dynamics are adversarial. Over the years, I became increasingly interested in learning more about the impact of faculty professional development on reshaping and changing the relationships between faculty and students. Further, over the 15-year course of my career as an educator, I have championed the marginalized, and I have cheered for the underdog. Throughout the course of my day at CTC, I found myself both cheering for, angry with, and crying for my students and my organization.

Prior to joining CTC, I came from an education background as a Teach for America Corps member. After leaving Teach for America, I deliberately sought out an institution that serves the same disenfranchised communities of students that Teach for America seeks to

transform. My desire was service teaching—transform the lives of the most marginalized students; and servant leadership—transform organizations that serve these populations.

After being hired as a member of the English faculty, I soon observed the idiosyncrasies and cultural peculiarities of the institution. I navigated the culture as best I could, while attempting to retain my own identity as a scholar and educator, but I was a pessimist if I wasn't careful. By 2011, I was promoted to Department Chair. In that role, I was able to more closely observe faculty classrooms and address student grievances. I soon began to observe tension between faculty and students. While many of the faculty were purpose-driven and learner-centered, others were not. Students often complained of faculty who did not seem to like students, and faculty often complained of students who "were not college material."

After being promoted in 2015 to Academic Dean, my role afforded me new positionality and new power. Finally, I had the power to exact change. Furthermore, as an insider conducting action research, I have used my positionality to lead this study and forge a way to sustainable change. When Dr. Stephens organized the college under a new strategic plan in 2017, he also created "Strategic Impact Teams" aligned to the new strategic plan. One such team was titled the "Professional Development Strategic Impact Team." I quickly volunteered to Chair that team. Soon, the Professional Development Strategic Impact Team and the Action Research team began to meet periodically to share ideas. This relationship gave rise to the sustainability of the change effort that is the focus of this action research study. I narrate that relationship in Chapter 4.

Taking this journey as a scholar-practitioner and leading insider action research has challenged me to take a good look at my own frailties, manage my pessimism, and check my "advocacy" assumptions. Although, I have a great deal to learn, I feel fortunate that I am

becoming more of who I am meant to be. I am finding my voice as a leader. I am powered by purpose. My purpose as an educator and leader of educators is to serve. Specifically, my purpose is serving marginalized communities by offsetting inequity and providing them access to higher education. My goal is to inspire, motivate, and support others, so that they too may find their purpose and be powered by it. Because I know that members of my team may be at different stages of professional development, my goal was to give them the support and tools they needed at varying stages.

Leading an organizational change effort through this action research study has also challenged me to examine my positionality in the organization by keeping distinct my role as a researcher and my role as a Dean and leader of faculty. But more than that, throughout this journey, I have been challenged to listen more than I talk, give people the benefit of the doubt, and trust the process.

A catalyst for the team's action was the data collected from students in 2015. The data indicated that potential explanations for the college's declining student retention and enrollment may have been be poor service and poor engagement. The 2015 Customer Satisfaction Survey indicated that students were leaving the college for a number of reasons: they felt that they were not receiving sufficient instruction in their classes; they felt as if they received poor service from various areas of the college; and they felt faculty and staff did not care if they are successful or not. This survey captured a total of 44 respondents. Students were first asked from which areas of the college they received service. Then they were asked to rate that service on a scale from 1 (poor) to 3 (excellent), in seven areas: friendliness, helpfulness, promptness, availability, knowledge and competence, efficiency, and overall service. Data from the survey showed that students surveyed felt that both faculty and staff services were generally unfriendly and

unhelpful:

- 61% of students surveyed rated the friendliness of their service as "poor"

- 65% rated the helpfulness of their service as "poor"

- 70% of the students rated the promptness of their service as "poor"

- 72% of the students surveyed rated the availability of the faculty and staff as "poor"

- 59% rated the knowledge and competence of the faculty and staff as "poor"

- 77% rated the efficiency of their service as "poor"

- 70% rated their overall service as "poor"

Tinto (2012) elucidated that the more students are academically and socially engaged with faculty, staff, and peers, the more likely they are to succeed in college (p. 7), and that "their success in college is largely built upon their success in the classroom" (p. 5). This research study focused on the classroom as a site of investigation to engage and retain students. Additionally, this study focused on transformative faculty professional development to achieve that end. As the literature on faculty development revealed, much of the professional development offered to community and technical college faculty emphasizes technical skill development and professional alignment with organizational mission. Few faculty development efforts emphasize transformative teaching and learning. Furthermore, post-secondary education has focused its student engagement and retention efforts largely outside the classroom (Tinto, 2012). This is a blind spot for institutions of higher education because colleges and universities recruit faculty based on an accreditation requirement that only focuses on discipline specific credentials, not on teaching and learning. Once those discipline experts are hired, there is little attention paid to their lack of teaching skills. Therefore, colleges that focus instructional professional development efforts primarily on discipline-specific content or technical skill attainment, without

an emphasis on transformative teaching and learning, have missed the mark. This study sought to fill that gap.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this action research study was to explore how and whether transformative professional development that emphasizes cultural responsiveness and learner-centeredness changes faculty perspectives. The research questions that guided the study were:

1. How do professional development interventions impact faculty perspective shifts about learner-centered pedagogy?

2. What is learned at the individual, group, and system levels about changing faculty mindsets through an action research project focused on learner-centered pedagogy?

Conclusion

Finally, this study has significance to the field of Learning, Leadership, and Organization Development (LLOD) in several ways. First, this action research study developed a framework for transformative professional development for college faculty that focuses on communicative rather than instrumental learning by emphasizing cultural responsive teaching and learner-centered pedagogy. Next, this study demonstrated that action research provides an appropriate methodology to facilitate organizational change in two-year technical colleges. This study engaged faculty and staff as active participants driving the changes that would impact their own work lives. Finally, this action research team established a sustainable, institutionalized change effort that, although not meant to be generalizable, could very well be replicated at two-year technical colleges state-wide and nationwide.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of the literature that supports a need for transformative faculty professional development focused on learner-centered pedagogy. Many education theorists have problematized passive education models and argued for humanistic, student-centered teaching and learning (Dewey, 1938/1997; Giroux, 1981, 1983; Piaget, 1964; Steinberg, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978). Most poignantly, Freire (1970/1990) problematized the *banking model* of traditional education, which, according to Freire, objectifies and oppresses the student. Freire argued that the *banking model* of education is "an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor … and knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing" (p. 72).

In American colleges and universities, the *banking model* persists. We see this represented today in "traditional" classrooms in various ways. This banking model of education seeks conformity rather than transformation or liberation. In colleges and universities today, the classroom remains an important site of investigation. In fact, since Tinto's (1975) model of departure, colleges and universities have struggled to engage, retain, and graduate students. According to Tinto (2012), colleges "have neglected the classroom, the one place on campus, perhaps the only place, where the great majority of students meet the faculty and one another and engage in formal learning activities" (p. 5). And since only one quarter of college students are comprised of "traditional students"—those who graduate high school and enroll as full-time residential students (Tinto, 2012, p. 5), the other three quarters of the population are non-traditional students, who live off campus, may have families, and work full-time jobs.

Therefore, "the experience of college [for them] is primarily the experience of the classroom. Their success in college is built upon their success in the classroom" (pp. 5-6).

Methodology in the Literature Review

The purpose of this action research study was to explore how and whether transformative professional development that emphasizes cultural responsiveness and learner-centeredness changes faculty perspectives. The theoretical framework of the study (illustrated in Figure 1) draws on Mezirow's (1978, 1991) Transformative Learning Theory, which is the theory of change guiding this study, and is informed by action research methodology. This framework is appropriate for the study because we set out to influence faculty perspective shifts through transformative professional development that emphasizes learner-centered pedagogy as a means of improving student engagement and retention. Therefore, this chapter provides a review of the literature on transformative learning theory, transformative professional development, learner-centeredness, and culturally relevant pedagogy.
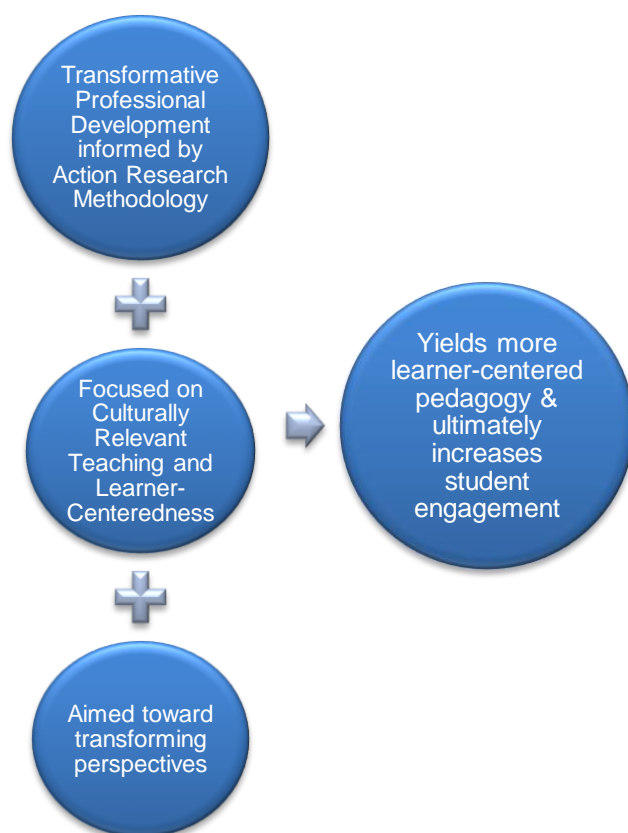
Figure 1. Conceptual and theoretical framework, with Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory as the theory of change.

Concerns-Based Adoption Model

The literature focused on the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) is reviewed here, because this study employed one of Hall and Hord's (2001, 2006, 2011) quantitative instruments, the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ).

Stages of concern. According to Hall & Hord (2011), feelings and perceptions are often overlooked as considerations in change efforts. Prior to the start of this action research study, much of the faculty were resistant to all other change efforts initiated by the college. They were particularly resistant to initiatives that required them to change their classroom practices. One such initiative, AVID, was the only professional development effort offered by the college that

focused on teaching and learning. In Chapters 3 and 4, this resistance is discussed further. However, one of the primary reasons for resistance was that the feelings and perceptions of the faculty were not considered. The change was simply thrust upon them.

Instead, Hall and Hord (2011) provided change facilitators with a set of research-based tools to facilitate successful change efforts. According to Hall and Hord,

> Feelings and perceptions about an innovation and/or a change process can help or
> disrupt…These feelings and perceptions can be sorted and classified into what we call
> concerns. In fact, extensive research is available about how our feelings and perceptions
> evolve as the change process unfolds. (p. 68)

Hall and Hord named this process the Stages of Concern (SoC). The authors first cited Fuller (1969) and her work with the concerns of student teachers. Fuller posited a model of four levels of concern: unrelated, self, task, and impact (as cited in Hall & Hord, 2011, p. 69). Unrelated concerns are unrelated to the innovation. Self-concerns are related to the innovation but within "an egocentric frame of reference in terms of what the experience will be like for 'me' and whether 'I' can succeed" (p. 69). Task concerns are felt early on with use of the innovation, and impact concerns "are the ultimate goal for student teachers, teachers, and professors" (p. 69), as the educators' focus is now placed on the impact the innovation has on the students they teach.

Hall and Hord (2011) expanded Fuller's (1969) model of concerns and applied it to diverse populations. They suggested that their research "on concepts and issues related to change has clearly documented that the concerns phenomena that Fuller identified are limited neither to college students going through teacher education programs nor to teachers" (p. 70). Hall and Hord found that everyone experiencing change goes through the same concern phenomena.

The authors, however, have identified seven specific categories of concerns about innovations in their SoC: unconcerned, informational, personal, management, consequence, collaboration, refocusing (p. 71). The unconcerned stage is classified as "unrelated." The informational and personal stages are classified as "self." The management stage is classified as "task," and the consequence, collaboration, and refocusing stages are classified as "impact" (p. 73).

Hall and Hord (2011) also provided three ways to assess concerns: the one-legged interview (OLI), the open-ended concerns statement, and the stages of concern questionnaire (SoCQ). According to the authors, change facilitators must attend to the concerns that people have during a change effort, because failure to do so "can lead to several kinds of potholes" (p. 89), which impede change. The SoCQ was used in this study to assess the concerns of the Action Research Team, half of which were comprised of faculty, during Cycle 1 (problem framing).

Interventions. According to Hall and Hord (2011), "facilitators provide the interventions that can increase the potential for the success of change or allow it to fail" (p. 143). They first defined the term intervention by providing some guiding principles. They explained that an "intervention is an action or event that is typically planned or unplanned and that influences individuals (either positively or negatively) in the process of change" (p. 145). Hall and Hord (2011) argued that change efforts cannot be successfully implemented without interventions. Further, of the guiding principles that the authors provided, there are two worth noting here:

4. Because change is accomplished at the individual level, facilitators will need to use diagnostic tools for shaping the interventions supplied to individuals as well as to

remember to provide groups with the array of interventions necessary to ensure each implementer's success with change.

5. Interventions also need to be targeted toward the whole organization or system, while remembering to employ them across all persons in the system. (p. 144)

In this action research study, the interventions were largely shaped by the action research team as well as by the feedback gathered from the faculty participants during each cycle. Although the interventions targeted only faculty and students, the success of the entire organization is predicated on faculty and students. Therefore, the whole system was impacted by an intervention aimed at developing faculty.

Furthermore, Hall and Hord (2011) argued that there are six functions of interventions (see Figure 2). Function number one is "developing, articulating, and communicating a shared vision of the intended change" (p. 148). The authors explained that:

The goal of increased student outcomes results from specific changes or innovations that are selected for adoption and implementation. Many change efforts fail because the participants do not share mental images or pictures of what classroom and/or school practice will look like when an identified change is implemented to a high quality. (p. 148)

In order to achieve a shared vision, all key stakeholders should be engaged in the developing process, and the shared vision must be communicated widely. As will be seen in the various cycles of this study, the Action Research team, which is comprised of key stakeholders from various areas of the college, worked collaboratively to implement interventions which encompassed their shared vision.
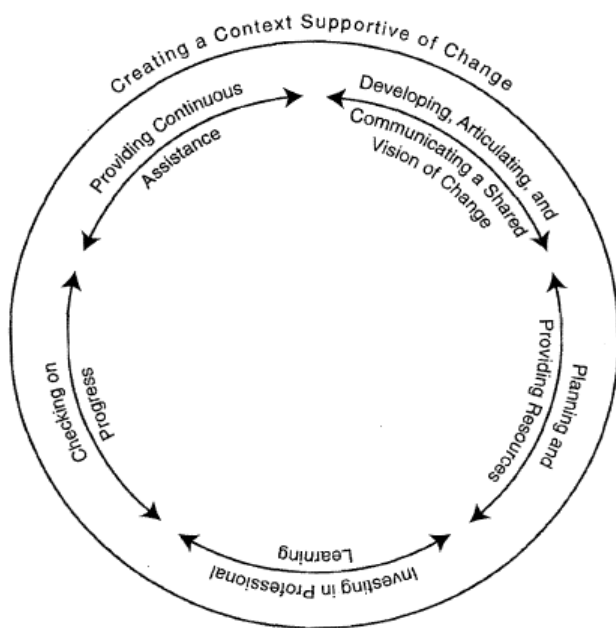
Figure 2. Six functions of interventions (Hall & Hord, 1984, p. 148).

According to Hall and Hord (2011), function number two is "planning and providing resources" (p. 149). Once the shared vision has been established, "planning for its realization is both possible and necessary. All logistical factors and resource allocations, along with policy implications, must be considered" (p. 149). Function three is "investing in professional learning" (p. 150). The authors contended that "learning is the basis of and the corollary to change," and that "if faculty are to use new curricular programs or instructional practices, they must learn how to do that" (p. 149).

The next function is "checking on progress" (Hall & Hord, 2011, p. 150). Hall and Hord (2011) argued that this is also a key factor in the change process. They explained that the change effort is usually lost when the leadership team fails to routinely check the progress of each implementer of the innovation:

Important checking actions include gathering data about the implementers' needs;

collecting information about the knowledge and skills of the implementers; collecting

feedback at the end of workshops and providing feedback on the feedback; at regular intervals systematically measuring, analyzing, and interpreting SoC, LoU, and IC; and talking informally with users about their progress. (p. 151)

Along with function number four is function number five—"providing continuous assistance" and function number six—"creating a context supportive to change" (p. 151). The authors define context in two parts: the physical and the people. The physical refers to "the nonorganic aspects of the organization: its buildings, facilities, schedules, policies, and the like" (p. 151). The people element includes the "beliefs and values held by the members and the norms that guide their behavior" (p. 151). If the nonorganic components of the organization are complex and dynamic and therefore support change, these components will have an impact on the beliefs, values, and behavior of the people.

In this action research study, the SoCQ was used to assess the concerns of the action research team. Specifically, faculty and AR team concerns about the innovation were assessed. Interventions were later guided by their shared vision of their classroom culture, student culture, and learner-centered practices.

CBAM Empirical Studies

The empirical studies reviewed below include studies that explore the Concerns-Based Adoption Model. The CBAM studies examine the implementation of change efforts in schools and colleges and can be divided into three themes: studies that correlate progression through SoCQ stages with membership in PD, studies that use SoCQ to guide the implementation of PD change efforts in K-12, and studies that use SoCQ to guide the implementation of change effort in community colleges. Table 2 illustrates these themes.

Table 2

Themes in Empirical Studies on Concerns-Based Adoption Model

CBAM Themes	Study
Theme 1 Correlate progression through SoCQ stages with membership in Professional Learning (PL) or Professional Development (PD)	Malmgren (2010)
Theme 2 Use SoCQ to guide the implementation of PD change efforts in K-12	Dilg (2015) Tobola (2015)
Theme 3 Use SoCQ to guide the implementation of change effort in community colleges	Klassen (2010)

Malmgren's (2010) fall into the first theme above in Table 2. The purpose of the study was to determine if faculty development, as measured by progression through the Stages of Concern, occurred as a result of teaching in a learning community (LC) cohort at a California community college, and if progression through developmental Stages of Concern is related to total number of years teaching or number of years teaching in the LC program (Malmgren, 2010, p. 84). The results suggest that faculty initially display high levels in all Stages of Concern, but over time, the first three stages of concern diminish (specifically by year three of teaching). However, impact concerns increase over time. Malmgren noted themes from the qualitative data, which include valuing collaboration and professional development, the need for planning and preparation time, and desire to understand and meet student needs (Malmgren, 2010).

The studies found in Theme 2 examine implementation efforts in K-12 schools. Dilg (2015) examined the perceptions and stages of concerns of elementary teachers regarding the Response to Intervention model (RTI). Those perceptions helped gauge the level of acceptance

of RTI and assisted school leadership in providing support and professional development to ensure a successful adoption. According to Dilg (2015), RTI is a model for school reform as a response to No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Thus, "RTI is designed to identify students at risk for failure and then to have teachers intervene with researched based practices to prevent that failure" (Dilg, 2015, p. 2). The results reveal that time management was a significant concern of all six teachers. Other themes or concern categories were: collaboration, working with students, student motivation, working with students, and satisfaction with work (p. 65).

Tobola (2015) is also categorized in Theme 2. The purpose of the study was to create and implement a professional development (PD) series to prepare the K-6 teachers to implement newly purchased mobile device technologies using transformational classroom instruction. Therefore, although this study is listed in the CBAM studies (see Table 2), the purpose also has transformational qualities. The results revealed that the participants perceived the workshops and support provided through this model favorably. The participants also appreciated the reflective and sharing time built within the workshop model. According to Tobola (2015), "teacher participants accepted and embraced the technology, however, survey results indicated teachers felt they did not have time to fully master the technology and did not feel they had all the resources needed to accomplish mastery" (p. 4). This study provides a helpful research design for a one-year study.

Klassen (2010) is categorized in the Theme 3. The purpose of this longitudinal case study was to examine the faculty adoption of distance education in a rural community college over a span of ten years in the southwestern United States, beginning in 1999 with the adoption and implementation of an instructional television (ITV) system and ending in 2009 with the adoption and implementation of an online distance education system (Klassen, 2010). Results

indicated, as Hall and Hord suggested, that concerns will be more or less intense across the various stages over the lifespan of the implementation of a change effort. Furthermore, according to Klassen (2010), "it is vital to identify and properly confront concerns in order to empower faculty to engage in active distance teaching (Dede, 1996) if higher education is to meet its goal of broadening education access" (p. 266).

Transformative Learning Theory

While Hall and Hord's (2011) CBAM attends to the stages of concern that stakeholders feel during change efforts, Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory attends to the epistemological shift that is the nature of deep, metacognitive change. As Tinto (1975, 1993, 2012) and Cuseo (2015) argued, colleges must make transformative and systematic change if they hope to retain and graduate their students with higher margins of success. Mezirow's (2003) transformative learning theory could be the balm that these systems so desperately need. Mezirow defined transformative learning as a "uniquely adult form of metacognitive reasoning" (p. 58). Further, he explained that:

> Transformative learning is learning that transforms problematic frames of reference—sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets) —to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change. Such frames of reference are better than others because they are more likely to generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. (Mezirow, 2003, p. 58)

Mezirow (2003) contextualized transformative learning in Habermas' (1984) distinction between "instrumental and communicative learning" (Mezirow, 2003, p. 59). Instrumental learning focuses on a discernment of truth or truth claims, while communicative learning focuses

on a discernment of intention and interpretation. Mezirow contended that communicative learning involves "the process of critical-dialectical discourse" which is the process of "assessing the beliefs of others to arrive at a tentative best judgement" (p. 59).

Transformative learning is a process. According to Mezirow (2009), there are two major elements that comprise this transformative learning process. First, there must be "critical reflection or critical self-reflection on assumptions—critical assessment of the sources, nature and consequences of our habits of mind—and second, participating fully and freely in dialectical discourse to validate a best reflective judgement" (Mezirow, 2009, p. 94). Further, because the nature of action research is reflective, the action research team, the researcher, and the participants engaged in critical reflections throughout the various cycles of this study.

Cranton (1994) further explicated Mezirow's (2009) theory of transformative learning saying that although his theories were based on constructivist assumptions, they do not belong to one school of thought. Rather, "transformative learning theory leads us to view learning as a process of becoming aware of one's assumptions and revising these assumptions based on critical self-reflection" (Cranton, 1994, p. 730). Further, it is within the context of this critical self-reflection that "the learner questions whether or not the assumptions are valid. If this process leads to a change in assumptions, it also leads to a new way of interpreting the world, and transformation has taken place. Actions and behaviors will be changed based on the changed perspective" (p. 730).

More importantly, Cranton (1994) argued that the two concepts of transformative learning that are of particular interest to faculty development are "domains of meaning perspectives" and "types of reflection" (p. 730). These "domains of meaning perspectives" are ways that adult learners make meaning: psychological, sociolinguistic, and epistemic" (Cranton,

1994, pp. 730-731). Cranton explained that "people have psychological meaning perspectives that determine how they see themselves personally … sociolinguistic meaning perspectives based on social norms, cultural codes and language; people have epistemic perspectives based on their knowledge and the way they use knowledge" (pp. 730-731). Cranton went further, claiming that when these perspectives become distorted, "reflection is the key process in becoming aware of distorted assumptions and meaning perspectives" (p. 730). Cranton explained Mezirow's (1991) delineations of reflection, arguing that there are three types of reflection that evoke three types of questions from the adult learner. For example, in "content reflection, we ask, 'What is the assumption?'; in process reflection, we ask 'How did we come to hold that assumption?'; and in premise reflection, we ask 'Why does this assumption matter?'" (as cited in Cranton, 1994, p. 731). These levels of reflection are designed to lead adult learners to transform their worldview. In this study, the data illustrated that the assumptions of the participants were challenged, and by reflecting on those assumptions, many of them experienced perspective shifts at varying levels.

Transformative Professional Development

Cranton (1994) made a distinct link between transformative learning theory and faculty development. She argued that:

> Faculty may tend to teach as they were taught or to base themselves on a specific role model, a person who strongly influenced them as students…When asked to discuss the consequences of various teaching behaviors, faculty seem to have difficulty; the tendency is to 'blame' students or institutional constraints (for example, class size) for ineffective practices. (pp. 733-734)

In this study, we found that some of the faculty fit these descriptions and had been blaming other factors for their inability to change outcomes and connect with their students.

Cranton (1994) added that traditional faculty development activities are designed "for forming rather than transforming practice" (p. 734). Cranton suggested that the type of faculty development that has the most potential for transformative learning is "long-term work with a mentor, a faculty developer, a peer consultant, or a group of faculty interested in teaching" (p. 735). As a response to this lack of emphasis on adult learning, Cranton (1996) proposed a model of influences in educator development that presents a three domain process that faculty should undergo in order to transform practice: critical reflection (CR), self-directed learning (SDL), and transformative learning (TL). This model is depicted in Figure 3.
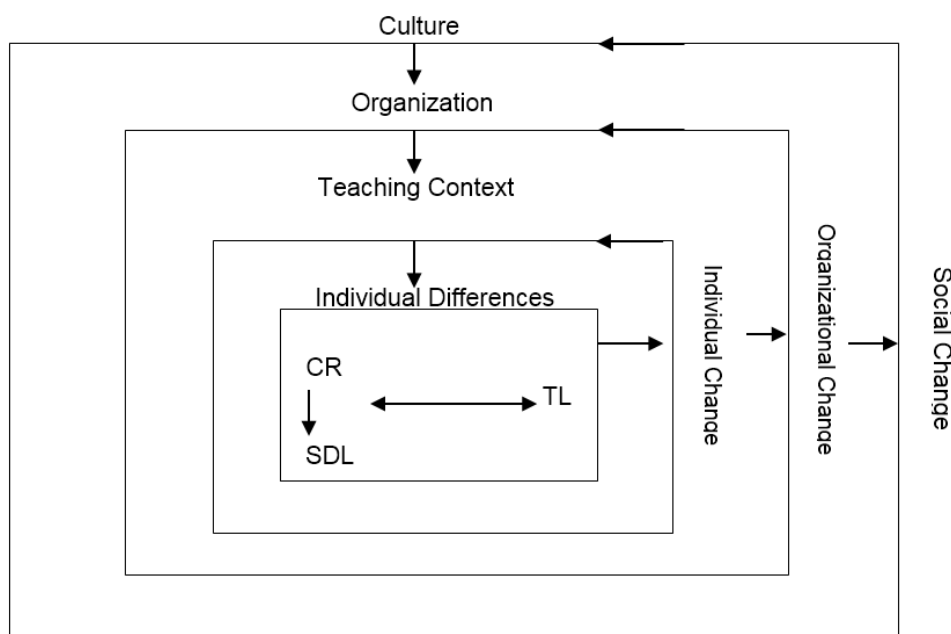
Figure 3. Cranton's (1996) model for how educators develop their practice.

According to Cranton (1996), in order to transform practice, faculty professional development should emphasize self-directed learning and should emphasize critical reflection and critical discourse about assumptions. During the problem-framing cycle, in this study the

data revealed that faculty resistance to previous professional development was based on the college's attempts to form rather than transform. For the faculty, the professional development events did not challenge them or engage them in transformative learning.

In keeping with Cranton's (1994) arguments, Servage (2008) suggested that professional learning communities should transform rather than reform. According to Servage, the professional learning community (PLC) is characterized by a number of core beliefs:

> (1) that staff professional development is critical to improved student learning; (2) that this professional development is most effective when it is collaborative and collegial; and (3) that this collaborative work should involve inquiry and problem solving in authentic contexts of daily teaching practices. (p. 63)

She contended that "presently, professional learning communities focus their efforts on the means of teaching and not its ends" (p. 65). Servage explained that in our achievement-oriented political climate, the "*learning* in professional learning communities is understood, for the most part, as best practices or a body of pedagogical, technical expertise that in theory will guarantee positive academic outcomes for students" (p. 65). However, studying best practices without collaborative processes is not transformation. More often than not, professional learning communities focus on instrumental learning, "yet anticipate … the transformative impact of communicative learning" (Servage, 2008, p. 69). Servage argued that "transformative learning theory can help us shift emphasis away from collaborative teacher learning as merely a social setting for the mastery of technical skills, to a communicative framework more appropriate for exploiting any transformative potential present in a professional learning community model" (p. 69). During this action research study, the action research team suggested that a means of sustainability for the change effort might include professional learning communities.

Professional Development in the Community and Technical College

This section focuses on professional development in community and technical colleges because City Technical College is a part of that group. Much of the sparse literature that focuses on professional development in community and technical colleges emphasizes professional development that seeks to improve technical skills, as Servage (2008) and Cranton (1994) contended, rather than improve teaching as a reflective and transformative practice. Although many professional development efforts do recognize the link between faculty development and student learning outcomes, there is still a lack of emphasis on developing the epistemic perceptions of the teacher in order to achieve this end.

Murray (2002) also explained that "much of the literature describes highly successful, innovative, one-shot programs that are typically limited in duration and scope" (p. 94). Murray argued that:

A review of the literature on faculty development and its implications for community colleges suggests that the following are necessary conditions for an effective faculty development program: administrative support that fosters and encourages faculty development, a formalized, structured, goal-directed program, a connection between faculty development and the reward structure, faculty ownership, support from colleagues for investments in teaching, and a belief that good teaching is valued by administrators. (pp. 94-95)

On the other hand, Nwagwu (1998) argued that "improving teaching effectiveness is not merely a function of effective rewards systems, but rather a collaborative function of several factors working together to improve not only what goes on in the classroom but to improve the quality of faculty" (p. 15).

Gerstein (2009) claimed that although community colleges have "long provided broad access to large numbers of Americans who seek opportunities in higher education," many of the students "arrive under-prepared for college-level work" (p. 1). This was largely the case at CTC. According to Gerstein, "one critical area of focus in addressing the increasing numbers of under-prepared students includes faculty professional development as a means to improve learning outcomes for students" (p. 1). Further, Gerstein (2009) explained that unlike university faculty:

> Community college faculties spend the greatest portion of their professional time devoted to teaching…. It is, however, this central role of instruction for which community college faculty has the least preparation. Community college faculties, like many of their colleagues in higher education institutions, bring very little experience and training to the teaching dimension of their roles. (p. 7)

The dilemma that Gerstein (2009) posited is exactly the conundrum that faced CTC at the time of this study. Although the primary role of the faculty at CTC is instruction, ironically, very few faculty possessed any teaching and learning training.

According to Gerstein (2009), "teaching is the core process of community colleges. Faculty, however, arrive with little to no background in pedagogy and curriculum design. Their areas of expertise surround a specific content area, mathematics or physics, for example" (p. 7). Gerstein concluded by proposing that faculty development that focuses on teaching and learning would fulfill this pressing need. This action research study seeks to fulfill that pressing need.

Furthermore, Brownwell and Tanner (2012) argued that there are some academic identity discrepancies to which we must attend. They explained that "the development of a professional identity is not unlike the development of a personal identity but is situated in the context of a discipline and thus framed by the 'rules of membership' of that discipline" (pp. 340-341). The

authors acknowledged that although the professional identity is an internalized identity, it "guides our external actions and decisions in our profession, including the decisions we make about how we teach" (p. 341).

Brownwell and Tanner (2012) suggested that there are three tensions between faculty maintaining their professional identities and participating in pedagogical change:

The first tension point between professional identity and pedagogical change efforts is that scientists are trained in an atmosphere that defines their professional identities primarily as research identities to the exclusion of teaching identities. (p. 341)

Indeed, at CTC we found evidence of this in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) faculty credentialing guidelines in which the emphasis is placed upon the level of credentials earned within the discipline rather than credentials earned in teaching, learning, curriculum, etc. (SACSCOC, 2018). In fact, teaching and learning credentials are discouraged. Therefore, many colleges staff faculty positions based solely upon discipline-specific criteria.

According to Brownwell and Tanner (2012), a second tension point is "that embracing a teaching identity as part of one's scientific professional identity can be perceived as a liability and something to be hidden" (p. 342). And finally, "a third tension point is that teaching is often regarded as lower status than research in the scientific disciplines" (p. 342). The authors argued that good professional development seeks first to reconcile these tensions before it can hope to achieve pedagogical change.

Reder (2007) argued that "good teaching does *not* happen naturally—and when [he] says good teaching [he] means *effective* teaching: the types of intentional pedagogical practices that lead to significant and deep student learning" (p. 9). According to Reder (2007), although the

Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) "focuses on liberal learning outcomes, civic learning, diversity, global education, residential learning, general education, and critical thinking," the role that faculty play in student learning is often an afterthought (p. 9). Reder (2007) affirmed that most:

> Doctoral education emphasizes research, not teaching, and as the vast majority of faculty are trained at research universities, the need for faculty teaching development is particularly salient at small liberal arts colleges, where the teaching ethos and classroom practices contrast considerably. (p. 12).

Therefore, Reder (2007) suggested that supporting faculty as teachers and learners is the key to developing effective teaching. Faculty development should focus on creating a "faculty community of critical practitioners who teach in a reflective and intentional manner that leads to better student learning" (Reder, 2007, p. 13). As Chapter 3 reveals, Brownwell and Tanner (2012) and Reder's (2007) theories are aligned with the ideas that guided the action research team's implementation of professional development that seeks to transform faculty perspectives toward learner-centeredness.

The problem with transformative learning. Some have identified limitations with the application of transformative learning theory. Kegan (2009) suggested that over time, Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformative learning has been diluted. He explained that transformation has begun to "refer to any type of change or process at all" (Kegan, 2009, p. 41). Therefore, in an attempt to "protect the genuinely landscape-altering potential in the concept of transformational learning," Keagan provided a list of distinct features that need to be more explicit (p. 41).

First, according to Kegan (2009), "transformational kinds of learning need to be more clearly distinguished from informational kinds of learning" (p. 41). This is a reiteration of Mezirow's (2003) discussion of Habermas' (1984) "instrumental learning" which focuses on a discernment of truth or truth claims. Kegan (2014) referred to instrumental learning as "informational learning aimed at increasing our fund of knowledge, at increasing our repertoire of skills, at extending already established cognitive structures" (p. 42). Furthermore, Kegan contended that "such learning is literally in-*form*-ative because it seeks to bring valuable new contents into the existing form of our way of knowing" (p. 42). On the other hand, "trans-*form*-ative learning puts the form itself at risk of change (and not just change but increased capacity)" (Keagan, p. 42). Transformative learning builds capacity for abstract thinking and the creation of entirely new knowledge, an entirely new frame of reference, and an entirely new paradigm.

Second, Kegan (2009) explained that "at the heart of a form is a way of knowing (what Mezirow calls a 'frame of reference'); thus, genuinely transformational learning is always to some extent an epistemological change rather than merely a change in behavioral repertoire or an increase in the quantity or fund of knowledge" (p. 41). This frame of reference refers to epistemological "meaning-forming" and "reforming of meaning-forming. Thus, transformative learning requires an epistemological shift.

Finally, Kegan (2009) emphasized that the concept of transformational learning needs to be broadened to include an entire lifespan. He argued that, "even as the concept of transformational learning needs to be *narrowed* by focusing more explicitly on the epistemological, it needs to be *broadened* to include the whole lifespan" (p. 41). Transformational learning also necessitates many epistemological shifts over a lifetime,

replacing a previous form or frame of reference for a new one. This kind of learning represents the evolution of human consciousness.

In this study, faculty meaning perspectives around learner centered instruction were explored and challenged in order to shift faculty premises that may be problematic or that lead to dissonance between assumptions and actions. As we learned earlier from Cranton (1994), the tendency of faculty is to 'blame' students or institutional constraints for problems in the classroom (pp. 733-734). Therefore, faculty may not have considered their own role in their students' learning outcomes. These meaning perspectives and premises were explored.

Empirical Studies for Transformative Learning and Transformative Professional Development

The studies that examine transformative professional development and professional development can be divided into three themes as illustrated in Table 3. The themes are: the impact of participation in PD and/or faculty teaching and learning community, the exploration of faculty perspectives about the design of professional development, and the exploration of faculty perspective shifts about teaching and learning.

Table 3

Themes in Empirical Studies on Transformative Professional and Professional Development

PD Themes	Study
Theme 1 Explore impact of participation in PD and/or faculty teaching and learning community	Pincus (1996) McGee (2015)
Theme 2 Explore faculty perspective shifts about teaching and learning	King (2002, 2004)
Theme 3 Explore faculty perspectives regarding the design of professional development	Scott (1987) Wallin & Smith (2005) Taylor (2006) Clancey (2012) Antalek (2014) Parker (2015)

Pincus (1996) can be categorized into Theme 1. The study explored the impact of

participation in a faculty teaching and learning community (TLC) on the professional

development of community college faculty in order to examine how the actual development of

the professional development occurs. Ultimately, the study found that learning takes place best

in community of learners. The study results reveal that the essence of how faculty professional

development occurs through the TLC in this study can be described as a "web of inclusion for all

of the personal and professional development connections the participants make in a dynamic,

intricate, interwoven network and learning environment which the TLC creates" (Pincus, 1996).

This study makes an excellent case for the value of faculty PLCs.

McGee (2015) also falls into Theme 1. The researcher's purpose was to improve the

instructional capacity of adjunct faculty by examining the outcomes of implementing an online

adjunct training module. The findings revealed that:

Only 10% of adjunct participants expressed having a positive view of being an adjunct instructor. The other 90% made multiple comments that expressed their dissatisfaction within the last year of their adjunct teaching experience. Less than 20 % of adjunct participants expressed that their self-efficacy stems from their personal characteristics versus institutional support. (McGee, 2015)

The only studies categorized in Theme 2 come from King (2002, 2004), in which she examines transformational learning and faculty development through two case studies. In the first, she holds that "transformational learning provides a rich framework from which to view faculty development in educational technology and provides insight into faculty learning processes in this area" (King, 2002, p. 284). King used transformative learning theory to investigate the changes that educators experience while they "examine their beliefs about teaching and learning while learning educational technology" (p. 287). The educators that were a part of the study enrolled in a graduate education course on technology, implemented the practices they learned in the course within their own teaching practice, then measured the degree to which their perspectives transformed and the degree to which their worldview of education transformed. The results of this study revealed that "professional development has the potential to engage teachers in fundamental reflection about their work and its place in our global community. Professional developers have an opportunity to help cultivate reflective practice and encourage the development of learning communities that may lead to communities of practice" (p. 294).

In the 2004 study, King "explored 'both sides' of the teaching-learning experience. While exploring the experiences of the learners, the study also investigates professors' perspectives and teaching experiences. In particular, the study explored the perspectives of professors regarding

transformative learning, barriers to learning, learners' experiences, and instructor and organizational responsibility. King's purpose, therefore, was closely aligned with the purpose of my action research study, which was to explore how transformative professional development that emphasizes culturally relevant teaching and learner-centeredness to change faculty perspectives. Although the context of King's study, its participants, study design, interventions, and data collection methods vary greatly from those same variables in my study, the intent is similar. King (2004) sought to measure the impact of transformative learning and professional development on student-faculty and faculty perspectives. Therefore, my rationale for reviewing King's study lies in its results and findings. Her study revealed perspective shifts in both students and faculty. The study was a mixed methods design using King's Learning Activities Survey (LAS). The LAS was meant to examine "experience perspective transformation" (p. 158). The findings were significant:

> Of the 58 participants, 36 (62 %) indicated that they had experienced perspective transformation within their educational experience in the program and/or class. Themes of these experiences included developing a more open-minded attitude towards others and themselves; developing a stronger reflective orientation to their lives and work; and understanding the people (adult learners) they will, or currently, work with better. Several educators discussed feeling dramatically more open-minded, looking at things from multiple perspectives, reassessing social expectations and roles, and looking beyond stereotypes. These were not minor changes, but instead deeply felt experiences of new ways of understanding their worlds. (King, 2004, p. 162)

King's 2002 and 2004 studies reaffirmed Servage's (2008) desire to shift away from professional development that emphasizes instrumental learning and focus on professional

development that emphasizes transformative learning. King shifts that focus and achieves perspective transformations in her study participants. King's research illuminates the transformative power of communicative learning experiences.

Next were the studies categorized into Theme 2. First, Scott (1987) presented a faculty development model for promoting professional growth and organizational change. The data revealed that each participating college believed it more feasible to develop its own reward system for faculty participation in professional development (PD) activities, and that it was more important that faculty feel a sense of ownership for PD.

There are two studies in Theme 2 that explore faculty perspectives about professional development in two-year technical colleges—Wallin and Smith (2005) and Taylor (2006). Wallin and Smith (2005) set out to study faculty development in Georgia's technical colleges. Therefore, their study "attempted to determine which faculty development activities are relevant to the needs and concerns of faculty" (p. 88). With input from an advisory committee comprised of technical college faculty, Wallin and Smith created a survey instrument that sought "to rate the importance of the identified activity to successful teaching (low, moderate, high, very high) and to self-assess their competence in that particular activity using the same scale (low, moderate, high, very high)" (p. 89). Of the "full-time faculty members at 29 of the 33 technical colleges, 714 faculty" (p. 89) returned the survey instrument.

The survey was divided into seven professional development activities as follows: instructional cluster, promotional cluster, administrative and management cluster, curriculum cluster, professional environment activities, professional development activities—performance gaps, technology cluster (Wallin & Smith, 2005). According to the researchers,

The instructional cluster contained the greatest number of activities that were considered by faculty to be of greatest importance for teaching success. Ranked number one, with a 3.59 importance mean, faculty considered their greatest responsibility the preparation of "effective current instructional materials." (p. 93)

A notable site of investigation is that "faculty consistently ranked activities in this cluster as very important, and they were also consistently confident of their abilities. The one exception, ranked seventh, was ''utilizing instructional techniques that develop higher-order skills in students (i.e., critical thinking skills)" (Wallin & Smith, 2005, p. 98). According to researchers, "getting students to develop the ability to go beyond course content and rote memorization to application and critical thinking is a concern for faculty. They are unsure of how best to go about achieving this very important objective" (p. 98). Oddly, the faculty surveyed did not make a correlation to their uncertainty in achieving the critical thinking outcome of teaching with their confidence in their teaching abilities. In other words, although the faculty asserted their ineffectiveness in teaching critical thinking skills—self-admittedly a very important objective— this ineffectiveness did not adversely affect their confidence in their teaching abilities. Therefore, faculty development efforts that focus on the teaching of critical thinking are needed.

Taylor (2006) also explored professional development in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS). The study identified the critical issues relating to the design of staff development and the results of the implemented process. The results indicated that "faculty perceived the purposes of staff development were to advance new initiatives in teaching and learning, to create or sustain a culture of teaching excellence, and to respond to and support individual faculty members' goals" (Taylor, 2006). This study is significant for two reasons. First, the study results confirm what most theorists reviewed here contend—faculty professional

development should sustain a culture of teaching and learning. Second, this study is significant because it is one of two studies reviewed that examine PD in two-year technical colleges.

Additionally, Clancey (2012) is categorized in Theme 3. The purpose of the study was to determine if an intervention presented to the College of Technology faculty in the form of a guided informational workshop could improve the faculty's self-directed choices for professional development (Clancey, 2012). The study found that the workshop caused a meaningful amount of positive change in the choices made by the faculty. The data also revealed that a "nominal amount of organizational behavioral change regarding professional faculty development had been initiated as a result of the workshop" (Clancey, 2012).

Further, Antalek (2014) examined faculty perceptions of the instructional methodologies used to facilitate student learning. The data revealed a lack of computer-based instructional strategies and a need for implementation of technological professional learning opportunities at the college. Faculty expressed desire for professional learning. Antalek also contended that:

> The Center for Community College Student Engagement (2010) asserted that "research abounds about what works in teaching and learning. Instructors, however, must be given the opportunity necessary to learn more about effective teaching strategies and to apply those strategies in their day-to-day work." (as cited in Antalek, 2014, p. 16)

Antalek's findings affirm the assertion made by Reder (2007), Servage (2008), and Brownwell and Tanner (2012) regarding the value of professional development which emphasizes teaching and learning for college and university faculty.

Like Antalek (2014), Parker's (2015) purpose was to implement and evaluate the efficacy of professional development workshops to change teachers' attitudes of a continuous professional development delivery versus the one-time professional development session.

Results of this study determined that continuous professional development versus single workshop methods did indeed improve teacher attitudes toward professional development. The research study indicated that teachers' attitudes did improve with the continuous professional development delivery method, and that the ongoing goal should be to continue with the continuous workshops for greater benefits (Parker, 2015).

Culturally Relevant Teaching

In this section, the terms, *culturally relevant teaching*, *culturally responsive teaching*, and *culturally relevant pedagogy* are used somewhat interchangeably. The literature on culturally relevant teaching is reviewed here because City Technical College is classified as a predominately black institution (PBI), with over 90% of its students identifying as African American. Further, as the literature suggests and as the data suggests, culturally relevant teaching is an appropriate site of investigation and intervention for this study.

Much of the literature focused on cultural relevance and cultural responsiveness in education is predicated on the infamous publication, *A Nation at Risk* (1983). *A Nation at Risk* (1983), now considered a watershed event, was published by President Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education, indicts the system of American education for allowing, what it calls, "a rising tide of mediocrity" to threaten the nation (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 5). Irvine (1990) argued that the nation is indeed at risk, but not because it has allowed "a rising tide of mediocrity" to wash over it. Rather,

The nation is at risk because the fastest-growing segment of the school population, blacks and other minorities, is being systematically and effectively excluded from the benefits of educational opportunities. These educational benefits lead to individual economic

independence, which this country will ultimately depend upon for its strength and survival. (Irvine, 1990, p. xiii)

Ultimately, Irvine (1990) claimed that black students are subjected to school failure because of racism, classism, and cultural resistance and insensitivity. Irvine's work is most notable because it breaks with the long-standing 20th century cultural deficit perspective, which assumes that schools serve their students equally and that schools are meritocratic and value-free (Irvine, 1990, p. 2). Therefore, if black students fail to thrive in schools, their failure is a result of their own deficit rather than the result of the political nature of the educational system and its latent agenda for black students and other students of culture (p. 2).

In response to the cultural deficit perspective, Irvine (1990) developed the concept of cultural synchronization to describe the necessary interpersonal context that must exist between teachers and African-American students to maximize learning. Rather than focus solely on speech and language interactions, Irvine's work described the acceptance of students' communication patterns, along with a constellation of African-American cultural mores such as mutuality, reciprocity, spirituality, deference, and responsibility (Ladson-Billings, 1995, pp. 468-469).

Ladson-Billings (1995) is widely recognized as the founding expert in the area of culturally relevant pedagogy. Ladson-Billings took Irvine's (1990) theories a step further and proposed a theoretical model "that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate (p. 469). She termed this pedagogy—*culturally relevant pedagogy.* Ladson-Billings (1995) grounded her model of culturally relevant pedagogy in the work of Collins (1991). Ladson-Billings' model is based on

four propositions: (1) concrete experiences as a criterion of meaning, (2) the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, (3) the ethic of caring, and (4) the ethic of personal accountability (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 471).

According to Ladson-Billings (1995), the first criteria of culturally relevant pedagogy is accepting concrete experiences as a criterion of meaning. In order to provide concrete experiences as a criterion of meaning, Ladson-Billings argued, as Collins (1991) posited, "individuals who have lived through the experiences about which they claim to be experts are more believable and credible than those who have merely read and thought about such experience" (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 472).

Ladson-Billings (1995) explained that the second criterion suggests that knowledge emerges in dialectical relationships. Rather than the voice of one authority, meaning is made as a product of dialogue between and among individuals (p. 473). These criteria seem also rooted in the Freirean (1970) concept of liberation pedagogy in which knowledge and meaning-making is shared by both teacher and student.

Moreover, the ethic of caring is the third criteria for culturally focused pedagogy. Ladson-Billings (1995) explained that the ethic of caring "refers not merely to affective connections between and among people but to the articulation of a greater sense of commitment to what scholarship and/or pedagogy can mean in the lives of people" (p. 474). In other words, teachers who are culturally focused in their pedagogy care deeply about the "implications of their work on their students' lives, the welfare of the community, and unjust social arrangements" (p. 474). Finally, the ethic of accountability can be described as, Collins (1991) explained, addressing the notion that those who make knowledge claims is as important as what those knowledge claims are. In other words, knowledge claims are inevitably value-laden and

subjective even in their attempts to foster objectivity. Consequently, Ladson-Billings' model informed the interventions implemented in this action research study.

Gay (2013) defined culturally responsive teaching then explained how she "writes to teach others how to understand and do culturally responsive teaching" (p. 48). Gay is best known for her scholarship in multicultural education, professional development in culturally responsive teaching, and her examination of the intersections of culture, race, ethnicity, teaching, and learning. Gay (2013) examined some specific actions of culturally responsive teaching: restructuring attitudes and beliefs about ethnic and cultural diversity; resisting resistance or countering opposition to cultural diversity; centering culture and difference in the teaching process; and establishing pedagogical connections between culturally responsiveness and other dimensions or areas of teaching (pp. 48-49). According to Gay,

> Education must be specifically designed to perpetuate and enrich the culture of a people and equip them with the tools to become functional participants in society, if they so choose. This education cannot progress smoothly unless it is based upon and proceeds from the cultural perspectives of the group of people for whom it is designed. Since all Americans do not have the same set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, values, and norms, a single system of education seems impossible to serve everyone…. [Educators] must accept the existence of cultural pluralism in this country and respect differences without equating them with inferiorities or tolerating them with an air of condescension. (p. 35)

We see Gay's claims echoed by some of the participants in this action research study.

Larke (2013) moved the conversation of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) into higher education. She argued for the need for CRT in higher education and provided practical application of CRT theories at the classroom and curricular level. Larke (2013) explained that,

"historically, instructional delivery on college campuses has been—and continues to be—via the lecture…. CRT is an effective pedagogical tool that can enhance teaching in college courses. CRT includes three areas: cultural competence and understanding, critical consciousness, and academic success" (p. 49). Some of the practical strategies that Larke presented are the types of interventions that, when combined with professional development, could prove beneficial to student success in the classroom.

Learner-Centeredness and Student Engagement

At the system level, Tinto (1993, 2012) sounded the call for colleges and universities to place students at the center and focus their engagement strategies at the classroom level. Tinto (1993) expanded his 1975 model of student departure (see Figure 4), which posited academic and social integration as the key factors to colleges and universities retaining students. These two sites of integration largely determine whether or not students persist or drop out of college. Tinto's model suggested that:

> It is the individual's integration into the academic and social systems of the college that most directly relates to his continuance in that college. Given prior levels of goal and institutional commitment, it is the person's normative and structural integration into the academic and social systems that lead to new levels of commitment. (Tinto, 1975, p. 96)

Furthermore, Tinto argued that colleges must successfully engage students inside the classroom as well as outside the classroom. In short, students must have academic self-esteem and must enjoy the college social environment if institutions hope to retain and graduate them. This action research study focused its investigation at the classroom level.
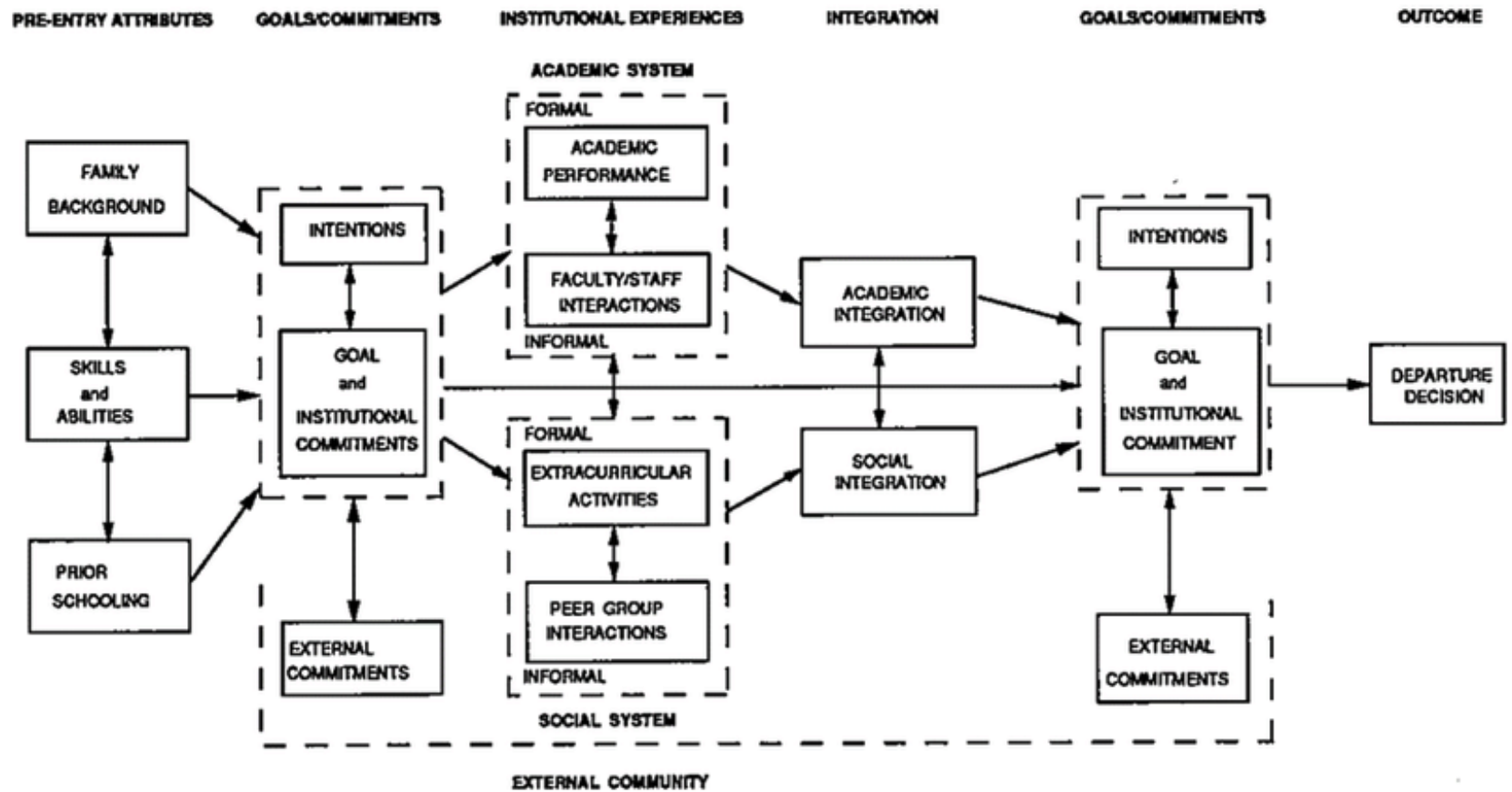
Figure 4. A conceptual schema for dropout from college (Tinto, 1975).

Tinto (2012) claimed that since his 1993 text, colleges and universities have done little to address the student retention problem. He argued that the purpose of the 2012 text was to "tap the knowledge we have gained from past research on student retention and completion and use it in developing a framework for institutional action that places the classroom at the center" (p. 6). Tinto explained that although colleges have improved access to underrepresented students over the past 20 years, they have not done a good job translating access into completion. Although colleges have institutionalized Tinto's theories by way of "Student Success Centers," "First Year Experience" programs, and "Academic Achievement Centers," students are still leaving colleges without a degree or credential attainment. Given the literature around student engagement and retention, City Technical College is not unlike other post-secondary institutions across the US. CTC is a nationally recognized PBI, serving over 90% African American students, yet it only retains about 45% of them from fall to fall. Therefore, as Tinto posited, the college has done an excellent job providing access to underrepresented students, but it has not translated access into completion.

Tinto explained that the national college completion crisis does not exist because of a lack of attention or effort. He added:

> Indeed, over the past twenty years, if not more, colleges and universities as well as foundations, state governments, and more recently the federal government have invested considerable resources in the development and implementation of a range of retention programs, many directed specifically at low-income and underserved students. Some institutions have been able to improve the rate at which they retain and graduate their students, but many, even those who have sought to do so, have not (cited in Tinto, 2012, p. 4).

So why are colleges still unable to retain students, despite their student retention efforts? According to Tinto (2012), there are several reasons that colleges are still struggling to retain students. First, Tinto argued that colleges are using attrition data with the wrong assumptions. Tinto posited that colleges incorrectly assume that "knowing why students leave is equivalent to knowing why they stay and succeed" (Tinto, 2012, p. 4). Second, colleges have focused much energy on "academic and social engagement," but their efforts are not specifically targeting how academic and social engagement should look at their institution. Lastly, Tinto explained, "Too often, institutions invest in a laundry list of actions, one disconnected from another. The result is an uncoordinated patchwork of actions whose sum impact on student retention is less than it could or should be" (p. 5). City Technical College had been creating and acting on a similar laundry list of "student success initiatives" for several years leading up to this action research study. The answer, however, is in the classroom. According to Tinto, colleges "have neglected the classroom, the one place on campus, perhaps the only place, where the great majority of students meet the faculty and one another and engage in formal learning activities" (p. 5). Since colleges cannot truly predict college readiness and the link to retention and graduation, Tinto encouraged colleges and universities to focus on their locus of control: the confines of the college or university. Research tells us that there are certain conditions within colleges and universities that promote retention and graduation. Tinto provided a "framework for institutional action" that outlines the "conditions for student success": expectations, support, assessment and feedback, and involvement (pp. 6-7).

High student expectations should be set by the institution, the faculty, and the students. According to Tinto (2012), "High expectations are a condition for student success, low expectations a harbinger of failure. Simply put, no one rises to low expectations" (p. 7).

Colleges and universities should also provide financial, social, and academic support for students. And, if colleges and universities have high academic expectations for their students, they must, in turn, provide academic support to ensure that students can rise to those high expectations, especially during the first year. Furthermore, Tinto argued that "students are more likely to succeed in institutions that assess their performance and provide frequent feedback in ways that enable students, faculty, and staff alike to adjust their behaviors to better promote student success" (p. 7). Finally, Tinto contended that "the more students are academically and socially engaged with faculty, staff, and peers, the more likely they are to succeed in college" (p. 7). This type of engagement requires relationship building, which is a critical component of this study.

As Tinto (2012) explained, although college enrollment numbers have dramatically increased over the past 20 years, college completion rates have not. Cuseo (2015) agreed with Tinto's claims about academic engagement. He explained that "the United States has one of the highest college-going rates in the world, yet its college completion rates (both 2-year and 4-year) rank near the bottom half of all industrialized nations" (cited in College Board, 2008; National Governors Association, 2008, p. 1). Low college completion rates not only have financial implications for colleges and universities, but as Cuseo explained, declining college completion rates have national implications. Globally, "an educated citizenry has always been essential to the success of a nation, but in the current global economy, it is absolutely essential" (p. 2). Cuseo (2015) went further arguing that:

> When today's students withdraw from college, the nation loses significant future contributors to its economy, loses tax revenue generated by its citizenry, and forfeits additional funds related to failed loan repayments—because students who withdraw from

college are 5 to 10 times more likely to default on their college loans than college graduates. (p. 2)

Furthermore, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) contended that "as the amount of postsecondary education increases, workforce participation increases, and the likelihood of being unemployed decreases" (p. 535). And Tinto (2012) explained that "the benefits of education accrue to our nation as a whole. On a range of issues—from voting, health, unemployment, poverty, rates of incarceration, and school readiness of children, to rates of volunteerism—it is evident that the costs to our society of not providing education to our citizens are considerable, though the benefits of an education are many" (pp. 1-2).

Cuseo (2015) posited six gaps in completions rates: the gap between low-income (students of color) and high-income students (white students) —the gap between the number of students intending to transfer from two-year to four-year colleges and the number of students who actually do—the gap between graduate school preparation of university faculty and their professional roles as undergraduate teachers and academic advisors—the gap between higher education's focus on coverage of discipline-specific content and the need for students to acquire cross-disciplinary, life-long learning skills—the gap in communication and collaboration between higher education and the K-12 school system—and the gap between the need for higher education to make transformative, systematic change to improve college completion rates and the reality that postsecondary institutions are notoriously slow to change (Cuseo, 2015). Thus, this study focused on driving change, at the classroom level, through transformative professional development and learner-centered pedagogy.

Empirical Studies for Learner-Centeredness and Culturally Relevant Teaching

Finally, the empirical studies that focus on learner centeredness and culturally relevant teaching fall into four themes as illustrated in Table 4: classroom action research in a K-12 setting, the examination of learning colleges and informal faculty leadership, AVID and underrepresented students, and culturally relevant teaching.

Table 4

Themes in Empirical Studies on Learner-Centeredness and Culturally Relevant Teaching

Learner Centered and Culturally Relevant Teaching Themes	Study
Theme 1 Classroom Action Research in K-12 setting	Sivadge (2005)
Theme 2 The examination of learning colleges and informal faculty leadership	Turner (2013)
Theme 3 AVID and underrepresented students	Woodson (2016) Watt, Butcher, & Ramirez, (2013) Huerta & Watt (2015)
Theme 4 Culturally Relevant Teaching	Morrell & Duncan-Andrade (2002) Hill (2012) Han, Vomvoridi-Ivanović, Jacobs, Karanxha, Lypka, Topdemir & Feldman (2014)

Sivadge (2005) is categorized in the first theme. The purpose of this study was three-fold:

(a) reveal teachers' perceptions of changed teaching practices as a result of their implementation of classroom action research; (b) identify teachers' perceptions of improved student achievement as a result of action research practices; and (c) provide the classroom teacher and district administrators a reliable source of information regarding

decisions about the design, implementation, and evaluation of an action research

professional development program. (p. 1)

This study revealed that the action research professional development program

enhanced both the teachers' personal learning and also their classroom applications. It also

identified the characteristics of a teacher researcher that a facilitator of an action research

professional development program can anticipate when leading the design, implementation, and

evaluation of such a program (p.79). These characteristics included being a "deliberate

practitioner," and a "consumer of research." This study illustrates the power of action research

and also the power of learner-centered instruction in action.

Next, Turner (2013) is categorized in Theme 2. The purpose of this qualitative multiple

case study was to explore and identify informal faculty leadership (IFL) practices in progressive,

post-secondary settings known as Learning Colleges. Faculty reported a broad spectrum of peer

leadership behaviors that influenced their actions including collaboration, communication,

innovation, and risk-taking. The college leaders "acknowledged the critical role of faculty in

their college's reform efforts and reinforced the importance of ongoing collaboration between

administration and faculty in achieving the college's purposes" (Turner, 2013, p. iii). This study

is significant because it explored the effective teaching and learning practices of colleges who

align themselves with a mission of teaching and learning. The study also affirmed Servage's

(2008) assertions of the values of PLCs.

The next studies fall in Theme 3 and explore AVID and underrepresented students. As

stated earlier, City Technical college has had limited success with AVID, and the focus of the

SoCQ was the AVID intervention. Woodson (2016) did not explore AVID. Instead, the study

explored the professional development activities, educational levels of faculty teaching

developmental courses, and demographic profiles of faculty and students in developmental courses at a Southwestern community college (Woodson, 2016). The data revealed that even though all faculty members had participated in professional development opportunities, the faculty may not feel as if those PD opportunities would assist them with how to best serve underprepared adult learners (Woodson, 2016). This data is provocative yet not surprising. As the literature argues, much of the professional development in colleges and universities lacks a focus on teaching and learning, and especially lacks a focus on underprepared adult learners.

Huerta and Watt (2015) examined the retention and college readiness of groups of AVID secondary students who go on to enroll in community colleges and universities. Overall, the results of the study revealed that AVID high school graduates experience slightly better college completion success than the national average. The longitudinal design of this study is a useful exploration. The study followed AVID high school students into college in order to determine whether or not their retention rates were higher in both community college and university settings. The study did not evaluate the impact of AVID in students whose first exposure was higher education.

A second study, Watt, Butcher, and Ramirez (2013), examined how a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) used AVID strategies to improve retention and to improve time to graduation for first-generation Hispanic college students. This two-year study used a quasi-experimental, mixed-methods design approach in which the retention rates and first semester grade point averages of a freshman cohort enrolled in a paired set of courses (and AVID course and an academic course) were compared to those of a control group and a similar intervention group. Although the researchers found "few statistically significant differences … between intervention groups with regard to GPA and retention, it appears that there is some benefit to the support

students received in the paired classes." Those benefits include increased engagement with faculty, better academic integration, and greater satisfaction with the college experience. The study illustrated some success with the AVID approach.

The studies that fall into the final theme are those that engaged culturally relevant teaching. Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) examined how using Hip-hop music and culture to engage urban students in the practice of critical discourse centers the lives and experiences of their students and enriches their ability to engage literary criticism. The participants were students in a 12th grade, high school, AP English class. The researcher found that the students were able to generate some excellent interpretations as well as make interesting linkages between the canonical poems and the rap text. They explained that "the unit was consistent with the basic tenets of critical pedagogy in that it was situated in the experiences of the students (as opposed to those of the teacher), called for critical dialogue and a critical engagement of the text, and related the texts to larger social and political issues" (p. 91). This study provides excellent curricular strategies for enacting culturally relevant teaching.

Next, Hill (2012) examined the characteristics, practices, and frequency of use of 52 CRT strategies employed by two teachers in a predominately African American urban public school, in order to determine the impact of those strategies on student learning and engagement. The results of the study were largely successful. The participants were two 8th grade teachers and 24 of their students in a South Side Chicago public school. Through a mixed methods approach, the researcher concluded that relational trust among both teachers and peers were an outcome of the study. Further, the data collected from the classroom and student-to-student interactions supports the fact that the teachers successfully provided a culturally responsive and culturally relevant learning experience for their students.

Finally, Han et al. (2014) examined how college educators "define, enact, and navigate their roles as culturally responsive educators" within a higher education setting (p. 290). The participants were seven college faculty in the College of Education at the University of South Florida. Through a self-study approach, the researchers found that the two most common concepts in developing a collective framework for CRP (culturally responsive pedagogy) were understanding the role of culture in education and helping educators develop socio-political awareness. The educators' enactment of CRP fell into three themes: teaching praxis, building relationships through teaching and advising, and program development. This self-study reveals important data about how CRP and CRT looks at the higher education level.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a review of the literature on the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), Transformative Learning Theory, transformative professional development, and learner-centered and culturally relevant teaching. Clearly, the literature argues that professional development for faculty should emphasize teaching and learning (Brownwell & Tanner, 2012; Reder, 2007; Servage, 2008). Additionally, as Servage (2008) contended, there is great teaching and learning value in professional learning communities (PLC) if their goal is to transform rather than reform. Cranton (1994) also argued traditional faculty development activities are designed "for forming rather than transforming practice" (p. 734).

Furthermore, the literature focusing on culturally relevant teaching argued that students of color have been historically relegated to the margins of American education. Irvine (1990) argued that black students are subjected to school failure because of racism, classism, and cultural resistance and insensitivity. She posited an alternative to the cultural deficit perspective left in the wake of *A Nation at Risk* (1983) by developing the concept of cultural synchronization

to describe the necessary interpersonal context that must exist between teachers and African-American students to maximize learning. Further, Ladson-Billings (1995), theorized a model culturally relevant pedagogy based on Collins' (1991) four propositions: (1) concrete experiences as a criterion of meaning, (2) the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, (3) the ethic of caring, and (4) the ethic of personal accountability. Gay (2013) focuses on professional development and curricular design for culturally relevant education, and Larke (2013) provides practical strategies for the application of culturally relevant teaching in higher education.

Finally, As Tinto (2012) illustrated, the classroom is a neglected site of investigation in the charge to engage and retain college students. The literature reveals that professional development that emphasizes teaching and learning and learner-centeredness has the capacity to change the face of the traditional college classroom by transforming faculty perspectives and, in turn, improving student engagement.

Outlined in Table 5 are the primary empirical studies reviewed to inform this action research study.

Table 5

Empirical Studies Reviewed for this Research

Study Author	Purpose	Sample	Methods	Findings	Comments
Empirical Studies on Concerns-Based Adoption Model					
Malmgren, I. (2010). A study of faculty development in community college teachers in learning community teaching teams using the concerns-based adoption model: a mixed methods study	The purpose of this study was to determine if faculty development, as measured by progression through the Stages of Concern, identified in the Concerns-Based Adoption Model, occurred as a result of teaching in a learning community (LC) cohort at a California community college, and if progression through developmental Stages of Concern is related to total number of years teaching or number of years teaching in the LC program.	LC faculty teaching in a California community college	This study was conducted as a mixed-methods design, triangulating an ex post facto, or naturalistic experimental study, with qualitative data.	Results suggest that faculty initially display high levels in all Stages of Concern, then diminish over time. Major themes evident in qualitative data included valuing collaboration and professional development, need for planning and preparation time, and desire to understand and meet student needs.	This study reveals good use of SoCQ in a community college over an extended, multiple-year change implementation
Dilg, D. J. (2015). Understanding teachers' perceptions of response to intervention through the concerns-based adoption model	The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and stages of concerns of elementary teachers regarding the Response to Intervention model (RTI). Those perceptions help gauge the level of acceptance of RTI and assist school leadership in providing support and professional development to ensure a successful adoption.	6 elementary school teachers from a suburban school district in a Midwestern state	Mixed methods	Time management was a significant concern of all six teachers. Other themes or concern categories were: collaboration, working with students, student motivation, working with students, and satisfaction with work.	A good validity and reliability example of SoCQ

Tobola, M. B. (2015). Utilizing the concerns-based adoption model in professional development series for teachers implementing new technologies	The purpose of this dissertation of practice was to carry out a professional development (PD) series to prepare the K-6 teachers in a small Minnesota public school to implement newly purchased mobile device technologies using transformational classroom instruction.	Small Minnesota elementary school	Mixed methods	Results showed strong evidence that participants had positive perceptions of the workshops, activities, and support provided through this model. Not enough time and resources to master the technology	Very helpful research design for a one-year study.
Klassen, D. J. (2010). Faculty adoption of distance education innovations in a southwestern rural community college: A longitudinal study	The purpose of this longitudinal case study was to examine the faculty adoption of distance education in a rural community college over a span of ten years in the southwestern US, beginning in 1999 with the adoption and implementation of an instructional television (ITV) system and ending in 2009 with an online distance education system.	Purposeful sample of 30 academic and technical faculty	Longitudinal mixed-methods	Results indicate, as Hall & Hord suggest, that concerns will be more or less intense across the various stages over the lifespan of the implementation of a change effort.	
Empirical Studies on Transformative Professional and Professional Development					
Pincus, G. S. (1996). The impact of a community college interdisciplinary faculty teaching and learning community on faculty professional development	Study explores the impact of participation in a faculty teaching and learning community (TLC) on the professional development of community college faculty in order to examine how development occurs.	Purposeful sample of 10 faculty members and 1 instructional dean: 6 women and 5 men. Community college teaching experience for periods of 4 to 31 years.	Methodology was a descriptive, interpretive case study, focused on understanding how faculty viewed their experiences while participating in a TLC planning team during the 18-month study.	In short: learning takes place best in community of learners. The essence of how faculty professional development occurs through the TLC at the Cascade Campus can be described as a web of inclusion for all of the personal and professional development connections the participants make in a dynamic, intricate, interwoven network	This study makes a dynamic case for PLCs (professional learning communities) in the early days of the PLC movement.

				and learning environment which the TLC creates.	
King, K. (2002). Educational technology professional development as transformative learning opportunities.	King uses transformational learning theory to examine and understand the changes that educators experience while they "examine their beliefs about teaching and learning while learning educational technology" (p. 287).	The educators that were a part of the study enrolled in a graduate education course on technology	Mixed methods	The results of this study revealed that "professional development has the potential to engage teachers in fundamental reflection about their work and its place in our global community. Professional developers have an opportunity to help cultivate reflective practice and encourage the development of learning communities that may lead to communities of practice" (as cited in King, 2002, p. 294).	This study uses transformative learning theory as a framework to examine faculty development - "experience perspective transformation"
King, K (2004). Both sides now: Examining transformative learning and professional development of educators	This study "explores 'both sides' of the teaching-learning experience. While exploring the experiences of the learners, [the study] also investigates professors' viewpoints and teaching experiences. In particular, it explores the perspective of the professor regarding transformative learning influences, barriers, learners' experiences, and instructor and organizational responsibility" (p. 156).	The professors in the study were enrolled in a graduate adult education course in which they studied Mezirow, Knowles, Houle, Cunningham, etc. (King, 2004, p. 160).	The study was a mixed methods design using King's Learning Activities Survey (LAS). The LAS is meant to examine "experience perspective transformation" (p. 158).	Significant findings. Of the 58 participants, 36 (62 %) indicated that they had experienced perspective transformation within their educational experience in the program and/or class. King, 2004, p. 162)	I am now very interested in King's LAS instrument in order to measure perspective shifts.

McGee, R. S. (2015). Improving the instructional skills of adjunct faculty through professional development: An action research study	The purpose of the study was to improve the instructional capacity of adjunct faculty by examining the outcomes of implementing an online adjunct training module.	The college in this study is a large urban Midwest two-year institution. The sample in included one participant group, comprised of adjunct faculty. From this group,10 participants were derived. department.	Action research - Action science was employed to develop and subsequently implement an intervention, which would attempt to address the need for providing a professional development program for part time faculty.	Several themes emerged: negative view of being an adjunct, low self-efficacy, and need for more institutional support.	Of note, "Community college educators are commonly hired to teach in areas they possess an expertise; however, there is a perceived notion that they possess learning and work methodologies and the ability to collaboratively connect and relate with students at various levels and modalities" (Ingersoll, 2012).
Antalek, L. K. (2014). A Professional Development Approach to Improve Practice at an Upstate Community College	The purpose of this study was to examine faculty perceptions of the instructional methodologies used to facilitate student learning.	Purposeful sample of 6 part-time and 2 full-time faculty participants	The study employed a qualitative intrinsic case study design.	The data revealed a lack of computer-based instructional strategies and a need for implementation of technological professional learning opportunities at the college. Faculty expressed desire for professional learning.	Noteworthy teaching and learning implications.
Clancey, M. (2012). Improving faculty professional development in high-tech programs: An action research study of self-directed	The purpose of the study was to determine if an intervention presented to the College of Technology Faculty in the form of a guided informational workshop could improve the faculty's self-directed choices for professional development.	The study used non-probability purposive sampling. 20 FT faculty members were randomly separated into	The action science research study used a mixed-method approach comprised of two quantitative elements and two qualitative elements.	The study found that the workshop caused a meaningful amount of positive change in the choices made by the faculty.	The purpose of this study is significantly different than the purpose of my study. The researcher sought

		two groups: a treatment group of ten and a control group of ten.			out to influence perspectives about faculty development choices.
professional development					
Parker, E. A. (2015). The implementation and evaluation of improvement in professional development for teachers teaching character education: An action research study	The purpose of this study was to implement and evaluate the efficacy of professional development workshops to change teachers' attitudes of a continuous professional development delivery versus the one-time professional development session.	Participants for this study included eight members of a high school faculty who participated in the delivery of continuous professional development to determine any change in their attitudes toward the benefits of professional development training.	Action research study involved collection of qualitative data regarding the intervention. Intervention consisted of implementing a professional development plan for faculty and administrators who were involved in the character building curriculum, which is new to the school, called Character Counts!	Results of this study determined that continuous professional development versus single workshop methods did indeed improve teacher attitudes toward professional development. The research study indicated that teachers' attitudes did improve with the continuous professional development delivery method, and that the ongoing goal should be to continue with the continuous workshops for greater benefits.	This study also set out to evaluate faculty perspectives about the content and delivery method of professional development workshops
Scott, O. P. (1987). A study to design and recommend a faculty development model for promoting professional growth and instructional change	Purpose of the study was to present a faculty development model for promoting professional growth and organizational change.	Inquiry forms sent to chief instructional officers and faculty at 12 community colleges in California. Representative sample 11.3% of	Action research qualitative study - survey questionnaires and panel experts	The inventory of PD goals that emerged from the study were found desirable by the participating faculty and chief instructional officers. Survey data revealed that each college believe it more feasible to develop its own	The development of goals and characteristics of the PD programs was essential element in this study and might prove valuable in my own study.

		total colleges in the state.		reward system for faculty participation in PD activities. It is more important for faculty feel a sense of ownership for PD.	
Wallin & Smith (2015)	The purpose of this study was to determine which faculty development activities are relevant to the needs and concerns of faculty (p. 88).	714 faculty of the Technical Colleges in Georgia	Quantitative	A notable site of investigation is that "faculty consistently ranked activities in this cluster as very important, and they were also consistently confident of their abilities. The one exception, ranked seventh, was ''utilizing instructional techniques that develop higher-order skills in students (i.e., critical thinking skills)" (Wallin & Smith, 2005, p. 98).	This study is significant because it is the only study that examines the region of my action research study
Taylor, H. J. K. (2006). An analysis of postsecondary career and technical education faculty development in Wisconsin	This study identified the critical issues relating to the design of postsecondary staff development in the WTCS and the results of the implemented process.	522 WTCS faculty/staff and 34 WTCS staff development coordinators participated.	Quantitative	Faculty perceived the purposes of staff development were to advance new initiatives in teaching and learning, to create or sustain a culture of teaching excellence, and to respond to and support individual faculty members' goals.	Also significant because this study is one of two studies reviewed that examine two-year technical college PD

Empirical Studies on Learner Centeredness and Culturally Relevant Teaching					
Sivadge, L. L. (2005). Teachers' perceived changes in practices and students' learning as a result of implementing teacher action research	The purposes of this study were (a) reveal teachers' perceptions of changed teaching practices as a result of their implementation of classroom action research; (b) identify teachers' perceptions of improved student achievement as a result of action research practices; and (c) provide the classroom teacher and district administrators a reliable source of information regarding decisions about the design, implementation, and evaluation of an action research professional development program.	9 second and third grade teachers from one Iowa school district	Action research – mixed methods	This study revealed attributes of the action research professional development program the teachers believed had enhanced both their personal learning and also their classroom applications. It also identified the characteristics of a teacher researcher that a facilitator of an action research professional development program can anticipate when leading the design, implementation, and evaluation of such a program (p.79)	Study uses as its quantitative instrument Hall & Hord's LoU instrument
Turner, P. J. (2013). Informal faculty leadership that transforms - evidence and practices for the learning college	The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore and identify informal faculty leadership (IFL) practices in progressive, post-secondary settings known as Learning Colleges.	52 faculty, two presidents, and one senior vice president	Qualitative case study design	In interviews, the three administrators acknowledged the critical role of faculty in their college's reform efforts and reinforced the importance of ongoing collaboration between administration and faculty in achieving the college's purposes. Specific examples included faculty roles in professional	The Learning Colleges were interesting sites of investigation in this study as well as the Informal Faculty Leadership concept (IFL)

				development, innovative practices, and as leading purveyors for a variety of change initiatives.	
Woodson, B. R. (2016), Goal 5, Texas higher education coordinating board: Exploring the professional development of faculty who teach underserved learners in developmental courses at a two-year post-secondary institution in developmental courses at a two-year post-secondary institution in Southwest Texas	This study explored the professional development activities, educational levels of faculty teaching developmental courses, and demographic profiles of faculty and students in developmental courses at a Southwestern community college.	639 faculty	Quantitative	The data revealed that even though all faculty members had participated in professional development opportunities, the faculty may not feel as if those PD opportunities would assist them with how to best serve underprepared adult learners (Woodson, 2016, pp. 114-115).	As much of the literature argues, much of the professional development in colleges and universities lacks a focus on teaching and learning, and especially lacks a focus on underprepared adult learners.
Huerta & Watt, K. M. (2015). Examining the College Preparation and Intermediate Outcomes of College Success of AVID Graduates Enrolled in Universities and Community College	Purpose was to examine the retention and college readiness of groups of AVID secondary students who go on to enroll in community colleges and universities	Total of 1,414 AVID seniors at 84 high schools nationally students were yielded from consent form	Quantitative study.	AVID students attending universities show better college preparedness than those attending community colleges. However, this data point can also be observed in non-AVID students attending universities versus community colleges. Additionally, the second research	This study does not examine AVID as an intervention strategy while students are attending college. Rather it follows AVID high school students into to college to determine whether or not their retention rates are higher in

				question examines whether AVID students exhibited higher retention rates when compared to non-AVID students. Indeed, "the sample group, as a whole, exhibited a fall-to-fall retention rate of 74%" (p. 27). The national average is a 72% retention rate. Overall, the results of the study reveal that AVID high school graduates experience better college completion success than the national average.	both community college and university settings. I am uncertain how/if this study can be used in my own research.
Watt, K. M., Butcher, J., & Ramirez, E. F. (2013). Advancement via individual determination (AVID) at a postsecondary institution: Support for first-generation college-goers	Purpose was to examine how a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) use AVID strategies to improve retention and to improve time to graduation for 1st-generation Hispanic college students.	(Group A), two randomly selected cohorts served as the control group (Group B), and two other groups served as an additional comparison group (Group C). Group A consisted of a cohort of students enrolled in a paired set of UNIV 1301 and MATH 1300 classes and a	Two-year study uses a quasi-experimental, mixed-methods design approach in which the retention rates and first semester grade point averages of a freshman cohort enrolled in a paired set of courses were compared to those of a control group and a similar intervention group"	Although the researchers found "few statistically significant differences…between intervention groups with regard to GPA and retention, it appears that there is some benefit to the support students received in the paired classes." Those benefits include increased engagement with faculty, better academic integration, and greater	Because this study targeted students while they were taking college courses and focused on student learning outcomes in those courses, it can prove useful in my own research as a way of illustrating the success of AVID and a student engagement/learner-centered intervention strategy. Also,

		cohort of students enrolled in a paired set of UNIV 1301 and MATH 1334 classes.		satisfaction with the college experience	this study targeted underrepresented students in a similar demographic to the target group of my study.
Morrell, E. & Duncan-Andrade, J. M. R (2002). Promoting academic literacy with urban youth through engaging hip-hop culture	Purpose of the study was to use Hip-hop music and culture to engage urban students in the practice of critical discourse in which their lives and experiences were centered	One, 12th grade, high school AP English class	English faculty in a high school English poetry course e designed a classroom unit with three objectives: 1. to utilize our students' involvement with Hip-hop culture to scaffold the critical and analytical skills that they already possess 2. to provide students with the awareness and confidence they need to transfer these skills into/onto the literary texts from the canon 3. to enable students to critique the messages sent to them through the popular cultural media that permeate their everyday live	The students were able to generate some excellent interpretations as well as make interesting linkages between the canonical poems and the rap text. "The unit was consistent with the basic tenets of critical pedagogy in that it was situated in the experiences of the students (as opposed to those of the teacher), called for critical dialogue and a critical engagement of the text, and related the texts to larger social and political issues" (p. 91).	This study was an excellent demonstration of the power of culturally relevant teaching
Hill (2012). Culturally responsive teaching: An investigation of effective practices for African American learners	The purpose of this study was to examine the characteristics, practices and frequency of use of 52 strategies employed by two teachers in a predominately African American urban public school to	South side of Chicago public school. Two 8th grade teachers— one white one black— participated in	Mixed methods— surveys, classroom observations, and interviews.	The results of the study were largely successful. The researcher concluded that relational trust among both teachers and peers were an	The 52 strategies used in this study could prove useful.

	determine their impact on student learning and engagement.	the study. Also selected randomly were 24 students (12 from each teacher's class)		outcome of the study. Further, the data collected from the classroom and student to student interactions supports the fact that the teachers successfully provided a culturally responsive and culturally relevant learning experience for their students.	
Han, Vomvoridi-Ivanovic ́, Jacobs, Karanxha, Lypka, Topdemir & Feldman (2014). Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in Higher Education: A Collaborative Self-Study	The purpose of this study was examine how college educators "define, enact, and navigate their roles as culturally responsive educators" within a higher education setting.	The participants were seven teacher educators in the College of Education at the University of South Florida	Self-study using semi-structured interview— collaborative, participatory, and recursive	The researchers found that the two most common concepts in developing a collective framework for CRP (culturally responsive pedagogy) were understanding the role of culture in education and helping educators develop socio-political awareness. The educators' enactment of CRP fell into three themes: teaching praxis, building relationships through teaching and advising, and program development	This self-study reveals important data about how CRP or CRT looks at the higher education level.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter documents the methodology of the study, provides the study's purpose, and the research questions guiding the study. This chapter also illustrates the theoretical framework and outlines the overarching research approach and methods of analysis.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this action research study was to explore how and whether transformative professional development that emphasizes cultural responsiveness and learner-centeredness changes faculty perspectives. The research questions that guided the study were:

1. How do professional development interventions impact faculty perspective shifts about learner-centered pedagogy?

2. What is learned at the individual, group, and system levels about changing faculty mindsets through an action research project focused on learner-centered pedagogy?

Informed Consent

The President of City Technical College, Dr. Stephens, provided written consent (Appendix A) for the researcher to conduct the action research study. Accordingly, all participants were formally invited to participate in the study via email communication and informed consent forms. All consenting participants have been given pseudonyms.

The informed consent outlined the details and particulars of the study—purpose of the study, study procedures, risks and discomforts, benefits, audio/video recording, privacy and confidentiality—in accordance with the University of Georgia Institution Review Board (IRB).

The IRB is concerned with the ethical treatment of human subjects and has both reviewed and approved the study on September 1, 2017.

Action Research

The methodology for this study was action research. Action research was born out of postmodernism which seeks to deconstruct "Truth" and power (Foucault, 1972), deconstruct meaning-making (Derrida, 1976), and deconstruct control (Fish, 1980). Moreover, one of the fictions of traditional research, framed through the scientific method, is that the scientific premise does not account for the messiness of human behavior. As Schön (1983) argued, research in the social sciences is a "swampy lowland where situations are confusing messes incapable of technical resolution" (p. 42). In fact, Stringer (2014) contended that is "impossible to control human behavior with the rigor and precision demanded by the procedures of the physical sciences" (p. 45). He also argued that the pragmatic focus of action research was born out of "the desire to give voice to people who have been previously marginalized from opportunities to develop and operate policies, programs, and services—perspectives often concealed by the products of a typical research process" (pp. 57-58). Additionally, Creswell (2012) described Action Research as having "an applied focus. Similar to mixed methods research, action research uses data collection based on either quantitative or qualitative methods or both" (p. 577).

There are other characteristics that make action research a distinct methodology. First, action research (AR) is a qualitative research approach that "requires researchers to actively participate in the research process, not as an expert who *does* research *on* people but as a resource person" (Stringer, 2014, p. 20) who engages in research with people. Furthermore, action research engages people "in the process of defining and redefining the corpus of

understanding on which their community or organizational life is based" (Stringer, p. 15). In action research, the participants become stakeholders who play an integral role in the meaning-making. In other, more traditional types of research, the participants would be excluded from the defining and redefining process that is an impactful part of meaning-making. Instead, one of the key factors in sound action research is to enable the participants/stakeholders to be involved in and provide analyses of their own problems.

Next, action research seeks not only to arrive at conclusions but rather to change organizations and systems for the greater good. In fact, as Stringer (2014) argued that "if an action research project does not *make a difference*, in a specific way, for practitioners or their clients, then it has failed to achieve its objective" (pp. 10-11). Unlike, experimental research, which merely seeks to identify problems or phenomena and hypothesize about them, action research seeks to identify problems, provide solutions, and exact change.

Finally, the key characteristic of action research is its multiple cycles of thinking, acting, and reflecting. During these cycles, the researcher and the research team work collaboratively to identify a problem, determine the impetus for the research, develop a plan of action(s), assess the efficacy of said action(s), and repeat. Coghlan and Brannick's (2014) iterative process of action research is best illustrated in Figure 5. Action research is also guided by theoretical perspectives that demand introspection and reflection from three distinct perspectives: first person, second person, and third person. The action researcher represents first-person inquiry, a process by which the researcher reflects on action, in action, and about action. Each member of the action research team also represents his/her own first-person inquiry. This kind of reflection is predicated on the notion that in order to lead change, one must first open oneself to personal change. This type of epistemic shift demands deep reflection. Moreover, second-person inquiry

is primary to first person learning. As Coghlan and Brannick (2014) asserted, "it is through

working with others through collaborative processes of engaging in constructing the project,

planning action, taking action, evaluating action and framing learning that individual (first

person) learning takes place" (p. 7). Consequently, "it is from that second and first experience

and learning that actionable knowledge for a third person audience emerges" (p. 7). Hence, third

person inquiry is born out of the first and second and seeks to transform organizations and

communities.
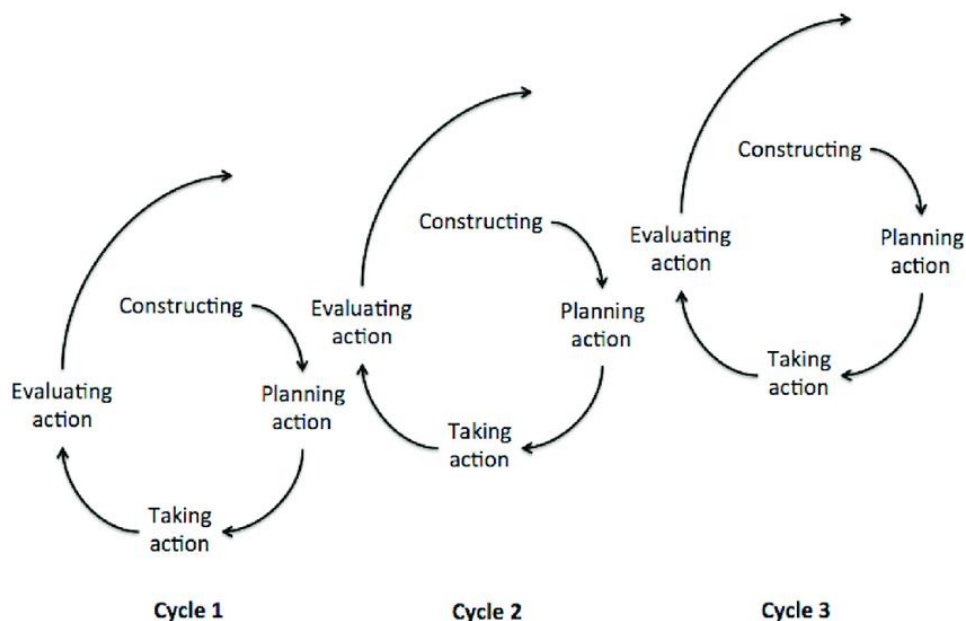
Figure 5. Cycles of action research (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p.11).

Finally, given the reflective, collaborative, action-based methodology of action research,

much is required of the researcher and organization in order to improve practice and contribute

to the knowledgebase. Therefore, the goal of the action researcher is to lead change, and in order

to create scholarship, that change must be measured and sustainable. As such, both researcher

and organization must be invested in the disruption and deconstruction inherent in creating

actionable knowledge. Ultimately, the organization must be willing to codify and integrate the changes into the strategic planning process so that the change has sustainability.

Action Research Tradition

There are diverse traditions and modalities in action research: action science, participatory action research, action research in education, appreciative inquiry, action research as self-study, and action research and organizational development/learning (Herr & Anderson, 2015). This action research study combines some of the components of action research and organizational development/learning with action research in education.

According to Coghlan and Brannick (2014), "action research in organization development is based on collaboration between the behavioral scientist-researcher and the client," in which both the client and the researcher collaborate to intervene in and change the system (p. 55). However, as the researcher for this study, I was also an insider. Therefore, Coghlan and Brannick (2014) also argued that doing action research in one's own organization is political.

> Indeed, it might be considered subversive—action research has a subversive quality about it. It examines everything. It stresses listening. It emphasizes questioning. It fosters courage. It incites action. It abets reflection and endorses democratic participation. Any or all of these characteristics may be threatening to existing organizational norms, particularly in those organizations that lean towards a hierarchical control culture. (p. 151)

Since the organization being studied is a two-year college, this study also aligns with action research in education, which can be described as "an individual route to professional development and as a collaborative route to professional and institutional change" (Herr &

Anderson, 2015, p. 20). The action research team and the researcher (considered a full member) embarked upon inquiry into the system, of which they were all members, in order to intervene in that system and ultimately change it.

Action/Intervention

Based on the data collected in the inquiry cycle of the study, the action research team decided to intervene in the system by designing and implementing a 12-month series of professional development to be delivered in a half-day format at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters. A virtual supplement to this series was offered during the summer term in a learning management system. The professional development intervention was intended to transform rather than form practice (Cranton. 1994). As the literature explains and the data revealed, faculty resistance to previous professional development was based on the college's exclusion of faculty from the process and its attempts to form rather than transform.

The emphasis on culturally relevant teaching and learner-centeredness, coupled with the shift away from a focus on instrumental learning, encouraged a "transformative impact on communicative learning" (Servage, 2008). The content of each session was designed to encourage experiences inside the sessions and later inside classrooms that perpetuate Mezirow's (1978) disorienting dilemma, in which the participants' existing meaning structures are jarred and challenged.

For example, during the session focused on fixed-growth mindset, participants watched Chimamanda Adiche's (2009) *TED Talk* titled "The Danger of a Single Story." Using excerpts from autobiographical narratives, Adiche challenged readers and listeners to loose themselves of their homogeneous, often subjugating, scripts about those who differ from them in class, race, and gender. When we reduce people to a "single story," we dehumanize them, said Adiche.

After watching the talk, participants were asked to write reflections about the power of a single story and share those reflections with a partner. Participants were then challenged to apply this notion of a single story to their students, reflect on ways that they may have reduced their students to a single story, and reflect on how that single story impacted their interactions with those students.

Additionally, the culturally relevant teaching session encouraged participants to recognize the race, class, and gender inequalities that exist in society (and in their students). The privilege walk activity helped to facilitate that learning by encouraging participants to acknowledge their privileges, contextualize their own experiences, and examine their own implicit biases. Through the final discussion and processing, participants were able to apply this activity to their teaching and learning experiences in order to facilitate a more transformative experience with their underrepresented and underserved students. Other sessions also modeled deep reflection as a part of the engagement strategy for both the faculty participants and the students they would later teach.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Merriam (2002) argued that data analysis in qualitative research is essentially an inductive strategy that begins "with a unit of data (any meaningful word, phrase, narrative, etc.) and compares it to another unit of data, and so on, all the while looking for common patterns across the data," called codes, "which are refined and adjusted as the analysis proceeds" (p. 14). This means that the researcher gathers "data to build concepts, hypotheses, and theories rather than deductively deriving postulates or hypotheses to be tested" (p. 5). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that collection and analysis are simultaneous in qualitative research, as qualitative designs are emergent. In fact, the researcher usually does not know ahead of time

every person who might be interviewed, all the questions that might be asked, or where to go next unless data are analyzed as they are being collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This process was indicative of the approach used in this action research study.

Transcriptions

All interviews in this study were recorded using a recording device and transcribed using an online transcription service. The benefit to recording interviews is that this practice "ensures that everything said is preserved for analysis" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016 p. 131). When using digital transcriptions, however, researchers can run the risk of lacking familiarity with the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, I addressed the issue of familiarity by reading the transcriptions repeatedly in varying stages of the coding process, thereby refamiliarizing myself with the data over the course of several months.

Coding

As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argued, coding is nothing more than assigning "shorthand designation" to data so that the researcher can more easily retrieve the data when needed (p. 199). This study also employed process coding. According to Saldaña (2016), process coding uses "gerunds exclusively to connote action in the data" (p. 111). This is particularly useful in qualitative research that searches for "the routines and rituals of human life" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 111). In an action research study that seeks change at the individual, group, and system levels, the processes and rituals of human life are a vital component of this action research study.

Generating Meaning

As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain, "devising categories is largely an intuitive process, but, it is also systematic and informed by the study's purpose, the investigator's orientation and knowledge, and the meanings made explicit by the participants themselves" (p.

211). Once I began to observe commonalities across the interviews, I engaged in what Saldaña (2016) calls "focused coding," which searches for "the most frequent or significant codes to develop the most salient categories in data" (p. 240). I revised the coding scheme repeatedly, engaging in the continuous process of coding and re-coding across all interviews until I saw several themes emerging across the interviews. This iterative meaning-making process resulted in the themes displayed in Chapter 5.

Trustworthiness

In this section, methods for ensuring trustworthiness in action research is discussed. It is important to consider that action research methods are held to non-traditional standards of validity and reliability. Therefore, there are non-traditional standards of ensuring reliability and validity for action research. Those standards are presented here.

Rigor of Action Research

Coghlan and Brannick (2014) argued that Action Research "should be judged *not* by the criteria of positivist science, but rather within the criteria of its own terms" (p. 15). Accordingly, the authors contend that there are "three elements to good action research: a good story, rigorous reflection on that story, and an extrapolation of usable knowledge or theory from the reflection on that story" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 16). Table 6 illustrates the applicable strategy for each data collection method.

Table 6

Strategies for Achieving Trustworthiness

Collection Method	Triangulation	Audit Trail	Member Check	Reflexivity
Semi-Scripted Interviews	X	X	X	X
Meeting Notes		X	X	
Researcher Reflections		X		X
Organization Documents	X		X	
Personal Context				X

Good story. In action research, a story is considered "good" if it is "presented in a factual and neutral manner…In short, the story is based on directly observable behavior" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 16). The story of this action research study is illustrated in Chapter 4. It narrates the dynamic tale of how the action research team exacted change in a tumultuous organization. The story also reflects the deep learning and reflection of the action research team, the researcher, and other organizational members.

Rigorous reflection. According to Coghlan and Brannick (2014), rigorous reflection involves not only providing an analysis of what one thinks is going on, but also how one makes sense of it as the story unfolds. In other words, articulating one's sense-making is making one's tacit knowledge explicit. This study captured that kind of reflective data.

Usable knowledge. Coghlan and Brannick (2014) described usable data as the way in which the action research project is contributing theory to the broader audience. Since action research is context-bound and not generalizable, it must have relevance for a "third-person readership" (p. 17). This study contributes to the literature on transformative professional

development. It also heed's Tinto's (2012) call to focus student engagement and retention

efforts at the classroom level. This study fills the research gap on transformative professional

development in two-year colleges by developing a 12-month faculty professional development

series that emphasizes cultural responsiveness and learner-centeredness.

Triangulation. Triangulation is the process of using multiple sources of data to establish

validity. Merriam (2002) stated that "the researcher collects data through a combination of

interviews, observations, and document analysis" (p. 25). In this action research study, the

researcher and the action research team examined multiple sources of data to ensure internal

validity. An example of this triangulation can be found in the examination of the colleges

Customer Satisfaction Surveys and Student College Inventory in order to examine two

instruments in which students provided responses about the college. Other triangulation can be

seen in the examination of both the Self-Assessment of Learner-Centered Instruction (SALCI)

and the Assessment of Learner Centered Instruction (ALCI) in order to correlate the student data

with the faculty data. Finally, the interviews that were conducted in this study were triangulated

with SALCI and the SoCQ in several instances: the AVID interviews and the interviews focused

on learner-centered strategy implementation.

Audit trail. Merriam (2002) contended that an "audit trail in a qualitative study

describes in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions

were made throughout the inquiry. Throughout this action research study, I kept an AR journal,

which included memos, field notes, my own reflections, and information pertinent to the study.

This chapter documents the process of data collection used in this study.

Member check. Another strategy to ensure validity is member checks. Merriam (2002)

explained that the researcher asks participants to comment on his/her interpretation of the data.

In this action research study, we engaged in member checks during the data analysis of the semi-scripted interviews and various organization documents (customer satisfaction survey, staff development policy). The transcriptions of all interviews were provided to all participants during the data collection and analyses throughout this study. The researcher's analyses of those interviews was also shared with participants.

When their transcribed, coded, and analyzed interviews were shared with them, they had positive feedback and no changes to make.

Reflexivity. Action Research is inherently reflexive. In fact, Coghlan and Brannick (2014) stated that an important part of action research is the researcher's reflection on his or her own learning. The action research process challenges assumptions, attitudes, and existing organizational relationships and should be captured through journaling and memo-writing as "reflection-in-action" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 171). Accordingly, presenting the researcher's reflexivity is a strategy for ensuring trustworthiness of the study. As Maxwell (2013) explained, researchers should make their perspectives, biases, and assumptions clear not as a way of eliminating "the researcher's theories, beliefs, and perceptual lens," but rather as a way of understanding how this subjectivity influenced the study (as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 249). In Chapters 4 through 6, I narrate my reflections through various cycles of this action research study from my perspective as the researcher, but also as a member of the system being studied, and as a complete member of the action research team. As an insider and a full member, my biases become apparent. I return to my negotiations between "fear and scarcity" and "trust and abundance" (Laloux, 2014) throughout this journey.

Threats to Validity

There were two threats to validity in this study: role duality and role confusion. As explained in the previous section, this is an action research study in which the researcher was an insider in the organization being study. As Coghlan and Brannick (2014) noted, doing action research in one's own organization is political, subversive, and radical.

Role duality. There were role duality concerns throughout the study. At the onset of the study, my research role was distinct from my organizational role. As the study came to an end, however, and the research intervention became institutionalized, it became increasingly difficult to determine where my researcher role ended and my organizational role began. For example, as is detailed in Chapter 4, I volunteered to chair an organizational committee in which the stated purpose was campus-wide professional development. My volunteering was opportunistic, as I could clearly see the alignment of this committee, the Action Research team, and my study. Ultimately, the organizational committee had some overlapping goals with the Action Research team, and both teams worked collaboratively to intervene into the system.

Role confusion. My organizational role in a position of power had some impact on my interactions and collaboration with the members of the action research team. All of the team members, aside from the Dean of Students, were in subordinate roles to me. Although none of the committee had a direct reporting relationship to me, my title was senior to theirs. My position of power initially had an impact on the group dynamics of the AR team. My way of mitigating this factor was to step back and act as a member rather than a leader, which is aligned with the methodology of action research. Eventually, I became a facilitator in the room. I witnessed subordinate members taking leadership roles. For example, most of the PD

intervention sessions were conceived, developed, and led by faculty and staff in subordinate

roles to me. The Dean of Students and I took our direction from the other team members.

<div align="center">**Instruments and Data Collection**</div>

This study employed an action research methodology with mixed-methods of data collection in

the form of both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data was found in Hall and

Hord's (2011) Stages of Concern Questionnaire

(http://www.sedl.org/cbam/socq_manual_201410.pdf); the Self-Assessment of Learner-Centered

Instruction (SALCI) illustrated in Appendix A; and the Assessment of Learner-Centered

Instruction (ALCI) displayed in Appendix B. Both SALCI and the ALCI were co-created by the

researcher and the principle investigator of this study. Additionally, the qualitative data was

found in three major sources: interviews, journal reflections, and meeting notes. Table 7

represents this plan

Table 7

The Research Plan

Research Question	Data Collected	Participants	Analysis Approach
How do professional development interventions impact faculty perspective shifts about learner-centered pedagogy?	Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ)	AR team and the PD participants	Quantitative
	Researcher reflections	Researcher	Coded data and looked for patterns and themes.
	Interviews focused on AVID and focused on faculty-student conflict	AR Team	Coded data and looked for patterns and themes.
	Self-Assessment of Learner-Centered Instruction (SALCI)	Faculty Participants of the PD	Reviewed raw data. Compared faculty responses to student responses.
	Assessment of Learner-Centered Instruction (ALCI)	Student Participants	Reviewed raw data. Compared student responses to faculty responses.
	Researcher reflections	Researcher	Coded data and looked for patterns and themes.
What is learned at the individual, group, and system levels about changing faculty mindsets through an action research project focused on learner-centered pedagogy?	Interviews focused on learner-centered implementation of learner-centered instruction	Faculty participants of the PD	Coded data and looked for patterns. Reviewed and identified themes
	Self-Assessment of Learner-Centered Instruction	Faculty participants of the PD	Reviewed raw data. Compared faculty responses to student responses.
	Assessment of Learner Centered Instruction (ALCI)	Student participants	Reviewed raw data. Compared student responses to faculty responses.
	Student interviews	Student participants	Coded data and looked for patterns and themes.
	AR Team journal exercise	AR Team	Coded data and looked for patterns and themes.
	AR Team exit interviews	AR Team	Coded data and looked for patterns and themes.
	Researcher reflections	Researcher	Coded data and looked for patterns and themes.

Stages of Concern Questionnaire

This study used Stages of Concern Questionnaire, one of the three diagnostic dimensions of Hall and Hord's (2011) Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM). CBAM is a framework for measuring implementation and facilitating change in schools and colleges (George, Hall, & Stiegelbauer, 2006). Appendix D displays the SoCQ adapted for use in this study. Additionally, this study used the Assessment of Learner-Centered Instruction (Watkins, 1978) for both students and faculty in order to assess perspective shifts toward learner-centeredness. The validity and reliability of these instruments is discussed in the next section. As can be seen in the preceding table, the team used Hall and Hord's (2011) SoCQ, a quantitative instrument, to assess the action research team's concerns about the intervention and allow those concerns to guide the direction of the study. More details about each stage can be seen below in Figure 6. The action research team SoCQ data is found in Chapter 4.

	6	Refocusing	The individual focuses on exploring ways to reap more universal benefits from the innovation, including the possibility of making major changes to it or replacing it with a more powerful alternative.
IMPACT	5	Collaboration	The individual focuses on coordinating and cooperating with others regarding use of the innovation.
	4	Consequence	The individual focuses on the innovation's impact on students in his or her immediate sphere of influence. Considerations include the relevance of the innovation for students; the evaluation of student outcomes, including performance and competencies; and the changes needed to improve student outcomes.
TASK	3	Management	The individual focuses on the processes and tasks of using the innovation and the best use of information and resources. Issues related to efficiency, organizing, managing, and scheduling dominate.
SELF	2	Personal	The individual is uncertain about the demands of the innovation, his or her adequacy to meet those demands, and/or his or her role with the innovation. The individual is analyzing his or her relationship to the reward structure of the organization, determining his or her part in decision making, and considering potential conflicts with existing structures or personal commitment. Concerns also might involve the financial or status implications of the program for the individual and his or her colleagues.
	1	Informational	The individual indicates a general awareness of the innovation and interest in learning more details about it. The individual does not seem to be worried about himself or herself in relation to the innovation. Any interest is in impersonal, substantive aspects of the innovation, such as its general characteristics, effects, and requirements for use.
	0	Unconcerned	The individual indicates little concern about or involvement with the innovation.

Figure 6. Stages of concern about an innovation (George et al., 2006, p. 8)

Reliability and validity of SoCQ. The SoCQ is backed by years of reliability and validation described below. The validity testing for the SoCQ began with a pilot study in 1974 using item correlation and factor analysis. The pilot instrument was sent to a sample of teachers and college faculty "stratified according to years of experience with an innovation" (George et al., 2006, p. 11). "Following the pilot study, the researchers reduced the questionnaire to 35 items by selecting, from the original 195-item instrument, 5 items for each of the seven stages" (p. 12). Over the next two years following the pilot, the 35-item SoCQ was used in "cross-sectional and longitudinal studies of 11 educational innovations" (p. 12).

The percentile scores used throughout Stages of Concern Manual (2014) were based on a group of 830 elementary and secondary teachers and university faculty members. The

distribution of highest Stage of Concern within this sample is shown in Figure 7 (George et al., 2006, p. 21). Since the publication of the SoCQ manual in 1978, the instrument has been used extensively:

Kolb (1983) developed an SoCQ to assess nurses' concerns about the nursing career. Barucky (1984) developed an SoCQ to measure concerns about leadership development in officers in the United States Air Force. Jordan-Marsh (1985) developed an SoCQ to measure concerns about exercise. Martin (1989) developed a concerns questionnaire for those learning computer programming. (George et al., 2006, p. 21)

Authors	Sample Size	Stages of Concern						
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Hall, George, & Rutherford, 1979	830	.64	.78	.83	.75	.76	.82	.71
Van den Berg, & Vandenberghe, 1981	1585	.77	.79	.86	.80	.84	.80	.76/73*
Kolb, 1983	718	.75	.87	.72	.84	.79	.81	.82
Barucky, 1984	614	.60	.74	.81	.79	.81	.79	.72
Jordan-Marsh, 1985	214	.50	.78	.77	.82	.77	.81	.65
Martin, 1989	388	.78	.78	.73	.65	.71/78*	.83	.76
Hall, Newlove, Rutherford, & Hord, 1991	750	.63	.86	.65	.73	.74	.79	.81

* In these studies, the authors proposed two subscales in place of the original SoC scale.

Figure 7. Coefficients of internal reliability for each SoCQ (George et al., 2006, p. 21)

The Self-Assessment of Learner-Centered Instruction (SALCI) and the Assessment of Learner-Centered Instruction (ALCI)

The Self-Assessment of Learner-Centered Instruction (SALCI) and the Assessment of Learner-Centered Instruction (ALCI), featured in Appendices H and I, were created in collaboration with the principle investigator of this study, Karen Watkins. We started with the inventory that Watkins (1978) developed for a monograph. Based on the literature presented in Chapter 2, we built upon the theme in Watkins (1978), aligning the survey questions to more contemporary theory and practice. Although these instruments were not validated, they proved to be a reliable method of measuring perspectives on learner-centeredness in this action research study. The instruments are a set of 25 questions for students and 26 questions for faculty that used a Likert-scale for each question as follows: always, very frequently, occasionally, rarely, very rarely, never. The data that emerged is presented and analyzed in Chapter 5.

AVID Semi-Scripted Interview

The team's first course of action was to investigate their concerns about the campus professional development intervention (AVID) at the time of this study. As mentioned earlier, AVID had limited use and success campus wide. Therefore, the AR team was interviewed about AVID and student engagement. The interview questions are listed below. The purpose of the interview was to engage in deeper inquiry around faculty concerns and resistance to this intervention.

- Q1. Tell me about the best class lesson or session you have ever had teaching adult learners. Why was it the best class
- Q2. What was happening?
- Q3. What's happening?
- Q4. What are the students doing?
- Q5. What are you doing?

- Q6. Who is doing most of the talking?

- Q7. How well do you think AVID works as an engagement strategy for adult

  learners?

- Q8. What works well?

- Q9. What doesn't work well?

- Q10. Why has it or why has it not worked well in your discipline?

Semi-Scripted Interview Faculty-Student Conflict

Following the SoCQ, the Action Research team engaged in inquiry which revealed that one of the factors contributing to student departure and faculty concerns was the prevalence of faculty-student conflict at the college. The interview questions are displayed below. Moreover, the purpose of the interviews that focused on faculty-student conflict was to gather data from key members of the campus community whose day-to-day responsibilities consisted of managing student-faculty conflicts and rendering decisions about student-faculty conflict. Those interviewed were the Dean of Students, the Director of Career Services, and a Department Chair of a high rigor program.

- Q1. What is your primary role at the college?

- Q2. With regard to students and faculty, list the types of issues you spend the majority of your time addressing and mediating?

- Q3. Describe a simple conflict that you mediated between a faculty member and a student that could have been prevented.

- Q4. What types of strategies could the faculty member have used to prevent the conflict?

- Q5. What do you feel are the underlying factors contributing to these conflicts?

- Q6. Describe a more complex conflict that you mediated between a faculty member and a student that could have been prevented.

- Q7. What types of strategies could the faculty member have used to prevent the conflict?

- Q8. What do you feel are the underlying factors contributing to these conflicts?

- Q9. Can you describe a conflict in which race, gender, or national origin was the source of the conflict?

- Q10. What types of strategies could the faculty member have used to prevent the conflict?

- Q11. What do you feel are the underlying factors contributing to these conflicts?

Semi-Scripted Interview Focused on Learner-Centered Implementation of Learner-Centered Instruction

During Cycle 4, this set of interviews was administered in order to determine the extent to which faculty participants had implemented any of the learner-centered strategies demonstrated and discussed in the professional development (PD) intervention modeled during the PD sessions at the beginning of the semester. During these interviews, the participants' concerns about implementation were also assessed. In addition, a set of interviews was also administered to a small of sample of students. The purpose of those interviews was to determine, from a student's perspective, the extent to which faculty participants had implemented any of the learner-centered strategies demonstrated and discussed in the PD intervention modeled during the PD sessions. The student interview questions are as follows:

- Q1. Describe a class lesson that you really loved

- Q2. Why did you love it?

- Q3. Describe a time when you discussed different cultures in class.

- Q4. Can you describe what social contracts are?

- Q5. Describe a time when you met with your instructor one-on-one or had a conference with her

- Q6. What was the focus of your one-on-one meeting/conference?

- Q7. Describe a time when your instructor made you feel like she/he supported you.

- Q8. Describe a time when you felt as if you got to know your instructor as a person.

- Q9. Explain the best part of the student experience at the college.

The faculty interview questions are below:

- Q1. Have you implemented some of the learner-centered strategies that were either modeled [i.e., community building, culturally relevant pedagogy, etc.……..]or discussed during the January professional development [i.e.…….]?

- Q2. What happened?

- Q3. How did the students respond?

- Q4. What were your reflections on how it went?

Journaling and Reflections

Another qualitative measure applied throughout the study was rigorous reflection. According to Coghlan and Brannick (2014), rigorous reflection involves not only providing an analysis of what one thinks is going on, but also how one makes sense of it as the story unfolds. In other words, articulating one's sense-making is making one's tacit knowledge explicit. Accordingly, this study included data from the researcher's reflections as well as the action research team's reflections.

Action Research Team Exit Interviews

At the close of Cycle 4, the Action Research team delved deeper and were encouraged to reflect on the past 15 months of the action research study. They were asked to consider the impact of their work on them at the individual, group, and system levels. The interview questions are displayed below:

- Q1. Think about a time when you felt that we changed faculty perspectives (or mindsets) about learner-centeredness. What happened? What made it work for you?

- Q2. Think about a time when you felt that your perspective changed in our work together or you had a significant aha. What happened? What made it significant or transformative for you?

- Q3. Thinking back on the changes we have implemented as a team, what impacts do you believe we have had or will have on the college?

- Q4. Who or what made the difference?

- Q5. What do we still need to do?

- Q6. When you think about our ongoing work to transform faculty perspectives toward culturally relevant teaching and learner-centeredness, what are you most concerned about?

- Q4. Is there anything else you would like to say about your work with this study and this Action Research Team?

Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the setting, participants, action research methodology, action and intervention, research purpose and questions, quantitative and qualitative data measures, as well as the collection strategies and method of analysis. This chapter also discussed possible

threats to validity and reliability. The analysis and results of the four cycles of action research

are presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

CHAPTER 4

OUR STORY

As I reflect on the journey that this team embarked upon two years ago, I am reminded of a concept that became a mantra for this action research study. This concept is often discussed in the scholarship surrounding action research, and it is the stuff of book chapters. During Cycle 3 of the study, some things became clear to me. I had been building the plane while flying it (Herr & Anderson, 2015). And, now, it all finally made sense.

"Building the Plane While Flying It"

As a doctoral student conducting action research, one finds oneself in a peculiar research/action paradox. We were trying to build a plane while flying it. As Herr and Anderson (2015) argued, the methodology in a dissertation proposal may not resemble the final methodology in the dissertation. The authors contend that dissertation committees "must then give a student a degree of latitude in terms of the evolution of the methodology and where successive cycles of plan-act-observe-reflect take the research" (p. 97). This is what my team and I experienced. The methodology from prospectus to dissertation evolved significantly.

There was a moment, during the final cycle of the study, when we all stepped back and could finally see what the plane looked like. We were putting the last pieces together when we realized that it was finished. We had built the plane! In that moment, the import and impact of what we had achieved became clear for the first time. We felt proud of ourselves and proud of our team, and we felt a deep sense of having been through something extraordinary. This is our story.

Context

As discussed in Chapter 1, the college system that was the focus of this action research study is a small, urban, two-year technical college, City Technical College, located in a large, metropolitan southern city. CTC is an open access institution, which means it is non-selective, non-competitive, admits over 80% of its applicants. Between 2017 and 2018, 90% of CTCs students were African American. Because over 68% of CTCs students receive the PELL Grant, they are considered economically disadvantaged (IPEDS, 2017, 2018). Since 2015, City Technical College has experienced a steady decline in enrollment and retention. Therefore, the problem being studied, retaining students, is a matter of organizational urgency, and as organizational insiders, the action research team was steeped in that urgency and poised to act.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this action research study was to explore how and whether transformative professional development that emphasizes cultural responsiveness and learner-centeredness changes faculty perspectives. The research questions that guided the study were:

1. How do professional development interventions impact faculty perspective shifts about learner-centered pedagogy?

2. What is learned at the individual, group, and system levels about changing faculty mindsets through an action research project focused on learner-centered pedagogy?

Action Research Team

The nine-member action research team listed in Table 8 are employees of CTC, who have not only intervened in the system, but have also taken part in the study.

Table 8

Action Research Team

Name	College Role
Steve Austin	Staff—Dean of Students
Mitchell Bourdieu	Staff—Director of Career Services
Eva Chapman	Staff—Director of Student Success
Darlene Simmons	Faculty—Accounting
Morgan Harris	Faculty—Criminal Justice
Janice Godfrey	Faculty—Early Childhood Education
Tim Kirk	Faculty—Allied Health
Norman Williams	Faculty—Early Childhood Education
The Researcher	Staff—Dean of Arts and Sciences

The five faculty members included in the team were chosen because they represent large departments within the college, and all of them, except one, sit on the AVID Core Team. For example, Janice is a former Teacher of the Year recipient who sits on the AVID Core Team. Darlene and Morgan both sit on the AVID Leadership Team and had been critical of its lackluster implementation. Tim Kirk is a member of the Health faculty, and this particular division has had low student learning outcomes and a high level of student concerns. The three staff members included in the team were chosen because of their positionality in the college, their breadth of adult education knowledge, and their commitment to change. These staff are all members of Student Affairs and report to the Dean of Students' Office. Eva is the Director of Student Success. Steve is the Dean of Students, and Mitch is the Director of Career Services. The three of them also served on the AVID Core Team.

Action Research Process

The action research team was assembled amid a college reorganization, which became the subtext for this action research study. As explained in Chapter 1, the president of eight years was removed, and a new president was appointed without warning. The announcement of this leadership change came in an email, from the state system Commissioner, in November of 2016. The new president took the helm on December 1, 2016. Therefore, some of the data collected throughout the study illustrated the impact of the broader organizational upheaval. In other words, we found ourselves at the center of Schön's (1983) "swampy lowland" (p. 42) of confusing messes, in which abrupt and seemingly unplanned organizational changes were occurring alongside planned change efforts and interventions. Table 9 illustrates the four cycles of planned action and implementation of the action research study.

Table 9

Implementation Plan

Intervention	Timeline
CYCLE 1—Problem Framing	
First AR Team Meetings	August 2017 – September 2017
Overview of Action Research	August 2017
College data review	September 2017
Stages of Concern Questionnaire	September 2017 – October 2017
CYCLE 2—Initial Interventions	
AVID semi-scripted interviews	January 2018
Student-faculty conflict semi-scripted interviews	February 2018 – March 2018
Learning sessions	April 2018
Designed SALCI and ALCI instruments	May 2018 – June 2018
Developed an implementation plan	May 2018 – June 2018
Designed professional development implementation	May 2018 – June 2018
CYCLE 3—Major Intervention	
Implemented first professional development intervention	August 2018
Administered SALCI	August 2018
AR Team reflections and evaluation of cycle	September 2018
Administered ALCI	November 2018
CYCLE 4—Final Intervention	
Implemented second professional development intervention	January 2019
Administered SALCI	January 2019
AR Team evaluation of cycle	February 2019
Faculty semi-scripted interviews	March 2019
Administered ALCI	April 2019
Student semi-scripted interviews	April 2019
AR Team Exit Interviews	May 2019

Permission to Conduct the Study

Prior to the previous president's departure, I had already received her endorsement and informal permission to conduct the study. In fact, she had been a formal mentor of mine for about five years. Therefore, when the new president arrived, I had to take a deep breath and begin the contracting process again.

I had lunch with Dr. Stephens, the new president, on May 29, 2017. He scheduled the lunch with the four academic deans as an attempt to get to know us personally and professionally. He asked us each four questions: "How long have we worked for the college?"

"What is the thing we like most about the college?" "What is the thing we like least about the college?" And regarding the previous question, "How did we envision ourselves changing that thing we liked least?" I used this as an opportunity to introduce Dr. Stephens to my ideas about change and action research. As a result, he agreed to meet with me, one-on-one, on April 5, 2017 to review my research proposal.

Dr. Stephens was impressed with my desire to be a part of the change that I wished to see. Although he thought that my study seemed to address some institutional problems, he also had some concerns. He wanted to see the scope of the study linked to the campus strategic plan. He also had several questions: Since CTC had been an AVID college for the past three years, why had the methodologies and strategies that were the core of the AVID intervention not been implemented campus wide? Was my research grant-funded? What would be my next steps?

To his first question, I responded citing campus-wide faculty resistance to change. Aside from the First-Year Experience classes, the campus had only "AVIDized" a handful of classes campus-wide: three Accounting classes, four Criminal Justice classes, two English classes, and four Medical Terminology classes. Many faculty, especially those faculty members in the high attrition classes, had been resistant to AVID because they believed the methodology would not benefit them, and basically that their students were not capable of doing any better than they had been doing. Furthermore, because there was no full-scale endorsement from the previous president and the senior leadership team, faculty with low student outcomes felt free to make no changes. Secondly, I informed Dr. Stephens that although my research was not grant-funded, I was open to exploring funding opportunities. And finally, I was forced to consider next steps. Aside from assembling an action research team, I truly had not considered next steps. Consequently, I thought quickly. I told Dr. Stephens that I would be sending an invite letter to

the AR Team. Once the team was assembled, we would meet that summer to develop a

collaborative plan of action for Cycle 1 of the study. Then, we would plan for a fall 2017

implementation. Once I received his endorsement, I would begin the IRB process.

After that initial meeting, I would spend the entire summer meeting with Dr. Stephens,

bargaining with him about the length of the study, negotiating role duality, and addressing his

expectations. Finally, we agreed to a study proposal that he could present to his cabinet

members for final discussion and approval. He promised I would have a decision by the end of

April 2017. April came and passed. By May, The Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA)

and the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) were both fired by Dr. Stephens on the same

day. The two positions were eliminated and replaced by a new position, the Executive Vice

President of Academic and Student Affairs, which would handle the duties and responsibilities of

both.

As I explained in Chapter 1, I was forever waging a battle between "fear and scarcity"

and "trust and abundance" (Laloux, 2014). After the two VPs were fired, fear and scarcity were

winning the battle. After the terminations, I let a week go by, and began sending polite nudges

and emails to Dr. Stephens about that permission to conduct the study that he had promised.

Instead of a permission letter, I received a request to meet again. At that first meeting, Dr.

Stephens gave me some sound advice about research and asked me additional questions that I

had not yet considered. He requested that I submit those changes via email. After I sent the

changes, Dr. Stephens still had more questions and more changes.

When it finally became apparent that my changes were not adequately meeting his

expectations, Dr. Stephens sent his Special Assistant, John Wilson, to work with me in order to

scale down my original proposal. Thankfully, John Wilson was also one of my mentors, who I

had known for seven years. John and I discussed the quagmire in which I found myself. I

wanted a two-year study. Dr. Stephens wanted a 12-month study. He also wanted to design my

study. At the contracting stage, the study did not have a design yet. We had a theoretical

framework. Dr. Stephens wanted to control my study, and he was not really listening to me.

John gave me some brilliant words of wisdom. He said, "Agree to the 12-month study and give

him what he wants, aside from the design. He'll approve your study, then you and your team can

do what you need to do." So that is what we did. I received Dr. Stephens' consent to conduct

research on August 1, 2017. The consent came in the form of an email illustrated in Appendix

B. Ultimately, trust and abundance won the war that day. However, for the remainder of the

study, I became a covert operative.

Cycle 1: Problem Framing

The action research team met for the first time on August 31, 2017. At that meeting, we

engaged in some ice-breaker styled introductions, and we discussed the president's permission to

conduct the study. We also spent a great deal of time discussing action research. I introduced

the team to Coghlan and Brannick's (2014) cycles of action. We then discussed member roles. I

emphasized my role as a full member and facilitator of change. As Dr. Stephens had been so

laser-focused on role duality in our meetings, I too made a distinction between my role as a

Dean, my role as a researcher and my dissertation, and my role on the action research team as a

full member. I also explained that our meetings would offer a safe space for us to discuss the

institution in realistic ways, take risks, and do the work that we knew needed to be done. I

emphasized that when I was sitting at the table with them in those meetings, I was not the Dean

of Arts and Sciences. I was a part of the team. It took a while for many of them to suspend my

organizational role, but it eventually occurred. During this first meeting, we also decided that,

for the duration of the study, we would meet at least once per month for two hours.

  Critical incident. Another event occurred between the August meeting and the

September meeting. In September of 2017, Dr. Stephens announced the next phase of

reorganization. He called a campus-wide faculty and staff meeting. At this meeting, the newly

appointed EVP presented the new organizational chart based on the reorganization. What we all

saw on a large LCD screen was that most of the positions in Student Affairs had been eliminated.

Some had been retitled and reclassified. Basically, people were discovering that they had been

fired in a room full of 300 people. All affected staff were allowed to apply for any of the new

positions or invited to separate from the college.

  Several members of my action research team were affected by this reorganization.

Needless to say, the scope and focus of the action research study was not a priority for them.

Those whose positions were not directly affected were plagued by fears that they would be next.

However, I continued with the scheduled September action research team meeting, which came

only three days after the President's announcement. Instead of immediately discussing the 2015

Customer Satisfaction Survey, I used the entire meeting to allow the team to discuss the

reorganization. I titled the meeting, "Climate Check." First, I asked everyone how they were

doing in light of the recent meeting with the President and the new Executive VP of Academic

and Student Affairs. Steve started the AR team meeting by expressing his thoughts:

> *I think of Steven Covey's first principle of highly effective people: Be proactive and not*
>
> *reactive. You cannot allow people or circumstances to dictate your vision and what*
>
> *you're doing.... So we are being proactive.... So I appreciate the changes, and change is*
>
> *the name of the game to effectively support and serve our students.... So with all that said,*

you know, that's not an easy prospect always, but I'm good. But, I think, we're just, as it

relates to this project, we're thrown back because of the storm—the little storm that has

occurred to push a few things back.

Eva tried to be as positive as Steve: *And I know for me, I welcome the change. I think for*

the institution to be viable, I think change is needed. I just was a little taken aback about the

delivery of the message. Eva was referring to the new organizational chart that was revealed in

the campus-wide faculty and staff meeting in an auditorium. Both Steve and Eva were a part of

that group whose positions were eliminated.

Ultimately, the AR team meeting ended by bringing the group back to the research

purpose, given the organizational upheaval and context of change that everyone had so viscerally

experienced just a few days prior. I noted that Burke (2014) argues that one cannot change

culture by changing culture. Instead, we must focus on changing behavior in order to change the

culture. If we can change what people do (their actions), their values and attitudes will eventually

follow. I ended the discussion with a call to action, saying that this is the work that we must do.

The team left inspired (even more) by a sense of urgency.

Customer satisfaction survey. At the next meeting, we reviewed and discussed the

2015 Customer Satisfaction Survey in order to probe deeper into the institutional problem of

student retention. The 2015 Customer Satisfaction Survey indicated that students were leaving

the college for a number of reasons: they felt that they were not receiving sufficient instruction in

their classes; they felt as if they were receiving poor service from various areas of the college;

and they felt that faculty and staff did not care if they were successful or not. This survey

captured a total of 44 respondents. Students were first asked from which areas of the college they

received service. Then they were asked to rate that service on a scale from 1 (poor) to 3

(excellent), in seven areas: friendliness, helpfulness, promptness, availability, knowledge and competence, efficiency, and overall service. Data from the survey revealed that the students surveyed felt that both faculty and staff services were generally unfriendly and unhelpful:

- 61% of students surveyed rated the friendliness of their service as "poor"

- 65% rated the helpfulness of their service as "poor"

- 70% of the students rated the promptness of their service as "poor"

- 72% of the students surveyed rated the availability of the faculty and staff as "poor"

- 59% rated the knowledge and competence of the faculty and staff as "poor"

- 77% rated the efficiency of their service as "poor"

Perhaps the most telling section of the survey was the overall comments. Below are a few. The statements below are presented free of editing, as they were in the survey data.

Comment #1.

A service that we all need and it seems that the people behind the window know that. During the peak hours it, majority of the time there is only one person seated at the window. Sometimes the attitude is pleasant however most of the time it is not. Information and forms that need to be submitted are not recognized or acknowledged until the very last minute. The person has even changed my account right in front of my face called me a liar and rolled her eyes and smacked her teeth. For the most part they are very unprofessional as a whole within this department. I understand that there will be rough days but no need to take it out on the students. Most of the problems had within financial aid are caused by the employees and we feed off of the energy. Hence the reason security is needed. It is not fair nor is it right for them to have attitudes and we are suppose to sit

and be disrespected. and I do not understand the school's method of paying for classes of the next semester before the current semester is finished. Thanks in advance!

Comment #2.

CTC has great programs that are relevant today; however; we obviously need a new administrative staff excluding (name redacted). This school is located in a low income area "we get that". If the staff cannot keep their composure and professionalism, how much better are they? I hate to say this but we need more diversity in the administration to bring integrity back because CTC lacks that across the board.

Comment #3.

As a student of CTC I find it very disappointing that employees in the Financial Aid Office, primarily (name redacted), prove to be unfriendly, frustrated and many time angered when students are in need of their assistance. CTC philosophy claims "Individuals should be provided programs and services that will enable them to develop and improve their academic skills, technical competence, and work attitudes", yet the services we receive at this school only teach us that when you are in a position to assist others, you should take that as an opportunity to be unavailable and as unhelpful as possible.

I do not recommend CTC, in fact when I am asked by others what my thoughts are concerning the school I fully explain to them the traumas I face on a daily basis from overcrowded classrooms, unprofessional office staff, regular failing of computers, a lack of committed teachers as the majority of professors are adjunct and a lack of communication with students from the Dean's office as well as the President's office.

I attended CTC in 2011 prior to you all becoming a "college" and I find it

disappointing that the services given at that time have now been forsaken for a new

agenda to accumulate as many bodies and hence financial aid funds to keep CTC afloat

with little regards for the students they are sending out into the workforce.

Comment #4.

Some of the instructors were very rude. They did not like to communicate with you or

help you at all. It was always read or get back with me. I was told a lot that I can't see

you right now, I am very busy. See me later. There was no later. Sometimes you were

cursed at by one or two instructors.

As the comments elucidated, students felt that faculty and staff were not attentive to their

needs and lacked concern for their wellbeing as students. Although many members of the team

had heard the same sentiments floating around the campus, seeing these comments projected

onto a screen was alarming for the action research team. This data became a crucial

consideration of the team's interventions.

Stages of concern. As explained in Chapter 3, the purpose of the Stages of Concern

Questionnaire in this study was to assess the action research team's concerns about the only

professional development intervention that the college had adopted prior to the beginning of this

action research study. The name of that intervention is AVID. The intervention targeted the

diverse needs of underrepresented and underserved students at the K-12 level. Only over the last

nine years had AVID for Higher Education been created. Moreover, the faculty at CTC had been

resistant to the implementation of AVID. Therefore, the purpose of the SoCQ, in this context,

was to discover the reasons for that resistance. That is, if we hoped to intervene into this system

in some other way, we needed to know the nature of the faculty's resistance to change. The data from this inquiry is displayed below in Table 10.

Table 10

Team Stages of Concerns Data

Concern Stage	Eva	Janice	Morgan	Steve	Mitch	Darlene	Norman	Tim
0	99	86	60	84	99	77	72	96
1	84	34	27	69	84	5	91	98
2	92	80	80	48	85	12	87	94
3	88	73	43	15	39	7	18	90
4	92	76	82	59	33	4	48	90
5	64	80	59	98	31	9	68	98
6	69	30	17	30	47	22	57	73

Based on these data, the team average was highest in the area of *self*-concerns, specifically in Stage 0 (with a mean score of 84) and Stage 2 (with a mean score of 72), in which "the individual indicates little concern about or involvement with the innovation" and "is uncertain about the demands of the innovation, his or her adequacy to meet those demands, an/or his or her role with the innovation." High stage 0 scores indicate that the respondent has "a number of other initiatives, tasks, and activities that are of concern to him or her" (George et al., 2006, p. 33).

Further, the team average was lowest in the area of *impact*-concerns, specifically in Stage 6, in which "the individual focuses on exploring ways to reap more universal benefits from the innovation, including the possibility of making major changes to it, or replacing it with a more powerful alternative." The combination of high *self*-concerns and low *impact*-concerns generally indicates non-users (George et al., 2006, p. 37). Approximately half of the team are non-faculty, and admittedly non-users. As the SoCQ data revealed, some faculty were either not concerned

about AVID and/or desired a shift away from the AVID brand. Hence, during Cycle 1, the team engaged these issues further using semi-scripted interviews.

Strategic impact team. In October of 2017, President Stephens unveiled the college's new mission, core values, and strategic plan. A focus group, led by an outside consultant, had begun working on this new vision under the previous president, prior to Dr. Stephens' arrival in December of 2016. Therefore, President Stephens relied on the work of the college focus group and finalized the plan. The president developed several teams, which he called *Strategic Impact Teams*, and aligned those teams to the strategic plan. One of those teams was aptly titled *The Professional Development Strategic Impact Team.* Faculty and staff were asked to volunteer to serve on the team of their choice. I volunteered (strategically) to serve on the *Professional Development Strategic Impact Team.* As was discussed in Chapter 3, conducting insider action research is political and subversive (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). And, as Meyerson (2001) argued, insiders conducting research on their own organizations are "tempered radicals." I was that radical. I viewed the strategic impact team as a way to quietly ensure that the work of my action research team would indeed be innocuously linked to the college's strategic plan, one of the goals that Dr. Stephens laid at my feet when I pitched my action research study to him. Subsequently, at the first *Professional Development Strategic Impact Team* meeting, the first order of business was to elect a Chair. I ran unopposed and became the Chair of *Professional Development Strategic Impact Team,* a one-year minimum appointment.

Cycle 2: Initial Intervention

During Cycle 2, the team engaged in further inquiry focused on the AVID intervention and student-faculty conflicts that were unearthed in Cycle 1. After analyzing the SoCQ data in

which AVID was the focus, the team engaged in qualitative inquiry regarding AVID and student engagement.

AVID interviews. The data indicated a number of themes that answered some of the questions that arose during the SoCQ inquiry. For example, one theme was related to giving up one's comfortable scripts. Tim explained:

Implementation is always the toughest part. How do you implement it? And then you have this script that you've been using for years, and now you're trying to implement something newer. And then sometimes, do you have time to change it up versus you got to cover these chapters. You got to cover this topic, so sometimes as instructors, you're pressured with covering certain topics, to stay on timelines and sometimes AVID can be tedious because you're using more collaboration.

What Tim explained is the tension between innovation and efficiency. Hindo (2007) argued that "a breakthrough innovation is something that challenges existing procedures and norms" (p. 8) and that the very policies and structures placed in an organization to ensure efficiency can also inhibit creativity. Learning outcomes-focused faculty have difficulty reconciling this tension. As Tim noted, faculty see interventions as yet another time-consuming factor getting in the way of the teaching, rather than a means by which to achieve their course learning outcomes. Tim's concerns got to the root of faculty resistance and helped to guide our thoughts about other interventions.

Darlene Simmons also confronted a valid concern that other faculty have echoed. As noted from her SoCQ results, she is an "unconcerned user." However, she believed that the current training around the innovation (AVID) was missing the mark in some ways. She argued that AVID is "not just a bunch of interventions created in a vacuum, but rather those

interventions are backed by 30-50 years of scholarship in the field of education." She said, the problem with the AVID "training" we have been receiving is that it only focuses on the "how"—the AVID strategies. She believed that if the training focused more on the "why"—the theories undergirding the strategies—then faculty might be more inclined to take AVID more seriously. Darlene and Tim's concerns guided the interventions and the implementation plan.

Student-faculty conflict. After the semi-scripted interviews that focused on AVID and engagement, the team engaged in deeper inquiry related to student-faculty relationship (with an emphasis on conflicts). The responses to the Customer Satisfaction Survey examined during Cycle 1 were the catalyst for these interviews. The participants interviewed were the Dean of Students, Steve Austin, who is also a member of the Action Research team, Dianna Smith, a Mathematics Chair and member of the Strategic Impact Team, and Mitchell Bourdieu, member of the AR team and Director of Career Services. The themes that emerged from those interviews were a) grade disputes and grade related grievances as a source of conflict, b) faculty and student feelings of being disrespected, c) lack of relationship-building in the classroom, and d) the need for faculty professional development in the areas of culture, relationship-building, and student-centeredness. This data would play an integral role in shaping the team's intervention and implementation plan.

Grade disputes. When asked to list the types of issues they spend the majority of their time addressing and mediating, each participant interviewed noted that grade disputes were the primary issues that were the impetus for conflicts between students and faculty. Each participant also indicated that these disputes usually get very emotionally charged, but that those emotions and conflicts could be prevented with simple preemptive measures and strategies. For example, Mitch Bourdieu talked about getting to know students as one such strategy: *But I think*

sometimes you can minimize that when you see it coming, and have those personal conversations. Steve Austin suggested that faculty should establish social contracts collaboratively with their students:

> *Social contract, an added strategy, where at the beginning of classes the students and the faculty agree to a set of norms regarding how we engage and interact with one another to alleviate any sort of conflicts.... So you're kind of investing that initial part of your time into building relationships and rapport, but it pays off on the back end as you're able to move through the curriculum and through the material without having conduct-related interruptions.*

Feelings of being disrespected. Another theme illustrated in each interview was student and/or faculty feelings of being disrespected. This theme was present in all three interviews. Dianna, the Mathematics Chair explained:

> *Most of the ones I hear are ... more like, "This teacher has an attitude" or, "This teacher is disrespecting me." On some level, I would say it's classroom community. They [faculty] don't have that rapport with the students and the students feel singled out.... I think that all goes back to building that culture in the classroom—because a lot of times if you already have that and you have a student that is speaking out or being disrespectful, those students are going to check each other.*

Lack of relationship-building. Another theme found in each interview was conflicts that resulted from the lack of relationship-building strategies employed by faculty. Those feelings of disrespect that Dianne discussed might be diffused by using relationship-building strategies. Steve, the Dean of Students, also discussed the issue of relationship-building:

Relationship building is one of the things that we advocate happening at the very beginning of class, because no one student is the same. You have introverts; you have extroverts; you have people who are passive-aggressive; you have people who have learning disabilities; you have others who have other particular challenges, and it is our job as an instructor to meet the students [where they are] because we are in a two-year college where the gross majority of our students are underrepresented. [Our students] may not even know or may not be as self-reflective to know what their learning issues are. So we want to bring that capacity to all of our instructors. That's one of the challenges that we have. If we could be as proactive as possible in empowering our faculty, it would probably chase away some of the challenges that we have related to issues that come to my desk that don't merit [coming to my desk].

Need for professional development. Finally, when asked what types of strategies faculty members could use to prevent simple or complex conflicts, each respondent noted the need for faculty professional development in the areas of culture, relationship-building, and learner-centeredness.

When asked to describe a conflict in which race, gender, or national origin was the source of the conflict, Mitch narrated a situation in which a Muslim student, wearing a hijab, believed that she was being discriminated against. The student was asked by the Testing Center staff to remove the hijab, briefly, before she could be allowed to sit for her entrance exam. The staff member needed to confirm her physical identity based on her state issued ID photo. Mitchell believed that the student was operating on faulty presumptions of discrimination, and possibly the staff member was not sensitive enough to the students' concerns.

When asked to describe the underlying factors contributing to the conflict regarding race, gender, or national origin, he responded thusly:

And so I think that training needs to be reinforced to make sure that the understanding is there—that there are culture differences that must be understood with the population that we serve, even among staff and faculty for the respect of each other. And I think we are not cognizant or thoughtful about others people's culture. Also, if we don't feed the teachers, they will eat the students.

By this, Mitchell meant that if we don't "feed" the teachers with sound strategies, backed by theories, they will develop adversarial relationships with their students. Mitchell explained that there is a lack of more intensive professional development around culturally relevant instruction.

Steve also emphasized the need for professional development, but in the area of relationship-building and student-centeredness. He explained:

A social contract is a great added strategy, where at the beginning of the [term] the students and the faculty agree to a set of norms regarding how we engage and interact with one another in order to alleviate any sort of conflicts. So in the development of a social contract, you get buy-in from your students, because they help to develop those expected norms.... There are people who are going to challenge those norms. But [with the social contract] you have a blueprint and a clear context whereby you can manage it and hopefully set off about 80% of those issue at the pass, before they become mushrooms or mountains that have to be dealt with.

The themes that emerged here became the inspiration for our professional development interventions in the next cycle.

Cycle 3: Major Interventions

Initially, the action research team proposed cognitive coaching (Costa & Garmston, 2002) as an instructional intervention. We spent a few weeks meeting and discussing cognitive coaching as a possibility. However, this approach proved to be too invasive for both faculty and students. Since the true focus of the study was professional development, the team decided to investigate other, less invasive, interventions.

The team engaged three possible interventions that focused on professional development. First, we proposed faculty professional learning communities (PLCs) in order to reconcile the structural tensions between innovation and efficiency (Hindo, 2007). According to Hindo (2007), the very policies and structures placed in an organization to ensure efficiency can also inhibit creativity. Through PLCs, faculty might find a practical way to both engage their students and cover the learning outcomes of their courses. The literature argued that, when implemented with attention to transformative teaching and learning, PLCs can be an effective collaborative community for faculty. Servage (2008) suggested transformative faculty professional learning communities—a new twist on an old idea. Servage argued that professional learning communities should transform rather than reform. In the past, PLCs have focused on instrumental learning rather than transformative learning.

Next, we proposed Argyris' (1995) action science case study method as an intervention that roots out Model I behaviors and gets to the heart of theories-in-use. A case study method at City Technical College might focus on a particular defensive routine that a faculty member keeps perpetuating each semester. Or, a case study could identify a faculty member's theories-in-use about teaching a particular course that always turns out badly. Although a highly effective process of change, the action science process requires deep,

collaborative, and reflective work, and therefore, can only be successful when facilitated within the confines of a group that has established trust. In order to establish this type of trust at an organization experiencing great uncertainty and radical change, the study would require more time than that allotted by the college President.

Additionally, data collected in Cycle 2 unearthed some factors about the student-faculty conflicts that the action research team agreed could be addressed through professional development. Therefore, the team determined that they would design and implement a 12-month professional development (PD) intervention using the adult learning theories that focused on transformative learning that emphasized culturally relevant teaching and learner-centered instruction as a theoretical framework. The result was several PD sessions which emphasized classroom culture, culturally relevant instruction, fixed and growth mindset, and transformative learning. The team did not, however, rule out PLCs as a natural extension of professional development interventions.

Strategic impact and action research collaboration. Once the action research team developed an intervention plan, I acted quickly to bring the two teams together: *Professional Development Strategic Impact Team* and Action Research Team. Representative members of the strategic impact team were invited to the summer 2018 action research team meeting in order to hear the team's intervention plan, and decide if this was a plan that the strategic impact team wanted to propose as a strategic team project aligned with the four strategic goals of the college. The strategic impact team believed that the AR team intervention plan was specifically aligned with the ideas that the strategic impact team had been meeting about since December of 2017. This meeting of the two teams was the first of three during the course of the action research study. Eventually, members of the action research team also joined the strategic impact team.

The fall 2018 professional development intervention. In August of 2018, we implemented our new transformative professional development intervention. All sessions were designed and led by members of the action research team. Two members facilitated each professional development session. The session topics were: culturally relevant teaching, fixed-growth mindset, and classroom culture.

Culturally relevant teaching. As described in Chapter 3, the culturally relevant teaching session equipped participants to recognize the inequalities that exist in society (and in their students), especially relating to race, class, and gender. The privilege walk activity helped participants to acknowledge their privileges, contextualize their own experiences, and examine their own implicit biases. Through the final discussion and processing, participants were able to apply this activity to their teaching and learning experiences in order to facilitate a more transformative experience with their underrepresented and underserved students.

Fixed-growth mindset. In this session, participants engaged in a workshop that focused on the work of Carol Dweck (2006) and Chimamanda Adiche's (2009) TED Talk titled "The Danger of a Single Story." After watching the talk, participants were asked to write reflections about the power of a single story and share those reflections with a partner. Participants, were then challenged to apply this notion of a single story to their students, reflect on ways that they may have reduced their students to a single story, and reflect on how that single story impacted their interactions with those students. After examining their own mindsets, participants were better equipped with the psychological tools needed to serve their students in a more learner-centered way.

Classroom culture. The purpose of this session was to develop learner-centeredness in the classroom by building a classroom community. After participating in this session,

participants were able to establish social contracts, learn and apply relationship-building strategies, and develop practical application tools that fostered more learner-centered approaches to instruction.

The content and design of each session applied elements of transformative learning. As will be shown in the findings in Chapter 5, participants were engaged in critical reflection during and after the professional development event. Some participants even experienced the stages of transformative learning—disorienting dilemma, critical reflection, and epistemic shifts (Mezirow, 1978).

Action research team group dynamics. I had been observing the team closely between Cycles 2 and 3. We were impacted by what could only be called "the fallout" from the reorganization. Many of us were still fearful that our positions would be affected in some way. Many employees who were not summarily fired were so fearful they would be, that they decided to cut their losses and resign. Others retired, and a few took leaves of absence, and went on hiatus. As a result, we lost two action research team members. Therefore, our nine-member team was reduced to seven members as illustrated in Table 11 below.

Table 11

Action Research Team After the Storm

Name	College Role
Steve Austin	Staff
Mitchell Bourdieu	Staff
Eva Chapman	Staff
Morgan Harris	Faculty
Janice Godfrey	Faculty
Norman Williams	Faculty

Nevertheless, I was gradually witnessing the team's group dynamics change in amazing ways. Tuckman (1965) argued that group development occurs in four stages: forming, storming, norming, and performing. According to Tuckman, in the forming stage of group development, group members are testing the limits of acceptable behavior. Tuckman explained that "the term 'testing' refers to an attempt by group members to discover what interpersonal behaviors are acceptable in the group, based on the reactions of the therapist or trainer (where one is present) and on the reactions of the other group members" (p. 387). We had moved through the forming stage rapidly, because many of us had been working closely together for years prior to the study.

In the storming stage, however, "group members become hostile toward one another and toward a therapist or trainer as a means of expressing their individuality and resisting the formation of group structure" (Tuckman, 1965, p. 387). In other words, group members begin "jockeying for power," resisting group cohesion and/or group task requirements. We experienced storming in Cycle 2, prior to the first professional development intervention. There were indications at that point that two of the group members, Tim and Darlene, were engaged in organizational battles and too preoccupied with the anxiety and fears surrounding their organizational role, so they left the committee.

By the time the remaining team members had worked so closely to plan and implement the first professional development intervention, we were squarely in the performing stage. According to Tuckman (1965):

> Finally, the group attains the fourth and final stage in which interpersonal structure becomes the tool of task activities. Roles become flexible and functional, and group energy is channeled into the task. Structural issues have been resolved, and structure can now become supportive of task performance. (p. 396)

I had become a full action research team member at this point. I was gladly taking orders from other team members. By the end of that first professional development in August of 2018, we were hugging and crying and giving each other "high fives." We had reached synergy, and we thought we were unstoppable.

Action research team reflections. The September 2018 Action Research Team meeting was the first meeting after the August 2018 professional development intervention. The team reflected on the first professional development intervention in two ways. First, they engaged in a force field analysis (Lewin, 1946) to examine the first professional development intervention. The force field analysis is a tool for assessing and constructing interventions within organizational contexts. The analysis is based on the assumption that in every change effort, there are forces driving change and forces restraining change. Figure 9 illustrates Lewin's force field analysis.
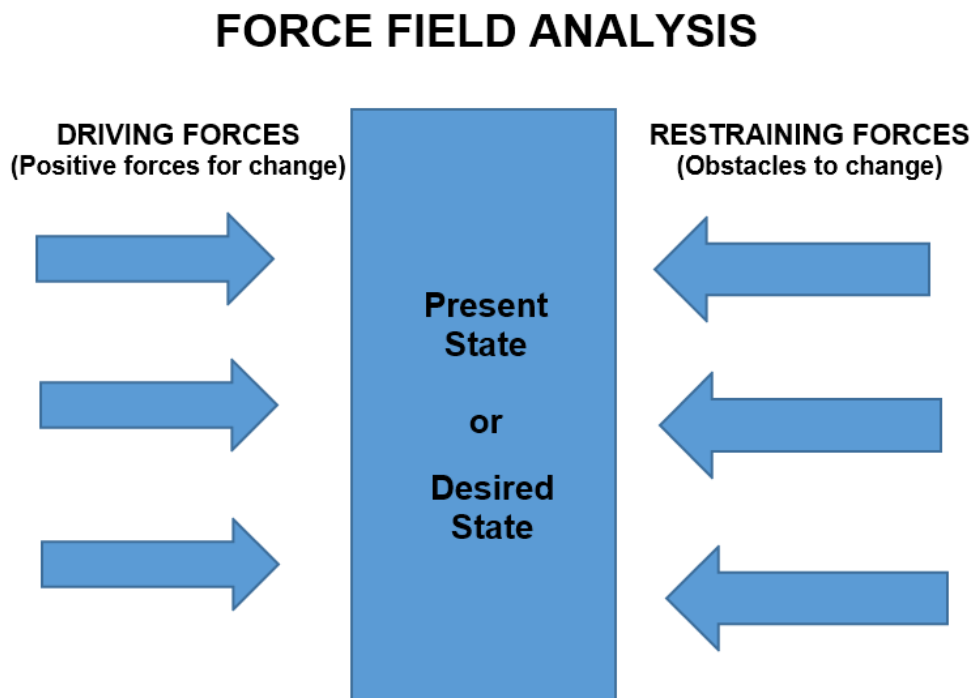
FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

DRIVING FORCES
(Positive forces for change)

RESTRAINING FORCES
(Obstacles to change)

Present
State

or

Desired
State

Figure 9. Representation of Lewin's (1946) force field analysis.

The team used this analysis to assess their work and assess the climate of the participants. The forces driving change were determined to be the following: the PD interventions were application-based and linked to practice; the PD encouraged teamwork and collaboration; the PD modeled learner-centered strategies in which the faculty were deeply engaged; the PD modeled transformative learning principles (challenging assumptions) in which the faculty were deeply engaged. The forces restraining change were determined to be the following: the PD did not include enough intentional reflection within the sessions; the PD did not provide enough time to discuss strategies for implementation in the classroom; the team suggested that the PD should evolve into a conference style event open to faculty to submit proposals. In Cycle 4, the team addressed some of these conclusions.

To close the meeting, I engaged the team in intentional reflection of their own. I asked them to reflect on the following questions:

1. How has working on this AR team impacted your perspective of the college?
2. How has working on this AR team impacted your perspective of the other team members?
3. How has working on this AR team impacted your perspective of yourself?

The themes that emerged were a) the college values professional development, b) the college has changed/improved its perspective, c) spirit of collegiality and collaboration, d) personal perspective shift, e) personal learning, and f) personal growth.

Here are some of those reflections:

This AR team has shown that we have many of the same concerns and coming together as a team can have a positive impact on the school and others. (Morgan)

I have learned new things and been introduced to new opportunities that have helped me

grow as a member of the campus faculty. (Norman)

Working on the AR team has shown me that the college is beginning to see how

important faculty development is to student success. (Morgan)

Learner-centered instruction. During Cycle 3, the researcher and the principal investigator, Karen Watkins, developed two tools to assess self-reporting learner-centered behaviors in faculty and to assess student-reported learner-centered behaviors in faculty. The self-assessing tool was named Self-Assessment of Learner-Centered Instruction (SALCI), and the student-reporting tool was named Assessment of Learner-Centered Instruction (ALCI). After the development of the survey, the action research team examined the instrument and took the survey themselves. The faculty were given the survey after participating in the professional development interventions, and their students were given the survey near the end of the term. The data was used to make two decisions: what changes should be implemented in the final intervention cycle and what more did we need to learn from faculty and students. Ultimately, the SALCI and ALCI data evoked questions from the AR team that gave rise to interview protocols for faculty and student participants. The data that emerged is examined in Chapter 5.

Cycle 4: Final Intervention

The action research team met at the end of the fall 2018 semester and discussed what was learned from the force field analysis in Cycle 3. They decided to make several changes to the final intervention. First, the team addressed the need for more intentional reflection within the sessions. As a response, we added "exit tickets" and "quick writes" to three of the sessions. Exit tickets are a reflective strategy that allow participants to provide a short reflection of their learning at the end of a session. Our exit tickets asked a question or set of questions specifically

focused on the experiences of the PD intervention. Like exit tickets, quick writes are also a reflective strategy. However, participants write this within the course of the PD session. The reflections are typically longer and are meant to be shared with a partner or with a group.

Next, the team decided that we should expand our offering from three sessions to four sessions, adding a session that specifically targeted change and transformative learning. Therefore, we added a session (that I would lead) that focused on both change and transformative learning. I presented the idea of leading groups through Kegan and Lahey's (2009) *Immunity to Change* exercise.

Finally, the team decided to add some additional interviews to Cycle 4. After examining the data that emerged from the SALCI and ALCI in Cycle 3, the action research team determined that there may be gaps between the data that the survey results yielded and what is actually happening in classrooms. As a team, we discussed the option of observing classrooms. We quickly dismissed that idea, because our presence in those classrooms could disrupt the natural environment and create inauthentic behaviors for both faculty and students. We did not want to expend a great deal of time and energy organizing observations when the observations may not provide enough usable data. Therefore, the team decided that in Cycle 4 we would conduct interviews with both the faculty participants and their students. The purpose of both sets of interviews was to determine the extent to which faculty participants had implemented any of the learner-centered strategies demonstrated and modeled in the professional development (PD) intervention and to determine the extent to which the students affirmed the claims of the faculty participants, and the degree to which those faculty members had implemented. Appendix D and E illustrate the interview protocol for these interviews. The data is examined in Chapter 5.

Conclusion: "We Built the Plane!"

The action research team assembled in the fall of 2018 amid scarcity, fear, and uncertainty. This chapter told the story of how a small group of people changed an organization in the face of tremendous adversity. As I illustrated in the opening of this chapter, we were building the plane while flying it. I might add also that we were building the plane while flying it through a thunder storm. When the clouds cleared and the storm dissipated, we could finally stand back, looking on in awe, at the plane that we had built. Despite the storm, the team was able to build and implement the framework for faculty professional development at an institution that hitherto had placed little emphasis on professional development that focused on the distinct needs of faculty—faculty who impact the college's greatest asset—its students.

The Eagle Has Landed

We landed just on the other side of Schön's (1983) "swampy lowlands." By the end of this study, the organizational climate was less tumultuous than when we began. The action research team had established some stability and order in the area it sought to change—faculty professional development. Evidence of this was revealed in fall 2019, four months after the study ended, and at the onset of a new academic year, the college supported its third iteration of transformative professional development independent of the action research team. As noted in the AR team's force field analysis, one of the forces restraining change was that the team believed that the PD should evolve into a conference style event open to faculty to submit proposals. During the study, we were not able to implement this. However, after the study ended in the spring of 2019, I considered these suggestions and called a strategic impact team meeting. Since several AR team members were now a part of the strategic impact team, they led the charge for this initiative and planning the fall 2019 transformative PD through a conference-

style lens. The event concluded successfully. There were six proposals submitted. The topics

were: Culturally Relevant Teaching and Redlining; Culturally Relevant Teaching in the

Classroom; Teaching in a Multigenerational Classroom; What is the Co-Requisite Model and

How is it Learner-Centered?; Using the Significant Learning Model to Foster Learner-Centered

Teaching Strategies; Implementing a Multiple Intelligences Approach in the Classroom, to

Enhance Critical Thinking, and Student Performance. As Chapter 5 will reveal, the work of the

action research team and this action research study was also able to change faculty perspectives

and impact individual, group, and system learning for the betterment of the organization.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

The catalyst to this action research study was the declining student retention rates at City

Technical College. Through four cycles of action, the action research team engaged in problem

framing, developed and implemented interventions, and learned about themselves and the system

in which they were intervening. The purpose of this action research study was to explore how

and whether transformative professional development that emphasizes cultural responsiveness

and learner-centeredness changes faculty perspectives. The research questions that guided the

study were:

1. How do professional development interventions impact faculty perspective shifts

   about learner-centered pedagogy?

2. What is learned at the individual, group, and system levels about changing faculty

   mindsets through an action research project focused on learner-centered pedagogy?

In response to Research Question 1, the action research team arrived at three key findings. First,

diversity and cultural responsiveness in the classroom helped faculty and students bridge

relationship gaps. Second, classroom community-building strengthens relationships and builds

trust between faculty and students. Third, learner-centered approaches encourage student

engagement in rich discussion and dialogue. In response to Research Question 2, three themes

emerged. At the individual level, the team learned that mindsets and perspectives changed in

various ways as a result of the study. At the group level, the team learned that working as a team

was the catalyst to the learning in the college community. At the system level, the team learned

that the college values faculty professional development. Key findings are summarized in Table

12.

Table 12

Summary Research Questions and Key Findings

Research Questions	Key Themes
1. How do professional development interventions impact faculty perspective shifts about learner-centered pedagogy?	Diversity and Cultural Responsiveness in the Classroom helped faculty and students bridge relationship gaps by exposing students to diverse perspectives makes them engage differently with each other and the instructor Classroom Community-Building strengthens relationships and builds trust between faculty and students ● Getting to know students as people and having students get to know faculty as people can encourage better academic outcomes ● Building classroom community helps students self-manage and manage each other Learner-Centered approaches encourage student engagement in Rich Discussion and Dialogue; rather than avoid rich discussion, encouraging it, helps students learn how to engage in dialogue.
2. What is learned at the individual, group, and system levels about changing faculty mindsets through an action research project focused on learner-centered pedagogy?	*Individual* Mindset and perspectives shifts ● Renewed passion for teaching and learning ● Changed perspective of the organization *Group* Working as a team was catalyst to the learning in community ● Empowering to lead a change effort ● Staff learned needs of faculty in an experiential way ● Empathy between faculty and non-faculty ● Faculty learned their perspectives were valuable *System* The college values faculty professional development ● Organizational leadership learned that their accrediting body values faculty professional development and faculty engagement in decision-making. ● Shifting of mindsets and perspectives to usher in new organizational culture that values PD

This chapter presents the key findings of the study a using thematic analysis of the data. The data gathered included *Stages of Concern Questionnaire* results, interviews focused on concerns about a previous intervention, *Self-Assessment of Learner-Centered Instruction* (SALCI)*, Assessment of Learner-Centered Instruction* (SALCI)*,* interviews focused on student-faculty conflicts, interviews focused on faculty learner-centeredness from both students and faculty, and action research team interviews. This chapter is divided into two sections, one for each research question, and examines the findings for each.

Research Question 1

As narrated in Chapter 4, an action research team, comprised of faculty and staff members of the college, were assembled to frame the institutional problem and work collaboratively to develop and implement transformative professional development interventions designed to shift faculty perspectives toward learner-centeredness. The professional development interventions were informed by the literature focused on Mezirow's (1978, 1991) transformative learning theory, transformative professional development, learner-centeredness, and culturally relevant pedagogy.

The primary catalyst to these interventions were the results of the 2015 Customer Satisfaction Survey. As noted in Chapter 4, this survey was not a part of the action research study. Rather, it was a routine instrument administered to students annually. As a result of the organizational crisis that began in December of 2016 and continued throughout the course of the action research study, the college's institutional research department stopped administering the instrument. Nevertheless, when the action research team met in 2017 to problem frame, the Customer Satisfaction Survey was the primary data source for student feedback. As seen in

Chapter 4, the data from the survey revealed that students believed faculty did not care about them or their success.

Moreover, the team probed for additional data around the topic of student/faculty relationships by interviewing key stakeholders across the campus. The data from these interviews revealed that the primary sources of student/faculty conflicts were grade disputes and feelings of being disrespected from both students and faculty. The data also revealed that participants who were interviewed believed that relationship-building was needed, and the way to spark better relationship building between faculty and students was through faculty development. Therefore, the team endeavored to improve student and faculty relationships by leading professional development interventions focused on classroom culture, relationship-building, and student-centeredness

Three key themes emerged from the faculty and student data: (1) diversity and responsiveness in the classroom helped both faculty and students to bridge relationship gaps, (2) classroom community-building strengthens faculty/student relationships by building trust, and (3) learner-centered approaches encourage student engagement through dialogue and discussion.

SALCI and ALCI Findings

The action research team examined the data from the SALCI and ALCI as a type of needs analysis. For example, after the team examined the data from the SALCI that revealed the degree to which the faculty claimed that they would implement elements of learner-centeredness, we wanted to be able to verify their claims in a more observable way. As mentioned earlier, we surmised that classroom observations may not yield enough usable data. Therefore, the team determined that we should interview a sample of faculty participants. Moreover, once we examined the data from those interviews coupled with the student ALCI data, the team still

thought that we should probe more. At an AR team meeting in the fall of 2018, I said: *How do you guys feel about student interviews?* Steve responded: *If we could find some willing students, I believe we could capture some good data.* We all agreed that I would poll the faculty to participants and ask them to solicit student volunteers. The data that emerged was used to make two decisions: what changes should be implemented in the final intervention cycle and what more did we need to learn from faculty and students. Ultimately, the SALCI and ALCI data evoked questions from the AR team that gave rise to interview protocols for faculty and student participants. Several of the survey question responses represented key themes that were later found in the interview data. This alignment of survey questions and interview themes can be found in Table 13.

Table 13

SALCI and ALCI Findings

Survey Question	Degree to Which Faculty Affirm	Degree to Which Students Affirm	Themes from Interviews
Q8. Instructor creates a supportive atmosphere	98%	90%	Classroom Community Building
Q9. Instructor builds trust	99%	88%	Classroom Community Building
Q10. Instructor provides opportunities for students to learn from each other	93%	90%	Classroom Community Building
Q24. Instructor engages with students to get to know them as people	93%	83%	Classroom Community Building
Q16. Instructor accepts the idea that each of his/her students can succeed	98%	90%	Diversity and Cultural Responsiveness

Diversity and Cultural Responsiveness in the Classroom

An analysis across all sets of data revealed that diversity and cultural responsiveness in the classroom helped faculty and students bridge relationship gaps.

Exposure to diverse perspectives. First, each participant was asked if he/she had implemented some of the learner-centered strategies that were either modeled or discussed at the professional development events. Professor Kingston went on to explain how she engaged in the Privilege Walk activity with her students. She had this to say about her students' perspectives: *Sometimes it's easy for you to think your experience is normal, and not understand how your background can be influencing you as well, and possibly being a motivator or a de-motivator.* Whereas, Professor Herndon sought to address the heterogeneous backgrounds of his racially and ethnically diverse group of students, Professor Kingston explained that the Privilege Walk activity was a way of exposing her students to a more diverse array of perspectives.

Finally, when asked the first interview question, Professor Prince responded affirmatively and described a learner-centered strategy called KWL (Know, Want to Know, Learn). She explained that this strategy helps to activate prior learning. In this activity, students create a chart divided into three columns. Column one indicates what the students know already about a given topic, and in this case, the topic was culture and cultural relevance. The second column indicates what the students want to know about the topic, and the third column represents what they want to learn. Professor Prince explained:

> *We talk a lot about stereotypes and prejudice and how to build a culturally relevant knowledge base, so students become a lot more aware. I've done a lot of different strategies around that particular topic. We do discuss that every semester, and we talk about, not so much culture, but just differences in people when it comes to diversity.*

As a follow up question, I asked Professor Prince if she could think of some experiences in those sessions, in which diversity was the focus, that either surprised her or something new happened in the class that had not happened previously. She responded saying:

Well, I think what happens is that students become a lot more comfortable in revealing their cultures and how they are different from other cultures. It becomes eye-opening to other students, about how we see others and how it might be something that we perceived differently in the past. I mean, by that, I've had a lot of students from India, and they talk about some of their traditions and practices. When they talk about them, it's like a lot of the other students who are African American are blown away about some of the things that they engage in, as it relates to traditions.

Professor Prince was intentionally exposing her students to diverse cultures and challenging their previously held assumptions. She explained how she has made time to set the tone and create an environment in her classrooms in which students feel comfortable expressing themselves and allowing themselves to be vulnerable.

Exposing students to diverse perspectives makes them engage differently with each other and with the instructor. When asked specifically to describe a time when different cultures were discussed in class, Eric responded thusly:

We were talking about different cultures in class and religion came up. So it turns out, you have people in the class who don't believe in God, and you have others that are Muslim, and others who are Christian…It was just interesting, and wanted to get to know their perspectives. And the discussion made me wanna just build people up as opposed to tearing people down.

Being exposed to different cultural experiences encouraged Eric to become more open and

receptive of diverse perspectives.

Arthur was asked the same question, and recalled his instructor actually leading the class

through the privilege walk that was modeled during the PD. Arthur recalled:

We did a privilege walk. And you realize even though you're in a class full of

"minorities," there are still privileges within that group…When you're looking around

you're like, I actually have some privilege, not necessarily just because I'm a black man

but due to the things that I've experienced in my life. I actually am, I do have some

privileges. Like right now just being 39 and looking at my situation, it's like, I'm very

blessed, and there are people that are not in that situation. So it was like, wow, I have

privilege as well. And no, it's not just white folks.

Arthur experienced a disorienting dilemma as a result of the privilege walk activity. He learned

that even as a 39-year-old black man, he had some unacknowledged privilege. This caused

Arthur to reflect deeply about his classmates and their experiences.

Diversity and cultural responsiveness not only impacted the students, but teaching from

this lens helped the faculty examine their own privilege, their own meaning perspectives.

Professor Herndon explained:

The culturally relevant teaching, that's a big deal to me because more and more I run

into people from other cultures, and to be honest with you, I've always thought of black

culture as being separate too.

You have to approach black kids in a different way, and it depends on how they

were brought up. Were they brought up middle class? Were they brought up working

class? Were they brought up poor? That's that privilege thing. Again, there are different

levels of privilege even in the black community that you have to look at, but you can't just

say, "I'm going to help this group and ignore these other ones." To me, you have to figure

out a way to incorporate all of them in there, and to me that's the culture relevant

teaching style is that you incorporate everybody according to what they bring to the

classroom. Also, when you do this, you have to recognize where you come from, your

own privilege.

Professor Herndon expressed several things here. First, he expressed his thoughts about black

culture and how he thinks it is distinct. He explained that black students are caught up in both

racial and class distinctions, and that teaching through a culturally responsiveness lens requires

the instructor be inclusive of these distinctions. Second, he argued that in order to incorporate all

students, the faculty member must first recognize his/her own privilege. Professor Herndon

explained that although he came from a rural, poor community in Alabama, he was raised by

educators. Therefore, he was economically poor, yet educationally privileged.

Classroom Community-Building

As the literature on student engagement and culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-

Billings, 1995; Collins, 1991; Tinto, 2012) contend the classroom makes or breaks the student

experience. The interventions in this action research study attested to this. When the action

research team first began to investigate student-faculty conflicts, they found that many of the

types of conflicts that were occurring could be circumvented by cultivating a classroom

community that not only emphasized relationships between students but emphasized

relationships between faculty and students.

Students and faculty getting to know each other as people. During the first major

intervention, faculty expressed skepticism during the professional development sessions about

the efficacy of building classroom-community building. One faculty, who had been skeptical in the fall of 2018, expressed her change in mindset by the spring of 2019. She said to the action research team member who facilitated the session on building community: *Before I took your training, I couldn't stand [this stuff]. I hated the thought of it. I couldn't understand how I could do any of that in my class. But, now, wow! I could rock this!*

The data throughout the study revealed that students and faculty getting to know each other as people greatly impacted students. Eric described his instructor, Professor Herndon, engaging the class in personality assessments on the first day of class. He explained:

> *He was a green personality, but I was not a green personality. A green personality is basically someone who loves to think things through, and they have a lot of imagination That's what he was.*

Professor Herndon was intentional about getting to know his students, which is one of the key indicators of learner-centeredness. Eric explained that:

> *I mean, honestly, in a nut shell, I just feel that I can learn from him. I can actually use this information on a personal level, opposed to, I mean I know I can use it in the world, yes, but it's information that I enjoy learning, one. And since I enjoy it, I feel like I can use it...*

Keith explained that during Breast Cancer Awareness month, his instructor, Professor Prince shared her story with the class. He recalled:

> *She explained about her breast cancer and what she had to go through. That hit me because my grandmother had breast cancer. So my instructor, she was a survivor too. So that conversation that we had that day, that was a great conversation.*

The responses became more revealing when the students were asked to explain what they each

liked best about their instructor. Arthur explained:

> *I like her attitude. She has a passion for learning. She has a passion for people, like she*
>
> *listens and like I said, I was out of school for about 12 years, and so I come back in and*
>
> *it's a completely different environment. And the professor, my current professor, like I*
>
> *said, I love her attitude, because she actually cares about students. She wants us to*
>
> *succeed. So, that's.... Give her an applaud. Seriously, I do.*

Arthur argued that his instructor truly cares about students. For him, knowing that she wants him

to succeed made the difference.

> *My instructor gives back, not only with knowledge, but with time and effort. My*
>
> *instructor is patient, a great teacher, and a learner. I didn't know an instructor could be*
>
> *one who can learn who I am as far a student. So, I really appreciate it and I admire her.*

Mark responded:

> *She doesn't judge. Again, I was having kidney problems. She asked what I was going*
>
> *through, she checked on me all the time. I was very proud and happy that somebody*
>
> *would do that for me.*

In one of the interview questions, the students were asked to describe a time when their

instructor made them feel supported. All of the students expressed feelings of instructor support.

Mark reiterated how much it meant to him that Professor Prince supported him through his

kidney health challenge, and Arthur had this to say about Professor Kingston:

> *There wasn't necessarily a one on one interaction, but I know, just from how she carries*
>
> *herself, there's a genuine concern and care there just from how she interacts. So, it's not*
>
> *… I can't specify one point, but I just know if I came to her and I had an issue, I know she*

would give me an ear and give me some advice if I needed it. So, I feel completely

positive about her.

Keith also described Professor Prince here:

My instructor, she always makes me feel like she supports me…Even though I say some

stuff that's like out of this world, she supports me really 100%. I never would have

thought this teacher would, but she actually does really support us a lot and she proves it.

Some of her stories that she told us really make us say, "Hey, I'm going to do better,"

motivate each other, and motivate ourselves.

Although Professor Herndon uses culturally relevant teaching to expose students to diverse

perspectives, he has also utilized cultural responsiveness as a means to build community between

the diverse voices in his classes. He explained saying:

The culturally-relevant teaching is particularly important to me. I have a class right now

where I've got someone from China, someone from Vietnam, somebody from Ethiopia in

the class, and I also have some older students. A lady who has three kids, she's come

back to college after getting her kids through school. It's a little bit different from what I

normally see in terms of the classroom. Also, a guy in there is from West Africa and an

older gentleman who lost his job and is trying to get back in the work force, so it's a

different group, but what I have tried to do is to set up a culture that is inviting to them

and encourage them to help build the classroom culture.

Professor Herndon implemented cultural responsiveness in his classes as a means of

getting to know his students as people. In doing so, he built trust. In getting to know his

students as people, Professor Herndon used that knowledge to leverage relationships with them

and in turn to elicit the best out of them academically. For example, he knows that one of his

students is Vietnamese and was an accountant in Vietnam; however, in America, she has a manual labor job. Another student was a mechanical engineer in China, but she could not use her credentials and experience in the U.S. Professor Herndon explained:

> *She mainly speaks Mandarin, and she's here to get her son an American education, her and her husband, so she's not so much here to get an education as to meet some Visa requirements. I keep that mind, but I also have been like, "You need to do your work." When I first met her, she told me she was a lazy Chinese [laughter]. But you know, in this class, what has happened since I tried that approach, like I said, she comes every Friday and she wants me to help her with the homework, and I noticed that her English is getting better.*

The approach that Professor Herndon is referring to here is his emphasis on cultural responsiveness and incorporating culture and diversity into the community of the classroom. For Professor Herndon, culturally relevant teaching amounts to incorporating everyone's differences into the classroom and placing those differences at the center.

Classroom community and management. Building classroom community also helps students self-manage and manage each other. I asked Professor Kingston what she was most concerned about when she considers implementing these new strategies as they presented themselves in professional development. She responded that her primary concern was managing conflict.

> *Well any time you have a more learner centered activity, or even just a difficult conversation. Any time that's going to bring anything controversial up, there does run the risk that there's going to be an argument that's going to get out of hand or something.*

When I probed Professor Kingston further to describe a time when these strategies engaged or ended in some kind of conflict, she narrated an event when a student announced during class discussion that she did not believe in interracial marriage. As one would suspect, the discussion became heated. According to Professor Kingston, she was able to diffuse the situation and redirect the conversation. However, the student genuinely wanted to grapple with her perspective and the implications of that perspective, so she asked to meet with Professor Kingston privately to discuss it.

I asked Professor Kingston how the other students responded the rest of the semester to the student who did not believe in interracial marriage. Professor Kingston replied:

> *So, I think honestly, there wasn't any negativity towards her, which was interesting. I did a lot of group discussions, projects, work, and nobody had any sort of negativity towards her, said "I don't wanna be her partner". So I don't know, that was really interesting.*

As a result of the classroom community that Professor Kingston had already established, students managed themselves and behaved civilly toward each other despite the previous disagreement.

On the other hand, Professor Herndon's experience with conflict in the classroom was one of the catalysts for interest in community building. According to Professor Herndon, two students nearly got into a fist fight in the middle of his class. As a result, he said ever since then, he encouraged a sense of community in his classrooms. Professor Herndon added:

> *I was glad to see the social contract. Like I said, it's not something that I do in formal writing, but we do have a long discussion the first class about what the expectations are and how we're going to approach those expectations.*

Students also explained that the sense of community in the classroom helped to mitigate conflicts. For example, when asked if they used social contracts in the class, Keith described how social contracts work. He said:

> *Social contracts are basically, they're a statement, a brief paragraph of how we treat each other, of how we see each other, and respect each other. It's just a contract of how we treat each other and take care of each other.*

I asked Keith to explain the process. He responded:

> *Well, everybody in the classroom was involved. The teacher was involved as well. The teacher, she actually spoke to us first about it. She was just like, we should create something that we can embody and really based on the foundation of respect and time, and just really life.*

> Arthur described the contracts as "rules of engagement." He explained:

> *And it was about basically we're going to respect each other in here…It was an introduction of who we are, and kind of like all our backgrounds, but a listening experience, like you have to just really listen. And that's one of the key things with social contracts, in a sense is you're going to respect their space, you're going to respect your ideas, and they're gonna do the same to you.*

> Eric explained the accountability component and how his instructor, Professor Herndon, engaged the class in this process:

> *And he gave us accountability partners. I was gonna hold her accountable and she was gonna hold me accountable to get our work done.*

Philip, who was also Professor Herndon's student, explained that because of his knowledge base, the Professor made him a peer tutor. Philip noted:

Because apparently he felt that I would be a better help to the student in the class. I'd also taken another class with the same student and she had questions about the class.

Learner-Centered Approaches Encourage Student Engagement

Learner-centered approaches that encourage student engagement in rich discussion helps students learn how to engage in dialogue. Faculty found value in strategies that helped them to engage students in rich discussion and dialogue. For instance, I asked Professor Prince to share some of her reflections on how a lot of the learner-centered strategies were going in her classes and what the student response has been. She responded by sharing how she engages her students using story-telling and activities that actively demonstrate the point of a lesson in a creative way. Professor Prince then explained how one of her students responded and how she interpreted that response:

[The student said]"That's why I like coming here, because we talk about things." I mean, I think what she was trying to say is, it's relevant to her. She didn't put it that way, but I try to make it a lot more meaningful for them, in their lives, rather than just being in a class or a course that they have to take.

Next, Professor Kingston responded to the same question saying:

I think it went well. I like having difficult discussions in classrooms. I think they're important. So I personally, in my life, like having difficult discussions. But I think in the classroom it's important to do that because if we can't civilly discuss things there, then where else can we?

I asked Professor Herndon to describe some strategies that he has tried, and he responded by describing how he gets his students to engage in discussion.

One thing I try to do is to get them to talk about themselves within the context of what

we're saying. I mean we're in accounting, so sometimes we'll talk about how accounting

is done different ways in different parts of the world. That's led to some pretty good

discussions. Sometimes, I've just let them talk about their past and how that fits in what

they're trying to learn.

This particular strategy blended aspects of culturally relevant teaching and relationship building in order to engage students dialogue.

The interventions in this action research study attested to the fact that a learner-centered college classroom can form the student experience and transform practice. By cultivating a classroom community that not only emphasized relationships between students but emphasized relationships, faculty were able to better connect with their students.

Research Question 2

As is indicative of action research, this section examines three levels of learning: individual, group, and system. At the individual level, the data indicated that participant mindsets shifted in the areas of teaching and learning and organizational perception. At the group level, the data revealed that participants believed that working as a team was catalyst to the learning in the college community. Finally, at the system level, that data revealed on organizational cultural shift toward valuing both faculty voices and faculty professional development. What follows is a representation of these findings and how they emerged.

Individual Level: Mindsets and Perspectives Shifted Regarding Teaching and the Organization

At the individual level, we found that mindsets and perspectives shifted in beneficial ways.

Renewed passion for teaching and learning. Faculty described renewed passion for teaching and learning. Steve and Eva argued that faculty mindsets shifted as a result of the professional development interventions. Steve explained

And so, I believe we did change the faculty mindset about the benefit of learning centeredness because we were able to demonstrate it in front of them. They were immersed in that learner centered environment. And then, I think they saw the value of that and, it was kind of fun to do.

Steve suggested that the professional development engaged the faculty in an experiential way. Other members of faculty, staff, and AR team described their own learning as a result of the study and the professional development interventions.

I have learned new things, been introduced to new opportunities that have helped me grow as a member of this campus faculty (Norman)

Working with this team has taken me out of my comfort zone and shown me areas that I need to improve." (Morgan)

Working with this team has shown me that I am still able to learn new things and improve. (Steve)

Working with the AR team, and being able to facilitate professional development that she is knowledgeable and passionate about, has imbibed Eva with a renewed sense of passion. She felt as if she was living her purpose.

I remember after the last professional development calling my friend, it's like that felt so good to talk about these things. And they was like I can see your smile through the phone. That's why I'm in higher education because I am so passionate about how we treat each

other, how we look at each other, how we can help each other grow and advocate for

another. That's my sweet spot, this is it. (Eva)

>*We built that! We believed in the [professional development]. We believed in*
>
>*what we were presenting…If nothing else, I felt like okay, now this is what Higher-Ed is*
>
>*all about. (Eva)*

She explained that she is always called upon to lead professional development and speak on

instrumental learning topics (Kegan, 2002; Mezirow, 2003) rather than transformative learning.

However, having the opportunity to present about culturally relevant teaching represented

transformative learning, which renewed her passion.

Norman expressed a renewed sense of passion and confidence. He explained:

When I started I was rather shy. I didn't want to talk. I didn't want to do the presentation.

I didn't. I just was like, I'm going to let Dr. Austin do it and I'll just be on the side. I put

the papers up, pass out papers and things. But he made me talk, he made me interact, he

made me engage with everybody. And then in January he was like, "No, you're running it.

I'm going to the computer." And I was like ... he was like, "you're going to be just fine."

So it's made me grow and realize that I could do something that I didn't think I was

capable of doing. And then also the fact that I had only been here a year, I was kind of

like, people are going to not pay me any attention because I'm new, and it wasn't really

like that. People were receptive of the information. It didn't matter if I was here a year or

not.

Individual faculty members also exemplified a renewed sense of passion about teaching

and learning, as described below:

Anika [Culinary instructor] and Marissa [Business instructor] came and sat in my class
[to observe the learner-centered strategies I modeled at the PD]. Then they asked me to
come to their classes to help them. Marissa constantly talks to me about different
scenarios and ways she could handle things differently and engage with her students
more. So I believe things have changed a lot. (Norman)

As a full member of the action research team and full organizational member, I also experienced
a perspective shift. As I discussed in Chapter 1, my battle was a constant negotiation between
"fear and scarcity" and "trust and abundance." The following is one of my final reflections,
dated June 2, 2019 and titled "A Little Piece of My Soul":

I met with another student, instructor, and Department Chair yesterday regarding a
grade grievance. During cycles 3 and 4 of this study, these encounters have really begun
to take an emotional toll on me.

These meetings start out as grade challenges with no basis for the claim except be
unable to complete assignments because of life challenges. Most of these life challenges
are predicated on conditions of poverty and lack of access. More often than not, the
students are young black women attempting to raise children alone.

By the end, each grade grievance meeting turns into a counseling session. Each
young woman has a similar narrative from which she can't seem to escape. In short, she
is living at or below the poverty line, attempting to raise one or more of her children
alone. She perceives the two-year technical college as a way out of poverty and a way to
provide a better life for her child/children. While her purpose is true, she has truly
underestimated what it would take for her to do this; how much tenacity and grit this
would take; what would she do with her children while she went to classes and tried to

carve out time to study; the amount of out-of-pocket expenses she would need;

transportation. The list is long. So when I meet with these types of students, all of these

variables have inevitably collided. The student collapses in a waterfall of tears and self-

loathing.

After I have heard her testimony, which usually involves me and the college

becoming a barrier to her dreams and aspiration, a little piece of my soul expands. I

have to shift the narrative for her, letting her know that I used to be her, that so many of

the instructors at the college chose to serve this particular population because we have

been where she is, and we want to show her a way out and a way up.

Then I think about the good work that we have been doing with professional

development, and how the faculty, staff, and leadership mindsets are gradually shifting.

Then I think about me. Trust and abundance is winning!

Changed perspective about the organization. Others revealed perspective shifts about

the college as a system. Morgan and Mitch responded thusly:

Working on the AR team has shown me that the college is beginning to see how important

faculty development is to student success. (Morgan)

The team has helped me change my earlier perspective of where the college is

heading. (Mitch)

Group Level: Working as a Team was Catalyst to Learning

At the group level, the data revealed that working as a team was a catalyst to learning.

Working together builds community. We become accountable to each other. We hold each

other up. Together, we build trust. Together, we can achieve more together. Together, we

become an unstoppable force.

Empowering to lead a change effort. Working as a team was a transformative experience for the action research team. Mitch explained:

> *So the team made me realize and validated that, No, it's not just you. Maybe there has not been any communication to that effect. Or maybe the communication stopped at a certain level because it wasn't pushed upward. And so I began to feel that, "No, it's not just you who thinks something is wrong. It is something wrong." The great thing was there can be something done to make the change…I think we had the freedom to do differently than we do in a senior leadership meeting. When you have a meeting where you can be open and tell your truth and have someone hear it, and someone put the spin on it that may alter what you think the truth is, but yet make you feel you've been heard in a positive way.*

Mitch argued that the action research team served as a safe space and a sounding board for his own concerns about the organization. He claimed that the safe space of the action research team facilitated honesty and truth without reprisal from senior leadership.

Morgan expressed a similar experience. He said:

> *I want to say during this study, I think when we all came together as a group and you brought the group together, and we talked about this. And when once we got the group together to talk about the needs and starting to introduce the faculty development. And I think once we had that first faculty development, I think that people were kind of, "Oh my, oh my goodness, this is so interesting." I think we really needed that. And so I think when we introduced that very first faculty development, you saw a difference in the faculty and, I guess, their approach to teaching because they wanted to know more. So I think that that was probably the time when it became a big deal. Yeah. Because before then we just*

flew by the seat of our pants. Everybody was doing things differently. And I don't think we

were getting as many results.

Morgan argued that it was the collaborative thinking and planning of the group (the action

research team) that was the catalyst to the change in the faculty.

So it's sad that we won't be having our meetings anymore…What we had was the

freedom to do things differently than we do in campus leadership meetings. On our team,

we could be open and tell the truth and have someone hear it…and make you feel like

you've been heard in a positive way…Changes are made bottom up a lot of times. So we

were bottom up, and I think that's what made the difference. (Mitch)

Eva describes how working together has been empowering for her:

So this was, for me, to sit in a room with faculty it was like we ... beliefs as it relates to

helping our students, guiding our students, it is not this, because sometimes just it's

student affairs versus academic affairs. We all have the same core values as it relates to

helping our students and just the whole experience has been an ah-ha moment for me.

Everybody is advocating for our students. We may advocate differently, but we still are

doing the work of advocacy. If we work together, we can achieve more.

Janice explained the power of working together:

The team made the difference. We were allowed to see the data and discuss it. We looked

at threats, forces resisting change and non-threats, forces driving change, then we

changed the professional development based on that.

Staff learned needs of faculty in an experiential way. The action research study allowed

staff to learn the needs of faculty experientially. As a result, a sense of empathy developed

between faculty and non-faculty. Individual AR team members claimed that working on an action research team transformed their perspective about faculty. Eva explained:

> *My perspective of my peer colleagues has improved. In the past, there seemed to be a disconnect between 'perceived' ideologies as it relates to student success and delivery of instruction. However, this team clearly showcases that we share similar beliefs and interventions. We also share the same vision as it relates to what is needed to improve the efficacy of the college. This work has allowed me to see the faculty through a different lens. Because of the "horror stories" I hear from students, I often serve as the mediator between faculty and students. Working directly with faculty has provided me with awareness of the trials and barriers that they face consistently.*

As a result of working on the AR team with both faculty and staff, Eva's previous assumptions about her colleagues was challenged. Ultimately, she has begun to reexamine those assumptions after experiencing the "disorienting dilemma" of working collaboratively with the team to lead change (Mezirow, 1995, 2003).

Many members of the action research team commented on how the relationships between faculty and non-faculty had become more empathetic as a result of the study and the professional development interventions. Steve had this to say:

> *For me, there was a lot of personal development, that gave me, as a developer of professional development, the chance.... As an administrator having a chance to work with a teacher in the trenches helped to pop a bubble about the grind that those who are doing instruction really have to deal with. And so this may be one of the contributors for a closed mindset as an administrator, you may not always be aware of what teachers are dealing with, but at the same time, the beauty of having that person as a, not only co-*

developer but a co presenter was that that presenter was really able to speak the

language.

As a result of working closely with a faculty member on the action research team to plan and implement professional development interventions, Steve gained a new appreciation for what it means to be faculty in this particular context.

Faculty learned their perspectives were valuable. Ultimately, the data revealed that a culture of caring is important. Knowing that the group cares about each other makes each member feel like they are valuable. And when people feel valued, they will give more of themselves and accomplish more. Morgan and Janice explained:

So if I feel like I am a part of the process, I think I'm going to give a little bit more of

myself. If I feel like I am a part of the process, then I'm being heard. (Morgan)

I felt like I had a voice, buy-in, when I helped implement changes that we needed to

improve upon as faculty members in the institution. (Janice)

System Level: The College Values Faculty Professional Development

As a result of this action research study, the college's organizational leadership began to shift its perspective regarding the value of faculty professional development. The organizational leadership team also learned that its accrediting body values faculty professional development and faculty engagement in decision-making.

Accrediting body validation. Prior to receiving the report from the college's accrediting body, Steve Austin, AR team member, made claims about the organizational impact of the study. He said: *We birthed the study, but it's not just study. It's part of the school's strategic plan and it's tied to student success, particularly from the perspective of student retention (Steve).* If we return to my discussion, in Chapter 4, of the contracting process, and the meeting that I had with

the president, Dr. Stephens, he had also wanted to see an alignment of my study with the college's strategic plan. As can be seen below, the action research study has made this possible.

The college's accrediting body requires that "the institution provides ongoing professional development opportunities for faculty members as teachers, scholars, and practitioners consistent with the institutional mission" (SACSCOC, 2019). The 2019 finding of the accrediting body asserted that the college was compliant in this area, stating:

> *The fall 2018 and spring 2019 PD agenda indicated that the institution provides and is committed to the ongoing access to professional development opportunities for its faculty…Some professional development topics including Transformative Learning, Classroom Culture, and Fixed-Growth Mindset.* (SACSCOC, 2019)

As a result, organizational leadership learned not only that their accrediting body values faculty professional development that provides "opportunities for faculty as teachers, scholars, and practitioners," they also learned that an action research study, led by organizational insiders could bring about this change.

Cultural shift. As a result of the study, the organization has gradually shifted its perspective. Some of the AR team members argued the following:

> *I think the action research team has a way to impact everybody to be better people…I think as a collective, there are a lot of people that make a difference. Even though there are a lot of people in the red Kool-Aid, there are just as many people in the water too (Norman)*

> I asked Norman to explain what he meant by "red Kool-Aid" and "water." He explained *that the red Kool-Aid people were those who are resistant to change and have a fixed mindset. The "water" people are those who welcome change and have a growth mindset.*

Therefore, Norman was explaining that there will always be change-resistant people.

However, the study and the AR team has encouraged everyone to be better.

Morgan also contended that the study had a cultural organizational impact. He explained:

Since the study, I honestly think that the new administration is more receptive and more

concerned about, not just instructors but students as well. [They understand that] if my

instructors have what they need, then the students will get what they need.

The action research team has been able to usher in new organizational culture that values

professional development aimed at the specific needs of faculty—teaching and learning,

transforming rather than forming practice. Faculty and staff engaging in action research can

change the organizational culture.

Conclusion

In the fall of 2017, an action research team was assembled in order to address the

declining student retention rates at City Technical College. Through four cycles of action, the

action research team engaged in problem framing, developed and implemented interventions,

and learned about themselves and the system in which they were intervening. The purpose of

this action research study was to explore how and whether transformative professional

development that emphasizes cultural responsiveness and learner-centeredness changes faculty

perspectives. The research questions that guided the study were:

1. How do professional development interventions impact faculty perspective shifts
   about learner-centered pedagogy?
2. What is learned at the individual, group, and system levels about changing faculty
   mindsets through an action research project focused on learner-centered pedagogy?

In response to Research Question 1, the action research team arrived at three key findings. First, diversity and cultural responsiveness in the classroom helped faculty and students bridge relationship gaps. Second, classroom community-building strengthens relationships and builds trust between faculty and students. Third, learner-centered approaches encourage student engagement in rich discussion and dialogue. In response to Research Question 2, three themes emerged. At the individual level, the team learned that mindsets and perspectives changed in various ways as a result of the study. At the group level, the team learned that working as a team was the catalyst to the learning in the college community. At the system level, the team learned that the college values faculty professional development.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This action research study was conducted in order to address the declining student

retention rates at City Technical College. The purpose of this action research study was to

explore how and whether transformative professional development that emphasizes cultural

responsiveness and learner-centeredness changes faculty perspectives. To reiterate, the research

questions that guided the study were:

1. How do professional development interventions impact faculty perspective shifts

   about learner-centered pedagogy?

2. What is learned at the individual, group, and system levels about changing faculty

   mindsets through an action research project focused on learner-centered pedagogy?

Table 5 recaps the key findings for this action research study. In response to Research

Question 1, the action research team arrived at three key findings. First, diversity and cultural

responsiveness in the classroom helped faculty and students bridge relationship gaps. Second,

classroom community-building strengthens relationships and builds trust between faculty and

students. Third, learner-centered approaches encourage student engagement in rich discussion

and dialogue. In response to Research Question 2, three themes emerged. At the individual

level, the team learned that mindsets and perspectives changed in various ways as a result of the

study. At the group level, the team learned that working as a team was the catalyst to the

learning in the college community. At the system level, the team learned that the college values

faculty professional development.

The findings of this action research study yielded three conclusions: (a) transformative

faculty professional development that emphasizes cultural responsiveness and learner-

centeredness changes faculty perspectives (b) in order to transform post-secondary practice, we must transcend the covert barriers that racist ideologies have created (c) action research provides an appropriate methodology to facilitate organizational change in two-year technical colleges; however, organizational capacity is necessary for long-term sustainability.

Conclusion 1

Transformative professional development that emphasizes cultural responsiveness and learner-centeredness changes faculty perspectives. A significant contribution of this study is the framework for transformative professional development that it provides for college faculty. As Cranton (1996) argued, "transformative learning is by definition concerned with social change" (p. 141). This action research study successfully changed an integral part of a system through transformative learning as professional development. Additionally, as the literature also argues, most faculty professional development seeks to form practice rather than transform practice (Cranton, 1994; Servage, 2008) by focusing on instrumental learning rather than communicative learning. As Mezirow (2003) posited, communicative learning involves "the process of critical-dialectical discourse," assessing one's beliefs and the beliefs of others to arrive at a "tentative best judgment," and eventually a changed perspective (p. 59). This action research study has established a framework for transformative professional development for faculty that focuses on communicative rather than instrumental learning by emphasizing cultural responsive teaching and learner-centered pedagogy.

Cranton (1994) argued that faculty tend to teach the way they were taught, or they model their teaching on someone who strongly influenced them. Further, "faculty's expertise lies in their subject area specialization; their knowledge of teaching is, in most cases, limited to knowledge derived from practice rather than from a study of the discipline" (Cranton, 1994, p.

732). Reder (2007) also argues that doctoral education generally emphasizes research not teaching. If the subject area specialization (discipline) lies outside the field of education, faculty may not have developed teaching expertise, even though they are required to continuously analyze and evaluate their own teaching. The literature suggests that most colleges and universities are attempting to address this paradox with professional development activities that emphasize simply provide new information, or as Cranton (1994) explained, those activities are designed to form practice.

As a response to this lack of emphasis on adult learning, Cranton (1996) proposed a model of influences in educator development that presents a three domain process that faculty should undergo in order to transform practice: critical reflection (CR), self-directed learning (SDL), and transformative learning (TL). According to Cranton (1996), in order to transform practice, faculty professional development should emphasize self-directed learning and should emphasize critical reflection and critical discourse about assumptions. This action research study developed and implemented a transformative professional development model that emphasized this type of critical reflection. Although there are a few professional learning programs at colleges and universities that address faculty learning through a more transformative lens (King 2002, 2004), none of these professional development programs have been found to exist at community and technical colleges. This action research study fills that gap.

King (2004) was a mixed-methods study that measured the impact of transformative learning and professional development on student and faculty perspectives. King's study, however, was conducted at a university with university professors and student participants. Another difference in King (2004) and this action research study is that the professional development used as the basis for learning in King's study were college courses. Graduate

students enrolled in Adult Education courses were the student participants, and King examined the students' and the professor's experiences as a result of the courses. Therefore, King's (2004) study design, interventions, and data collection methods varied greatly from those same variables in my study.

However, the intent was similar. The study explored the perspectives of professors regarding transformative learning, barriers to learning, learners' experiences, and instructor and organizational responsibility (King, 2004). King (2004) found that 62% of her study's participants indicated that they had experienced perspective transformation within their educational experience in the program and/or the classes in which they were enrolled. Themes included developing a more open-mindedness, becoming more reflective about themselves and their work, and viewing issues from multiple perspectives. Consequently, both King's (2004) study and this action research study revealed that transformative professional development can change faculty and student perspectives in meaningful ways.

Hill's (2012) study revealed somewhat similar cultural responsiveness outcomes as the action research study that is the focus of this dissertation. Hill (2012) examined the characteristics, practices, and frequency of use of 52 culturally relevant teaching (CRT) strategies employed by two teachers in a predominately African American urban public school, in order to determine the impact of those strategies on student learning and engagement. Hill (2012) concluded that relational trust among both teachers and peers were an outcome of the study. The data also revealed that culturally responsive and culturally relevant learning can enrich learning experiences for students.

Trust and relationship-building were also outcomes of my study. However, there were obvious differences. My study used action research as its methodology, focused on post-

secondary faculty and students, and used transformative learning theory, cultural responsiveness, and learner-centeredness as its theoretical framework. Hill (2012) used qualitative methodology, focused on k-12 teachers and students, and used activity theory as its theoretical framework.

Conclusion 2

In order to transform post-secondary practice, we must transcend the covert barriers that racist ideologies have created. The other significant contribution of this action research study is its emphasis on culturally relevant teaching (CRT) as a means to transform practice. Because the organization that is the focus of this action research study is a PBI, predominantly black institution, this action research study emphasized culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This study implemented CRT in a PBI organization in which most faculty racial demographics also represented student demographics. In other words, both faculty and students were predominantly black. Even though CRT was developed as a model for white faculty teaching students of color, it can also be a powerful strategy to help both black and white faculty to connect more effectively with black students.

Many black faculty at City Technical College (and possibly other PBIs) erroneously assume that, by virtue of being black themselves, they are automatically more culturally responsive to black students. One of the first problem-framing tasks of the action research team in this study was to examine student data which illustrated the discontentment of students toward faculty. At the onset of this study, relationships between students and faculty were either severed or never established. Therefore, the transformative learning interventions of this study emphasized culturally relevant teaching and learner-centeredness as a means to engage students. As a result, culturally relevant teaching was shown to have transformed practice by helping to build relationships and forging connections between black and white faculty and black students.

This connection, however, must begin by dispensing with cultural deficit perspectives. Irvine (1990) developed the concept of cultural synchronization in response to the cultural deficit perspective, largely assumed to be propagated by white supremacist rhetoric (*A Nation at Risk,* 1983) then later seeping into the social sciences (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994) in the form of IQ testing wrought with claims that not only was there a battery of tests that could measure intelligence quantitatively, but this IQ is fixed for life. These theories inevitably place black people on the low end of the intelligence spectrum. Although most of these assumptions have been debunked over the last 25 years as little more than rebranded eugenics (Gould, 1993; Konner, 2002), this type of thinking persists. Although Ladson-Billings (1995) grounded her model of culturally relevant pedagogy in the work of Collins (1991), she described Irvine's work as outlining the acceptance of black students' communication patterns, along with a constellation of African-American cultural mores such as mutuality, reciprocity, spirituality, deference, and responsibility (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Several of the findings of this study support the efficacy of including elements of CRT as a transformative professional development intervention.

In order to transform post-secondary practice, however, we must transcend the covert barriers that racialized ideologies have created. Some of the barriers to effective student-faculty relationship building can be attributed to race. During the course of this study, the dialectic of race emerged during action research team meetings and student grievance that arose with the Dean of Students. What became clear is that more inquiry was needed in the area of culturally relevant teaching, specifically focused on relationship-building that incorporates racial identity development (Cross, 1971, 1991). Some of the adversarial student-faculty relationships were predicated on socially constructed notions of race (Johnson-Bailey, 2015; Lorde, 1984; Tatum, 1997).

The vast majority of CRT studies have been conducted in K-12 settings. Although many CRT studies tend to focus on K-12 education, there are a few post-secondary CRT studies of note, much fewer conducted at two-year colleges, and even fewer still conducted at two-year technical colleges. Han et al. (2014) was conducted at a university. This study examined how college educators at the University of South Florida "define, enact, and navigate their roles as culturally responsive educators" within a higher education setting. The researchers took a self-study approach and discovered that the two most common concepts in developing a framework for CRT were understanding the role of culture in education and helping educators develop socio-political awareness. The study findings fell into three themes: teaching praxis, building relationships through teaching and advising, and program development. Although the researchers were developing practice at a university and not a PBI two-year institution, their study, like this action research study, demonstrated the transformative potential of CRT. Overall, more action research studies engaging race and emphasizing CRT are needed.

Conclusion 3

Action research provides an appropriate methodology to facilitate organizational change in two-year technical colleges; however, organizational capacity is necessary for long-term sustainability. Action research engages people "in the process of defining and redefining the corpus of understanding on which their community or organizational life is based" (Stringer, 2014, p. 15). This action research study engaged the people as active participants driving the changes that would impact their own work lives. Unlike traditional research, in which participants are treated as subjects of the research, excluded from the defining meaning-making process, the action research team was doing the research, involved in the defining and meaning-

making about their own lives. As a result of this work, and as the findings reveal, action research was the catalyst for organizational change.

Action research team members claimed that working on an action research team empowered people. After the first professional development intervention, the team achieved the synergy that is indicative of Tuckman's (1965) *performing* stage in his four-stage group development theory. Roles had become flexible and functional. Most importantly, the team felt a sense of empowerment as they witnessed the impact of their work. They were leading change in their own organization. As one team member, Mitch, explained, "What we had was the freedom to do things differently than we do in campus leadership meetings…Changes are made bottom up a lot of times. So we were bottom up, and I think that's what made the difference."

Action research not only empowered the team, it changed an aspect of the organizational culture. At the onset of this action research study, it was clear that the college had no internal professional development that addressed the distinct learning needs of faculty. By the end of the action research study, the organization now has a twelve-month calendar of faculty development that emphasizes transformative learning. As Steve argued, "We birthed the study, but it's not just study. It's part of the school's strategic plan and it's tied to student success." The organization not only has recognized the value of faculty professional development, but it has recognized the value of change led by those affected by the change. As a result of the accrediting body compliance report, which values faculty involvement and shared governance, the organization now values faculty involvement in faculty development.

This shift in organizational perspective is a cultural shift. According to Burke (2014), "you don't change culture by trying to change the culture" (p. 253). Rather, in order to change culture, one must change values, attitudes, and behavior. Since, values and attitudes are the most

difficult to change, we start with behavior (Burke, 2014, p. 253). This action research team

focused on transformative professional development in order to encourage learner-centered

practices in the faculty. Once that shift started to occur, then attitudes and values followed.

According to Burke (2014), in system-level, organizational change, there are three *orders*

of change: first-order, second-order, third-order. First-order change focuses on a subsystem.

Unless "other complementary and supplementary changes are also occurring in related parts of

the total system, the change within the initial subsystem will be short lived" (Burke, 2014, p.

123). Second-order change targets a subsystem or process that is beyond the initial focus.

Third-order change, however, "eventually influences some organizational process or outcome

that is affected by multiple factors" (Burke, 2014, p. 123). The action research team and the

action research study ultimately created third-order change.

As a result of the study, several changes in organizational procedure and organizational

structure occurred. First, although the Professional Development Strategic Impact Team was

created by the president as an alignment to the campus strategic plan, action research team

presence on the strategic impact team was strategic and subversive. As was noted in Chapter 4,

we became "tempered radicals," conducting insider action research on our own organization

(Meyers, 2001). We were able to lead the decision making about the organizational direction

with regard to faculty professional development. Now that the study has ended, and the

organization is living "post-action research study," half of the action research team sits on the

Professional Development Strategic Impact Team. Additionally, the work of the action research

team is now documented in the accrediting body reports and organizational reports.

This type of third-order, system-level change has impacted organizational culture because

the action research team not only changed behavior, but we changed organizational values and

attitudes. Norman, one of the AR team members said, "I think the action research team [had a way of impacting] everybody to be better people…. I think as a collective, there are a lot of people that make a difference." The team, indeed, impacted everyone including the senior leadership team and the president.

Although the professional development interventions implemented during this study became a part of the organizational practices after the study ended, sustainability is still precarious. Although a fall 2019 professional development successfully occurred, and there are plans already in motion for spring 2020, there are still some concerns about long-term sustainability. In the action research team exit interviews discussed in Chapter 4, I asked the team what they were most concerned about when they thought about our ongoing work to transform faculty perspectives. Eva expressed concerns about the faculty's capacity for long-term change:

> *I think for me, my concern is always, it is across the board at the institution, but when I interact with faculty it's just the capacity to actually implement and I say that as it relates to being able to be in a position to adequately plan, be in a place to adequately have a manageable workload, being able to not just be so emotionally and physically fatigued that you're just like, I know I need to do all this, but I still got these old PowerPoints that I did a couple years ago and I know I probably need to update and refresh them and change it around…I think the buy-in is there, but do they have the capacity, the time, the resources to be able to implement.*

Given the organizational crises that occurred throughout this study, and are still occurring at its close, Eva did not believe that the organizational climate provided the faculty adequate time to plan and implement classroom level changes. Although Eva's concerns are valid, the

organization has shown that it values faculty professional learning. This is a step toward capacity building. There are still faculty who will default back to the old faculty-centered methods. However, they are now armed with learner-centered pedagogy, and have transformative professional development opportunities each semester. Professional learning for faculty is now a part of the organizational culture. Cultural shifts are essential to long-term organizational sustainability.

Student Retention and Engagement

In closing, at the inception of this study, there were two problems that the action research team sought to address: student retention and student engagement with faculty. One of the first organizational documents that the action research team analyzed was the 2015 Customer Satisfaction Survey. In it, students claimed that faculty and staff did not care about them, and that they received poor service from all parts of the college. As this action research study came to an end, we endeavored to find updated customer satisfaction data. Unfortunately, the department of Institutional Effectiveness and Research (IER) was impacted heavily by the organizational turmoil of the college. The Data Analysts and Dean of Institutional Effectiveness stopped collecting student survey data. Additionally, the office of IER experienced great turnover, and the Dean position was currently vacant at the close of this study. It was also discovered that the college terminated its membership CCSSE (Community College Survey of Student Engagement) membership in 2016. As a result of the organizational challenges in the office of IER, the college also stopped conducting classroom-level evaluations. Therefore, the only student climate data that has been collected since 2015 exists in this action research study.

Although there was no new Customer Satisfaction Survey, the data collected in this action research study suggests that the cultural shift toward a value for professional development

and learning may have also begun to shift the climate of dissatisfaction campus wide. Although there are still unhappy students, and the turnover continues, the organizational value for professional development may help the organization learn its way forward.

Implications for Theory and Research

This action research study unearthed some important implications for theory and research. First, the theoretical framework of the study, which draws on Mezirow's (1978, 1991) Transformative Learning Theory, is also informed by action research methodology. The purpose of this action research study was to explore how and whether transformative professional development that emphasizes cultural responsiveness and learner-centeredness changes faculty perspectives. Transformative Learning and Action Research provided a logical marriage of theory and practice. Just as transformative learning relies upon critical reflection, meaning-making, critical examination of underlying assumptions, action research provides a methodology predicated on cycles of reflection followed by cycles of action, driven by collaboration and egalitarian meaning-making. Furthermore, the revised conceptual and theoretical framework (illustrated in Figure 8), displays the themes from the study's findings representing how transformative professional development that emphasizes cultural responsiveness and learner-centeredness changes faculty perspectives.

Finally, although not intended to be generalizable, this study could be replicated in other similar institutions. Next, we discovered that organizational capacity is necessary for the long-term sustainability of this type of change. Although action research is the anti-theory to generalizable traditional research, this action research study had some elements that are generalizable for a distinct subset of post-secondary education. The literature suggests, and this action research study has shown, that transformative professional development that emphasizes

culturally relevant teaching and learner-centeredness is an effective means by which to engage

student populations that are predominantly black, underserved, and underrepresented.
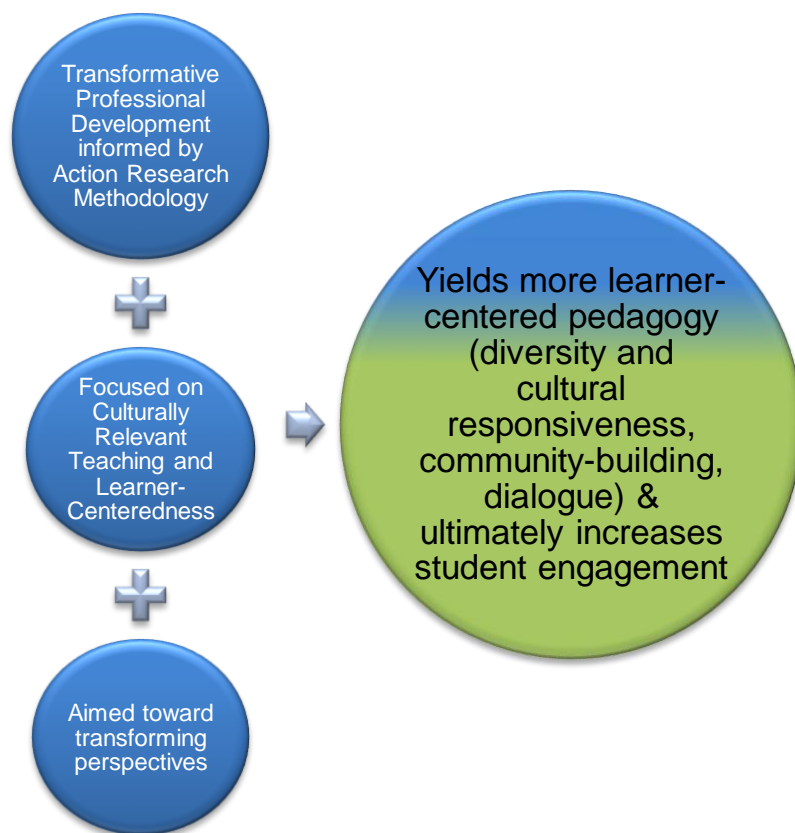

Figure 8. Revised Conceptual and theoretical framework, with Mezirow's (1991) transformative

learning theory as the theory of change.

Limitations

The length of the study was its primary limitation. As explained in Chapter 4, the

president of City Technical College was reluctant to provide permission for this action research

study. One of his conditions was that the study be confined to 12 months. As explained through

this study, I became subversive and covert, operating stealthily behind the scenes and not

volunteering unsolicited information about the study. Therefore, I was able to extend the 12-

xmonth study to a 15-month study, yielding four cycles of action. However, two or three years of research would have yielded much richer data and more long-term sustainability.

Summary and Closing Reflections

In Chapter 1, I provided my personal context. I began with a quote from Octavia Butler's 1993 novel, *Parable of the Sower*. She described herself saying, "I'm a pessimist if I'm not careful, a feminist, a Black, a former Baptist, an oil-and-water combination of ambition, laziness, certainty, and drive" (Butler, 1993). In Chapter 1, I linked Butler's description to Laloux's (2014) claim that there are essentially two ways to live: "from fear and scarcity or from trust and abundance" (p. 44). Throughout this action research study, I have waged a battle, negotiating between fear and scarcity and trust and abundance. As Butler contended, I, too, am a "pessimist if I'm not careful, a feminist, a Black, a former Baptist, an oil-and-water combination of ambition, laziness, certainty, and drive." However, as a result of this journey, I have learned to live in trust and abundance rather than fear and scarcity.

As a result of this study and this work, I have become intentionally reflective, self-directed, and more courageous. Cranton (1996) contended that "the educator who engages in self-directed, reflective, and potentially transformative learning will be likely to promote the same among his or her learners and hence will be an agent of social change" (p. 142). I became that agent of social change. As my learning expanded, the learning of those around me also expanded.

I led a self-directed learning study in the fall of 2017 independent of this action research study. The participants were the team of my direct reports, three department chairs and an administrative assistant. My goal was to measure the degree to which my own team was engaged in learning, then analyze the conditions that foster or impede learning. Some of the data

that emerged from that investigation was a validation of both team learning and individual learning. As Cranton (1996) suggested, I was applying transformative learning theory to my practice with the goal of becoming a transformative leader and an agent of social change. For example, our weekly meetings became a sacred time. I provided a safe space for the team to reflect and engage in dialog about the day-to-demands of teaching and leading in a turbulent organization. Many of those meetings transformed into lunch meetings off campus. I allowed my team to solve problems within the division and use me only to consult. In these meetings, they would present problems, and I would just ask probing questions until they arrived at a solution that we could all live with. I gave them the tools they needed to lead and navigate difficult situations, problems that did not have technical solutions, problems that were relegated to the "swampy lowlands" (Schön, 1983). As a result, they were empowered to lead through a different lens. They became self-directed. My work with this team became a testing ground for my leadership of the action research team.

Eventually, I administered Marsick, Dechant, & Kasl's (1991) Team Learning Survey in order to measure their learning and the conditions that foster or impede learning. I concluded that my team was indeed engaged in learning at the team level and at the organizational level. I was also pleased to discover that my team was operating synergistically in our team learning processes. One of my department chairs responded to our findings saying, "I appreciate everything you have been exposing us to. As you learn things, you teach us. And I just want to keep learning."

I, too, have experienced an epistemic shift. As mentioned above, I have shifted from a perspective of fear and scarcity to one of trust and abundance. That shift is incredibly courageous for someone like me. I am a child of the African diaspora, and I stand upon the

shoulders of my ancestors. My ancestors were enslaved Africans in America. To be clear, the slave-making process used violence, illiteracy, and suppression of information to construct one ultimate truth—that Africans are blind accidents of evolution, an inherent slave class that should be relegated to the lowest rung of biological and social hierarchies. Therefore, as a descendant of enslaved Africans, I began this journey for them, as homage to the blood-stained legacy of Africans in America. After all, post-reconstruction Africans used education as their great equalizer. I have come to discover, however, that while I feel a psychic connection to my ancestors, a transgenerational pain, a determination to prove the eugenicists and the white supremacists wrong, I must also write a new narrative of purpose.

At this particular moment in American history, yet again stifled by racial vitriol and acts of violence, it seems we are returning to the country's dark past. Consequently, there has been a circular shift, a devolution of psycho-social development. In response, I must somehow transcend the transgenerational trauma that haunts so many Africans in America and begin to inhabit my new role as a radical change leader. I was called to this work. I should be teaching people to advocate for themselves; I should be teaching people to reconcile their own pain, insecurities, and epistemologies. I have not only begun to envision what that looks like, I have begun to inhabit the change that I wish to see.

Many good writers explain that they started writing because people weren't writing the stories they wanted to read, so they wrote them instead. Change leaders, too, must write new narratives. And my new narrative must include my small "self" and my emerging future "Self" that represents my greatest potential (Scharmer, 2013). My greatest potential has been unleashed, and I am deeply grateful for this experience. That potential, while it includes the

voices of my enslaved ancestors, it also includes the voices of humanity. I now have a

responsibility to use my voice and that collective voice to shift the narrative.

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APPENDIX A

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNER-CENTERED INSTRUCTION (ALCI)

Created by Watkins, K. & McCoy-Wilson, S. (2018)

Q1 My instructor shares control of the content of my course with students
Q2 My instructor allows students to design their own learning experiences
Q3 My instructor negotiates a grade/learning contract with students
Q4 My instructor shares responsibility of a student's mastery of course objectives
Q5 My instructor provides a variety of learning modes
Q6 My instructor provides students with course objectives and criteria for the grading (i.e. rubrics) at the beginning of the course
Q7 My instructor creates an atmosphere of freedom
Q8 My instructor creates a supportive atmosphere
Q9 My instructor builds trust
Q10 My instructor provides opportunities for students to learn from each other
Q11 My instructor diagnoses students' present levels of competence in terms of my end-of-course Requirements
Q12 My instructor sequences course material developmentally (at different levels of complexity)
Q13 My instructor assesses higher-level cognitive outcomes (application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation)
Q14 My instructor helps students to become more self-directed as learners
Q15 My instructor focuses on performance outcomes (not content coverage)
Q16 My instructor accepts the idea that each student can succeed
Q17 My instructor asks students to evaluate their own learning
Q18 My instructor asks student to evaluate his/her teaching
Q19 My instructor shares his/her rationale for the course with students - making it relevant to them
Q20 My instructor confronts students (giving negative feedback)
Q21 My instructor praises students (giving positive feedback)
Q22 My instructor advises and coaches students
Q23 My instructor conferences with students individually
Q24 My instructor engages with students to get to know them as people
Q25 Focusing on the degree to which you feel your instructor is learner-centered, please share your thoughts about the best part of your class and/or the things you like best about your instructor.

APPENDIX B

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF LEARNER-CENTERED INSTRUCTION (SALCI)

Created by Watkins, K. & McCoy-Wilson, S. (2018)

Q1 I will share control of the content of my course with students
Q2 I will allow students to design their own learning experiences
Q3 I will negotiate a grade/learning contract with students
Q4   I will share responsibility of a student's mastery of course objectives
Q5   I will provide a variety of learning modes
Q6   I will provide students with course objectives and criteria for the grading (i.e. rubrics) at the beginning of the course
Q7   I will create an atmosphere of freedom
Q8   I will create a supportive atmosphere
Q9   I will build trust
Q10 I will provide opportunities for students to learn from each other
Q11   I will diagnose students' present levels of competence in terms of my end-of-course Requirements
Q12   I will sequence course material developmentally (at different levels of complexity)
Q13   I will assess higher-level cognitive outcomes (application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation)
Q14   I will help students to become more self-directed as learners
Q15   I will focus on performance outcomes (not content coverage)
Q16   I will accept the idea that each student can succeed
Q17   I will ask students to evaluate their own learning
Q18   I will ask student to evaluate his/her teaching
Q19   I will share his/her rationale for the course with students - making it relevant to them
Q20   I will confront students (giving negative feedback)
Q21   I will praise students (giving positive feedback)
Q22   I will advise and coaches students
Q23   I will conference with students individually
Q24 I will engage with students to get to know them as people
Q25 I will video record several of my classes for self-evaluation
Q26 Please share your thoughts about the August 8th professional development