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"It Goes Both Ways" : How white teachers view and respond to culture in the diverse classroom

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"IT GOES BOTH WAYS": HOW WHITE TEACHERS VIEW AND RESPOND TO CULTURE IN THE DIVERSE CLASSROOM

by
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A Thesis

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Dedications

This thesis is dedicated to my fiancé, Josh Mol, for always being there for me on every step of this journey. From taking care of every household chore and responsibility so I could focus on my work to having your shoulder ready for my head when I couldn't type another word, I could not have done this without you. Thank you for always believing in me, even when I wanted to give up. You make me a better person and I am thankful for you every single day.

I would also like to dedicate this to my two Great Pyrenees children, Brodie and Gus, who understood and forgave me when I was too tired to take them for a walk. I couldn't imagine surviving these last two years without your endless love and slobber.

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I would also like to thank Martha, Joan, Velma, and Cherie, the teachers in this case study, who volunteered their time to help me complete this thesis. Thank you for being open and honest and for allowing me to use your experiences and ideas to inform and improve current teaching practice.

Abstract

Danielle Martin
"IT GOES BOTH WAYS": HOW WHITE TEACHERS VIEW AND RESPOND TO
CULTURE IN THE DIVERSE CLASSROOM
2019-2020
Marjorie E. Madden, Ph.D.
Master of Arts in Reading Education

The purpose of this study was to examine how white teachers in a diverse school district view, respond to, and bridge cultural differences in the classroom. A pre-question, survey, audio recorded discussions, notes in a teacher research journal, and a post question were all analyzed to determine how four white, female teachers incorporated culture into the classroom as well as their receptiveness to culturally sustaining pedagogy. Findings were that these four teachers had a rudimentary understanding of culturally sustaining pedagogy prior to the study and while they made attempts to include culture in the classroom, these attempts were limited and superficial. However, findings also included their side of the story and the challenges they face to carry out the many demands of their job while trying to make teaching relevant and applicable to their diverse student population. Implications for future research are discussed.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1. Issues of power are enacted in classrooms.

2. There are codes or rules for participating in power; that is there is a "culture of power."

3. The rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power.

4. If you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture make acquiring power easier.

5. Those with power are frequently least aware of or least willing to acknowledge its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence. (Lisa Delpit, 2006, p. 24)

As my classmates displayed their presentation on Lisa Delpit, I couldn't help but fidget in my seat in the third row of my Clinical Experience classroom during the summer of 2019. As each Google slide progressed, I couldn't help but feel targeted and defensive. Even through the lack of sleep and the stress I was feeling trying to carry out all of the demands of the course while working full time, the further the presentation went, the less I had to fight my eyes to keep them open. I was intrigued. I learned about the "culture of power" and how it affects the way we teach "other people's children" and how the "silenced dialogue" prevents the people who know the most about educating the youth of color from sharing their knowledge with those doing the educating. The more I learned, the more my emotions stirred. I was angry, defensive, and embarrassed, and yet at the same time, I was mesmerized, inspired and enthralled with Delpit's work. They no

sooner finished their presentation and I had ordered Lisa Delpit's seminal pieces off of Amazon: *Other People's Children* and *Multiplication is for White People.*

It's hard to say what truly inspired my interest in this topic as it was a mixture of many things. Was it because my classmates presented the information in such an interesting and engaging way? I'm sure that had something to do with it. (Great work, girls.) Was it because I didn't believe that a "culture of power" existed? Possibly. Was it because I judged myself for being a white, female teacher who was a part of the said "culture of power?" Partly. Was it because I taught in an extremely diverse district and I was responsible for teaching "other people's children" and never once stopped to consider how my "whiteness" affected my teaching? Most definitely.

Regardless of the exact reasons or the mixture of reasons that captivated me, the minute *Other People's Children* was delivered to my door, I couldn't put it down. When I wasn't in class or working, my nose was in that book. I read and reread the pages day in and day out and took it everywhere I went. To this day, Post-Its are still hanging out of the sides and as you fan the pages, one might mistake all of my color coding and highlighting for a rainbow flipbook. Questions and reactions fill the margins and even when the book is not open, the cover still awkwardly sticks up on its own. Delpit's second book, *Multiplication is for White People,* was treated the same way, color coding and all. I have to admit that I was a little bitter when I had finished both books, as if all of this knowledge had been bestowed upon me in such a short period of time and I was left to just deal with it all on my own.

This bitterness led me to unpack what McIntosh (1990) refers to as the "Invisible Knapsack" of White Privilege. Like McIntosh (1990) stated, while many white people are

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taught about racism as being something that puts others at a disadvantage, rarely are the white people taught that white privilege puts them at an advantage. I was guilty of this and I knew that without Lisa Delpit's books, I never would have realized it. Through self-reflection and self-criticism, I quickly yearned to be a better teacher, analyzing the ways in which my white privilege affected my culturally diverse students on a daily basis. This is what drove my obsession with using culture in the classroom, leading to the discovery of culturally sustaining pedagogy.

Lisa Delpit changed my outlook on both teaching and my place in society. Being somewhat new to the profession, with only five years under my belt, I still have a lot to learn about teaching. However, if I, a young teacher, soon to be fresh out of graduate school, had been so clueless about a "culture of power" and culturally sustaining pedagogy, I couldn't help but think about the other teachers in my school, who, without coincidence, are all white as well. It was then that I decided that I wanted and needed to find out what my fellow white colleagues knew about culturally sustaining pedagogy. Did they incorporate students' culture into the curriculum? If so, how? Did they know that they too were a part of this culture of power and that "whiteness" can have an impact on their teaching? Did they follow a standardized curriculum and use assessment tools that disregard the culture of other people's children? And if they did, then what?

I had to find out the answers to these questions and at a bare minimum, I needed my colleagues to know that culturally sustaining pedagogy exists. With the evolving demographics of the schools in the United States, and of OUR school, a school with an already diverse population, it was time to step out of our comfort zones and consider how

our "whiteness" affects our students and how culturally sustaining pedagogy could change our classrooms for the better.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to record how white teachers who teach in a diverse school district, view, respond to, and incorporate the various cultures of their students into the classroom and curriculum. The specific aims are to determine what these teachers are already doing in the classroom to incorporate culturally sustaining pedagogies. In addition, how they view culture in the classroom as well as how their culture affects their teaching will be explored.

Statement of Research Problem and Question

The purpose of this study is to examine how white teachers incorporate culturally sustaining pedagogies into the classroom and how they view, respond to, and bridge these cultural differences. Sub-questions that guided my inquiry included: what do these teachers already know about culturally sustaining pedagogy? How is their teaching influenced by culture? What ways do these teachers incorporate culture into the classroom? Do these teachers realize and accept the culture of power that exists inside and outside of school? If so, do they agree with it? How does being "white" affect our teaching and our students on a day to day basis?

Story of the Question

After learning about Django Paris' (2017) idea of culturally sustaining pedagogy in my graduate courses at Rowan University, I was instantly intrigued about incorporating culture into the classroom. I had studied theories such as Homi Bhabha's (1994) Third Space Theory, Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) Culturally Relevant

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Pedagogy, and Moll and Gutierrez's (1994) funds of knowledge and yet none of them resonated with me until Lisa Delpit was mentioned in a presentation during class. After spending the summer with my nose in both of her books and doing research on the topic, I found what appeared to be the epitome of all I had learned during my courses: culturally sustaining pedagogy.

I instantly began to reflect on my own teaching. How did I use students' culture as a springboard into learning? How did I use culture to make students feel welcome in the classroom? Was I forcing the monocultural and monolingual norms on my diverse student population? Quite frankly, it was painful to reflect on my years in the field. I could think of a few examples of how and when we studied different cultures in my classroom such as Black History Month with a focus on Martin Luther King Jr., the Lenape Native Americans unit we completed every year, and the simile and metaphor project I assign when we study figurative language, requiring students to bring in song lyrics that incorporate similes or metaphors. Could that be it? Could those be the only things I was doing that incorporated culture in my fourth-grade classroom?

After reflecting on my own teaching, I knew I had more to discover. At this point in my reflection, I accepted that I was a white, middle class, female teacher who was a part of a culture of power and that, whether I wanted to believe it or not, this had effects on my teaching in a diverse school district. Furthermore, I also accepted that I was not a culturally sustaining educator. I was on the cusp, but I was not there, yet. It was then that I needed to see if any of my colleagues were. What did they already know about culturally sustaining pedagogy? Were they doing things in their classroom that I wasn't? What if they weren't doing anything? I felt it was my responsibility to shed light on this

pedagogy. Unfortunately, I couldn't change the past and go back in time and show my previous students that I did recognize and appreciate their culture, but I could change my instruction and classroom climate now. I could also help my colleagues to see the benefits of using culturally sustaining pedagogy. My journey to become a culturally sustaining educator while bringing awareness to culturally sustaining pedagogy would begin with myself and a small group of colleagues at my school. "What should we be doing? The answers, I believe, lie not in a proliferation of new reform programs but in some basic understanding of who we are and how we are connected to and disconnected from one another" (Delpit, 2006, p. xxv).

Organization of the Thesis

The following four chapters detail my teacher research. Chapter two focuses on a review of the literature that relates to and has influenced this study. Chapter three discusses the context of the study, including community and school information, as well as the research design and methodology. The data found during the study and an analysis of the data are located in Chapter four. The final chapter, Chapter five, consists of the study's conclusions, limitations and implications for future research.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

When we teach across the boundaries of race, class, or gender - indeed when we

teach at all - we must recognize and overcome the power differential, the

stereotypes, and the other barriers which prevent us from seeing each other. Until

we can see the world as others see it, all the educational reform in this world will

come to naught. (Lisa Delpit, 2006, p. 134)

Introduction

The demographics of the schools in the United States have drastically changed

over the years. A rapid growth in numbers of students from all over the world has created

a much-changed classroom, one that encompasses diversity in all of its forms. However,

those in charge of educating this diverse youth has remained primarily monocultural in

regards to race and gender. Therefore, the differences in culture between educators and

their students has become very apparent, leading many to both study and question how

schools in the United States are preparing a very diverse youth to thrive in society. The

result of these concerns and questions has led to the development of what Django Paris

(2012) designated as culturally sustaining pedagogy.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature pertaining to culturally sustaining

pedagogy. The first section outlines how classrooms in the United States are rapidly

changing and why culturally sustaining pedagogies are relevant and needed for a

paradigm shift to address the needs of the changing demographics. It is followed by a

discussion about the theoretical frameworks and research that was completed prior to

Django Paris' (2017) formation of culturally sustaining pedagogies, which helps to

contextualize this new theory. Next, the known benefits of using culturally sustaining pedagogies in the classroom are reviewed. The challenges that arise when bringing culture in the classroom to the forefront and the difficulties that teachers face are discussed after that. The following section examines teachers' attitudes towards adopting culturally sustaining pedagogies in their classroom as well as their willingness and preparedness. Finally, what characteristics culturally sustaining educators should possess in order to implement the pedagogy appropriately as well as suggestions for training preservice and in-service teachers are explored. The chapter ends with a summation of the literature and the ways in which this study may contribute to the knowledge base about culturally sustaining pedagogy.

Relevance of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies in Today's Education

In recent years, student populations in schools have become increasingly diverse in regards to ethnicity, race, and language. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), since the Fall of 2014, less than half of public-school students have been white and this number is projected to decline continuously until the year 2028. In the same regard, the National Center for Education Statistics (2019) predicts that the percentages of students who are Hispanic, Asian, and of two or more races will continue to increase, while the population of African American students will remain about the same as it was in the year 2016.

At the same time, the demographic of teachers remains primarily white, female teachers, accounting for 80% of the public-school teaching population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Therefore, a difference in cultural backgrounds between the students and the teachers is prominent in public schools today and will continue to be

a relevant topic in public school education as student diversity increases. These cultural differences may have an impact on the effectiveness of daily classroom instruction, in a society that promotes monoculturalism and monolingualism (Paris, 2012, p. 93). Teachers and students may have different values, views, customs, and prejudices, which can substantially impact learning (Ozudogru, 2018) and it is the norm for teachers and students to come from totally different worlds, as many teachers do not live in the community in which they teach (Gay, 2010).

Therefore, as the demographics of today's schools are changing and will continue to change, educators must be ready to not only recognize cultural differences but provide a school experience in which students of color can both "survive and thrive "(Paris, 2012, p. 13). In order for this to happen, educators across the nation must become familiar with and be ready to educate the youth of America using what Paris (2012) coined as culturally sustaining pedagogy: a pedagogy that "seeks to perpetuate and foster - to sustain - linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the school for positive social transformation" (p. 1).

Theoretical Frameworks that led to Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

The idea of using students' cultures to benefit classroom instruction is not new. One way to do this is through what Moll and Gutierrez (1994) describe as "funds of knowledge" or the "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (Paris, 2012, p. 133). Moll (1994) stressed the importance of using students' funds of knowledge in the classroom as these bodies of knowledge generate positive self-esteem and meaningful learning (Tracey & Morrow, 2012).

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Homi Bhabha (1994) described the Third Space Theory as the "hybridity and continual evolution as people and cultures come into contact with one another and as people negotiate cultural changes" (Turner, 2016, p 108). By combining one's first space (personal knowledge and discourse) with their second space (less personal knowledge such as work or school influences) new knowledge is created resulting from the intersection of the two spaces (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). However, Gutierrez (2008) made it clear that the creation of this third space is not simply building a bridge between the first and second space; rather, "teachers and students must bring together and extend the various activities and practices of these domains in a forward-looking third space" (Paris, 2017, p. 94).

Sonia Nieto (2006) looked at learning in a sociopolitical context including "the conditions, laws, regulations, policies, practices, traditions, and ideologies that influence and define education at any given time" (p. 7). Nieto stressed how teachers need to consider the social and political context in which they teach in order to reject racism and provide students with strategies and a curriculum that allow all students to learn. She believed that teachers could make a difference with a sense of mission, solidarity with and empathy for their students, courage to challenge mainstream knowledge, improvisation, and passion for social justice (Nieto, 2006).

Similarly, Lisa Delpit (2006) studied the ways to best educate students of color and recognized that a culture of power exists in schools and in society. Delpit offers ways to connect teachers with varying cultural backgrounds to their students and made it known that a silenced dialogue occurs when non-white people are left out of the dialogue about how to best educate students of color. Like Nieto, she pushes for action and social

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change and advocates for teacher self-reflection to examine how they are helping or impeding student learning and access to power in society (Delpit, 2006).

Gloria Ladson Billings developed the idea of culturally relevant pedagogy, which she defines as "pedagogy of opposition" that is committed to "collective, not merely individual empowerment" (Ladson Billings, 1995, p. 160). It is aimed at empowering students of color intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically so they are prepared to not only fit into society but to change it (Harmon, 2012). Resting on the principles of academic success, developing and/or maintaining cultural competence, and developing a critical consciousness in which students can challenge the social order in which they live, culturally relevant pedagogy allows teachers to use students' culture as a vehicle for learning (Ladson Billings, 1995). Her idea of culturally relevant pedagogy paved the way for what Ladson-Billings now refers to as "the remix" to her groundbreaking notion of culturally relevant pedagogy (Doucet, 2017, p. 196).

This "remix" is what Alim and Paris (2017) have identified as culturally sustaining pedagogy which "seeks to perpetuate and foster, to sustain, linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation" (p. 1). They argue that rather than simply responding to, recognizing, and valuing the cultural backgrounds of students, these cultures must coexist in a pluralistic society that is ever changing and evolving as time progresses. The sustainment of these cultures is crucial in a globalized society. Walter and Lee (2018) make it clear that, "the emphasis in culturally sustaining pedagogy is not simply on valuing cultural differences but working to sustain these differences" (p. 263). This pedagogy promotes engagement, enrichment, and

achievement of all students by embracing diversity, identifies and nurtures the cultural strengths of students, and validates students' lived experiences (Samuels, 2018).

Effects of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy on Students

Research has established a connection between culturally competent educators and positive outcomes for students (Samuels, 2018) as teacher beliefs have a direct influence on classroom practice (Bolshakova, 2015). There are many benefits to using culturally responsive, relevant or sustaining pedagogies in education as it is one of the most effective means of meeting the learning needs of all students (Gay, 2010). It should be stressed that this type of pedagogy is for all students, not just minority groups (Ozudogru, 2018).

In contrast, Gao (2014) describes the idea of "not learning" as one of the consequences of not enacting culturally sustaining pedagogies in the classroom. According to Gao (2014), unequal social powers and cultural alienation cause a negative impact to cognitive and intellectual development which causes "not learning" (p. 104.). "Not learning" occurs when a child recognizes a conflict between his or her culture and the dominant culture, thus making him/her feel uncomfortable and sometimes even offended or insulted. In addition to this, students may become discouraged when a teacher fails to use students' current strengths to foster learning, stemming from a lack of cultural recognition (Gao, 2014). Rose & Issa (2018) put it bluntly that "students don't care what you know unless they know that you care" which is another way for students to ask, "Do you know enough about me to teach me?" (p. 13).

According to Ozudogru (2018) a teacher's response to using culturally responsive teaching in the classroom could influence students' self-esteem and academic success.

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This idea is further explored by Doucet (2017) who stated, "it is clear that what educators believe about their students has real implications for their educational outcomes" (p. 195). Students can perceive how their teachers feel about them and low expectations result in students' poor performance as they lose confidence (Gao, 2014). Resting on the frameworks of the humanizing practice which builds on the work of Paulo Freire, and Paris' culturally sustaining pedagogy, Doucet (2017) argue that immigrant children are deserving of learning environments in which "their humanity is seen and honored, and in which their cultures, languages, and family histories can be bolstered and sustained" (p. 200).

One of the critical parts of the culture pluralism is language. State and local language policies in education greatly affect students' learning and success as these policies coupled with high stakes assessments cause deficit-oriented ideologies of culturally and linguistically diverse students. This results in a negative effect on English Language Learners, other language-minority groups and even English dominant students (Michener, Irving, Proctor, Silverman, 2015). State and local language-in-education (LIE) policies in the United States privilege English, thus supporting monolingualism, leaving students' home language and literacy practices out of the curriculum (Puzio, Newcomer, Pratt, McNeely, Jacobs, & Hooker 2017). This results in what Paris (2012) described as "the eradication of linguistic, literate, and cultural practices that diverse students bring to the table" (p. 223). For teachers in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, this presents a challenge as they must mitigate the effects of such strict policies.

These policies in conjunction with teachers who are forced to follow them, can have a negative impact on students. For example, the more a student is exposed to constant correction when speaking or writing standard English, the more likely they are to give up or not attempt "standard English" at all. Lisa Delpit (2006) explains that constant correction whether in the form of oral or written English, increases cognitive monitoring which causes speech to be very difficult. In turn, "forcing speakers to monitor their language for rules while speaking, typically produces silence" (Delpit, 2006, p. 51). In contrast, according to Michener, Sengupta-Irving, Proctor, and Silverman (2012), one way that teachers can respond to the needs of language-minority students is through incorporating culturally sustaining pedagogies (p. 200).

Doucet (2017) discusses how teachers wrongfully use a deficit mentality toward students who are bilingual when in reality, bilingualism is linked to cognitive capacity (Doucet, 2017, p. 197). Dialect greatly influences teachers' assessments of competence and without considering the dialect that students use, teachers may develop low expectations, resulting in teaching these students less (Delpit, 2006). These same students are frequently categorized as having learning disabilities because the school system fails to provide assessments that can determine if they're struggling because they are learning another language or due to their actual cognitive development and/or limitations (Delpit, 2006, p. 197). Therefore, without considering a student's culture and recognizing all that they do bring to the table, some teachers instead focus on student deficits resulting in deficit mentalities and misdiagnoses.

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Challenges for Implementation

There are challenges that arise when implementing culturally sustaining pedagogy in schools. These challenges include teachers' willingness and readiness to accept their role in the culture of power, eliminating "color blindness" and the deficit mentality in schools, lack of time for teachers to get to know their students and plan diverse curriculum, obligation to local authority and policies such as English-Only policies, and the monopolization of the curriculum due to standardized testing.

There is a culture of power that exists in today's schools and in society (Delpit, 2006). Delpit (2006) describes five aspects of the culture of power that include: "issues of power are enacted in classrooms, there are codes or rules for participating in power, the rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power, if you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier, and those with power are frequently least aware of or least willing to acknowledge its existence" (p. 25). Goodman (2001) sums this up when he states, "people from privileged groups tend to have little awareness of their own dominant identity, of the privilege it affords them, of the oppression suffered by the corresponding disadvantaged group, and of how they perpetuate it" (Samuels, Samuels, & Cook, 2017, p. 57).

Paris (2017) describes culturally sustaining pedagogy as a pedagogy necessary for "helping share access to power in a changing nation" (p. 6). This power shift can only occur if teachers are aware that the power struggle exists. Unfortunately, many teachers fail to realize or simply neglect the power relationships that exist inside and outside of the classroom. McIntosh (1990) makes it clear that while many white people are taught about

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racism as being something that puts others at a disadvantage, rarely are the white people taught that white privilege puts them at an advantage. Therefore, in addition to what McIntosh (1990) describes an "unpacking the invisible knapsack," teachers must also acknowledge how equity and sharing authority impact learning, among many other components in society (Patchen and Petersen, 2008).

Many teachers do not think deeply about their own attitudes and beliefs about culture, race, and ethnicity, advocating that they are "colorblind" or they teach their students as individuals so those things do not matter (Gay, 2010). In doing so, they avoid the obvious disparities so as to protect themselves from being called racist and striving to be "colorblind" to not cause any trouble. Delpit (2006) argues that being colorblind sends the wrong message to students of color, portraying that something is wrong with being "black or brown" and that if a teacher does not see color, they do not really see children (p. 177). Furthermore, by not talking about skin color or the differences in the students, white children are protected, thus further protecting the power in a changing nation. In addition to this, according to Doucet, (2017) "there is no evidence that ignoring visible differences benefits anyone" (p. 198).

To determine content knowledge and critical concepts that white teachers should know and utilize in regards to African American culture and history, Logan, Hilton, Watson, and Kickland-Holmes (2018) completed a study in which they concluded that "understanding race, racism, and white privilege has direct application in the classroom" (p. 18). Furthermore, they discovered that "colorblind" teachers could have negative impacts on the classroom such as missing rich pedagogical opportunities (p. 18).

A deficit mentality is then created, sometimes unintentionally by educators. Samuels, Samuels, and Cook (2017) discovered that the deficit mentality is very prevalent in the mindsets of both preservice and in-service teachers. For example, many teachers have difficulty separating race and socioeconomic status and frequently assume that students of color come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. In a study conducted by Sbarra and Pianta in 2001, teachers' ratings of behavior problems and academic competencies of African American and white preschoolers were studied over a two-year period. Discoveries from this study found that the teacher's rating of white children was stable over time but African American children were rated as "less competent" in regards to task orientation and frustration tolerance" (Doucet, 2017, p. 198). As Gay (2010) pointed out, because teachers and students' cultures vary so significantly, distorted perceptions and attitudes toward ethnically and racially diverse individuals are common among teachers. Like any other individual, teachers pick up the same misconceptions and messages as a result of the media and not living in the community in which they teach.

There are other challenges that teachers face as culturally relevant pedagogy clashes with the normative ways in which education is traditionally carried out in society (Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008). Teachers feel that getting to know each and every student's background in order to teach in a culturally sustaining way is a challenge. While this is a common misconception in regards to culturally sustaining pedagogy, (Puzio, Newcomer, Pratt, McNeely, Jacobs, & Hooker, 2017) it is not outlandish to consider the need for smaller class sizes in order for teachers to better get to know their students (Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008). This is aligned with teachers' lack of time to get to know students and their families and to engage in planning time with colleagues

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to create a curriculum that is representative of the diversity in classrooms today (Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008). Another challenge teachers face is that sometimes the obligation to local authority figures and policies prevents culturally sustaining pedagogy in the classroom (Puzio, Newcomer, Pratt, McNeely, Jacobs, & Hooker, 2017). For example, the English-Only policy in some states stands in the way of this pedagogy as home languages are left out of the curriculum. Last, standardized testing places immense pressure on teachers, causing many to conform to a standardized curriculum in order to prepare students for these tests (Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008).

Teacher Readiness

Studies have shown that teachers recognize the need for culturally sustaining pedagogy in the classroom and are willing to implement them but struggle due to a lack of preparation (Ozudogry, 2018, Samuels, Samuels, and Cook, 2017, Heitner & Jennings, 2016). Bolshakova (2015) states that the majority of K-12 teachers have not received coursework necessary to integrate culture within their teaching. Ozudogry (2018) argues that preservice teachers were willing to teach different cultures but did not find that their undergraduate education prepared them for culturally responsive teaching. In fact, many of the teachers in the sample expressed positive attitudes toward culturally responsive teaching but did not feel as if their undergraduate education was sufficient in raising awareness about cultural diversity. Similarly, Samuels, Samuels, and Cook (2017) discovered that the teachers that they studied recognized the value of culturally relevant pedagogy but were uncertain on how to apply this type of pedagogy in the classroom, struggling with lack of knowledge on the subject and the inability to imagine how culturally relevant pedagogy could be used daily.

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A case study was done by Patchen and Petersen (2008) that explored two classroom teachers' use of constructivism to inform and support culturally responsive teaching in their second, third, and fourth grade science classrooms. They concluded that although the teachers modified their teaching practices in meaningful ways, such as using students' prior knowledge, allotting time for students to make connections between the material in science and their everyday lives, and utilizing student participation, these teachers were still only on the cusp of incorporating culturally responsive teaching. These teachers infrequently used students' contributions in a significant way, thus supporting the teacher to student transfer of knowledge, maintaining complete authority in the classroom. Samuels (2018) argues that a culturally responsive educator must reinforce strategies of collaborative and constructivist learning and must act as a learning facilitator, encouraging students to take the lead in the learning process.

Heitner and Jennings (2016) explored what faculty at a university knew about culturally responsive teaching as well as the differences between their knowledge and practice. The results revealed that the teaching faculty recognized the need for culturally responsive teaching but also realized that their knowledge fell short to address this need. The authors suggested that again, professional development, along with professional onboarding and mentoring would assist faculty with increasing their competence in assessment and instruction while acknowledging, valuing, and using students' cultural backgrounds for optimal learning (p. 67).

What's Needed to Implement Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy in Classrooms

Many researchers have identified what is needed to successfully implement culturally sustaining pedagogy in schools. This includes the necessary characteristics of

culturally sustaining educators, education and preparation programs for preservice teachers, as well as professional development for teachers already in the field.

Django Paris (2017) identified five characteristics that culturally sustaining educators possess: "an understanding of the systemic nature of racialized and intersectional inequalities and their own relative privileged or marginalized position within those systems, an understanding that education participates in and often perpetuates such inequalities, though it can also disrupt them, an understanding of the ways deficit approaches have historically and continue to perpetuate racialized inequalities, and an understanding of asset approaches and how to curricularize them, an understanding that critical asset approaches do improve academic achievement, but that current measures of achievement are narrow and assimilative and so not the sole goal, and an understanding that humanizing relationships of dignity and care are fundamental to student and teacher learning. That is, they engage teaching in ways that allow teachers and students to foster complex understandings about each other that disrupt damage-centered (Tuck, 2009) deficit views" (p. 5).

Gay (2010) refers to Nieto (2005) who established five attitudinal qualities that are considered essential for teachers to promote cultural diversity and social justice. They include: "a sense of mission to serve ethnically diverse children to the best of their abilities; solidarity, empathy for, and value of students' lives, experiences, cultures, and human dignity; courage to question mainstream school knowledge and conventional ways of doing things, and beliefs and assumptions about diverse students, families, cultures, and communities; willingness to improvise, to push the envelope, to go beyond

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established templates and frameworks, and to embrace uncertainty and flexibility; and a passion for equality and social justice" (p. 145).

Doucet (2017) offers a framework of six commitments that can be used to educate preservice teachers or can be adopted by teachers in the field. These include: increase knowledge of diversity, build the classroom as a community of trust, involve families and communities, combat prejudice and discrimination, address diversity in its full complexity and promote global perspectives. Building on Doucet's (2017) idea of involving families and communities, Puzio, Newcomer, Pratt, McNeely, Jacobs, & Hooker (2017) discovered that teachers can receive valuable information and awareness with help from community insiders as they are a valuable source of knowledge and support for teachers to supplement their instruction in culturally sustaining ways.

Teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities are needed to ensure that teachers are utilizing culturally sustaining pedagogies. Racial, ethnic, and cultural attitudes are always present in education, can be problematic, and are significant in regards to teaching conceptions and actions (Gay, 2010). In addition to this, culturally relevant pedagogy requires self-reflection and willingness to interrogate one's own biases and assumptions, and this self-reflection can only occur once teachers are made aware of this type of pedagogy (Borrero, Ziauddin, and Ahn, 2018). Therefore, teachers must be made aware of how using culture in the classroom is beneficial for all, in the form of teacher preparation programs and professional development (Gay, 2010, Harmon, 2012, p. 20, Ozudogru, 2018, Heitner & Jennings, 2016, Rose & Issa, 2018 Logan, Hilton, Watson, and Kickland-Holmes, 2018).

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The goal of professional development is to increase teachers' awareness of the benefits of using culturally sustaining pedagogy so that they may take steps toward adopting this pedagogy in the classroom. In her study, Samuels (2018) synthesized the necessary components of a culturally responsive classroom. This type of classroom allows for student choice and differentiated instruction. Students should be given a voice in multiple contexts, and dialogue in the form of meaningful, respectful conversation where all students participate should be utilized. Samuels (2018) also makes it clear that the teachers assume the role of learning facilitator which stems from constructivist learning. This is also supported by Gay (2010) who stresses that students must learn by doing. Learning should be tailored to students' interests by including students' culture in the curriculum (Samuels, 2018). A teacher who uses culturally responsive or sustaining pedagogy not only values students' cultural and linguistic knowledge but uses this knowledge to manage the classroom effectively and select assessment techniques that allow students to show what they know which ultimately set them up for success (Ozudogru, 2018). Opportunities for students to obtain the highest grade possible through learning experiences and projects allow students to demonstrate their learning at multiple levels of complexity (Gay, 2010) and provides students the necessary knowledge to function in mainstream culture (Ozudogru, 2018). Developing these characteristics is essential when using culturally sustaining pedagogy in schools and can be accomplished through professional development.

Conclusion

With the constant and consistent changes in the demographics of student populations and the mostly homogenous teaching population in the United States, it is

clear that culturally sustaining pedagogy is both warranted and necessary to meet the needs of all students. While culturally sustaining pedagogy is a relatively new term, it stems from the synthesis of previously developed ideas including funds of knowledge (Moll & Gutierrez, 1994), third space theory (Homi Bhabha, 1994), and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). There are many benefits to adopting culturally sustaining pedagogies in the classroom, including positive outcomes for all students (Samuels, 2018), higher self-esteem (Ozudogru, 2018) and the avoidance of "not learning" (Gao, 2014).

Upon reviewing the literature, it is clear that many educators have not received the necessary training in culturally sustaining pedagogies to enact them in the classroom (Bolshakova, 2015). While many teachers are willing to adopt such pedagogies, they face many challenges including strict language policies, (Michener, Irving, Proctor, Silverman, 2015), obligation to local authority figures (Puzio, Newcomer, Pratt, McNeely, Jacobs, & Hooker, 2017) and high stakes testing (Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008). The deficit mentality is present in schools today (Samuels, Samuels, and Cook, 2017) and many teachers are unaware of the culture of power that exists inside and outside of school; some may even choose to ignore it (Delpit, 2007). Without professional development and training, teachers will not gain the necessary awareness needed to adopt culturally sustaining pedagogies.

While there have been some studies that have gauged teachers' knowledge on incorporating students' culture in the classroom (Özüdogru, F. (2018, Johnson & Bolshakova, 2015, Patchen & Cox-Petersen, 2008) and professional development carried out in various districts (Rose & Issa, 2018 Heitner & Jennings, 2016), the idea of

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culturally sustaining pedagogy is still unheard of in many schools. Many of the previous studies have focused on Ladson-Billings' culturally relevant pedagogy and Gay's culturally responsive teaching. While these pedagogies are similar, research is lacking in the synthesis of these pedagogies in the form of culturally sustaining pedagogy.

In addition, many studies have focused on the readiness of preservice teachers who have completed the same, recent educational programs (Özüdogru, 2018, Borrero & Ahn 2018). Therefore, research is needed on the readiness of in-service teachers who have diverse educational backgrounds and teaching experiences. Other recent studies have focused on culturally relevant pedagogy for specific subject areas or age groups (Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008, Patchen & Cox-Petersen, 2008, Johnson & Bolshakova, 2015). Student populations have been homogenous in these studies in regards to cultural diversity. There are gaps in the areas of how teachers enact culturally sustaining pedagogies when working with a variety of populations or multicultural classrooms simultaneously (Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008). The aim of this study is to investigate how white teachers with varying educational backgrounds and teaching experiences view, respond to, and bridge cultural divides in a very diverse school district.

Chapter 3

Context of the Study

Introduction

  This study, completed during the Fall of 2019, explores how teachers view, respond to and bridge cultural differences in the classroom. As the demographics of schools become increasingly diverse, it is imperative to have a continuous dialogue about the impact of using culture in the classroom. In order to raise the consciousness of the teachers to reflect on their role in developing a culturally sustaining classroom, I used a research design that included pre and post questions, a survey, interviews, and audio recorded discussions.

  In this chapter, the context of the study and the methodology used are discussed. The chapter begins with the context of the study. Included in this are the descriptions of the community in which the school is located, the specific demographics of the district, as well as the demographics of the school. In order to protect the confidentiality of the school, district, and case study participants, the community and school were given pseudonyms. The context is followed by a discussion of the methodology, specifically outlining the research design along with the data collection and analysis process.

Community

  This case study took place in a New Jersey public school. According to the United States Census Bureau, population estimates for Ridgewood in 2018 was 2,363. The racial demographics were estimated to be 42 percent white, 18.5 percent Hispanic or Latino, 14.9 percent African American, and 0.5 percent Asian. Approximately 42.6 percent identified as two or more races, with 8.1 percent being white and African American.

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About 13.8 percent of the population of people 25 and older possessed a bachelor's degree or higher. The median household income was $23,763 with 39.9 percent of the population living below the poverty line.

District

The district is comprised of three schools: the first elementary school serves grades pre-K to third grade, the second elementary school serves grades four to five, and the middle school serves grades six through eight. Approximately 896 students attended a school in this district during the 2017-2018 school year. Many of the students in the district receive free breakfast and lunch, with a total of 55.1 percent of students being economically disadvantaged. On the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), the results for students that met or exceeded expectations for language arts across the district were 35.4 percent and 24.5 percent for mathematics.

There are 82 teachers in the district with an average of 13.3 years' experience in a public school and 11 years in the district. Female teachers account for 86.6 percent of the teacher population in this district. In regards to race, 92.7 percent of teachers, both male and female identified as white, followed by 2.4 percent Hispanic, 2.4 percent Asian, 1.2 percent African American, and 1.2 percent American Indian or Alaska Native. Approximately 72 percent of teachers have obtained a bachelor's degree and 28 percent have received a master's degree as their highest level of education.

School

East Ridge Elementary had approximately 180 students enrolled in the 2017-2018 school year. Just over half the student population, 50.4 percent, identified as white,

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followed by 25 percent Hispanic, 18.9 percent African American or Black, and 2.8 percent Asian. The remaining 2.8 percent of students identified as two or more races.

The student-teacher ratio for the 2017-2018 school year was 8:1. There are 23 teachers who teach in this school. Combined they have 13.6 years of experience in public school with 10.5 average years within the district. Approximately 57 percent of teachers in this school have received a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education and 43 percent have obtained a master's degree. All of the fourth and fifth grade classroom teachers are white females. However, when combined with the special area subject teachers, 87 percent of teachers are female and 13 percent are male. In regards to race, 82.6 percent are white, 8.7 percent are Hispanic, and 8.7 percent are Asian.

Methodology

Participants. For this study, I chose a purposeful sample to "intentionally select individuals and sites to learn and understand central phenomena" (Creswell, 2012, p. 206). In order to understand in depth how teachers view and respond to culture in the classroom, a relatively small sample was selected. The selection of these four participants enabled me to obtain rich data, focusing on a small group with varying backgrounds and life experiences.

I selected four participants for this study based on the following criteria: they had to be white, female teachers. However, I made sure to include teachers with different backgrounds and experiences to explore and gain multiple perspectives on the topic. This included years in the field ranging from five to 24 years, different bachelor's and master's degrees, experiences in one to four districts with varying student populations,

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and both general education, special education, and school counselor positions. The one thing all four participants had in common was they were white, female teachers.

Research design. This study is based on qualitative research or "research that consists of systematic documentation" in the form of observations, interviews, and data collections (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 44). Qualitative research best fits this study because it enables the researcher to see firsthand what is occurring in the school in which he/she teaches. The particular type of research used in this study is teacher research. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) define teacher research as "the inquiry of K-12 teachers and prospective teachers, often in collaboration with university-based colleagues and other educators" (p. 40).

Teacher research is carried out by an educational practitioner in his/her professional context. The researcher, who continues to carry out his/her duty as a classroom teacher, develops a question based on problems or issues that arise from practice. This question can also be manifested in self-reflection or discrepancies between what is intended and what actually occurs in the classroom. For example, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) explain that these questions "also have to do with how these practitioners theorize their own work, the assumptions and decisions they make, and the interpretations they construct" (p. 42).

Once a question is determined, information is gathered through reading published research. Using the knowledge gained from the research, a study is created to answer the question and provide useful information for others in the field. Because the research takes place in the teacher researcher's classroom, the teacher researcher is able to form a personal perspective on the data, thus enabling personal experience to shape new ideas.

This new knowledge is then constructed and made generalizable for others in the public to use for inquiry, learning and professional growth (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

Teacher research is not conducted in a controlled environment. This study was conducted in a series of discussion groups with the participating teachers in the teacher researcher's classroom. The teacher researcher assumed the roles as both a teacher and colleague, as well as researcher to investigate how the teachers in this school use their students' culture in the classroom. The qualitative data collection methods used included a pre-question, a survey, individual interviews, audio recorded discussions, a post question, and observations in a teacher researcher journal. The teachers' responses in each discussion influenced the topics to be discussed in subsequent meetings. I also recorded my thoughts and reflections in my teacher researcher journal. As knowledge was constructed throughout the duration of the study, the lines between inquiry and practice were blurred as this is often characteristic of teacher research (Cochran & Lytle, 2009).

Procedure and data collection methods. In the beginning of the study, in order to determine what the teachers in this district knew about culturally sustaining pedagogy, a pre-question was administered for the teachers to answer independently. I then set up weekly meetings to discuss various topics surrounding culturally sustaining pedagogy, beginning with the answers to their pre-question. I was able to choose different topics for each meeting based on the teachers' responses and the conversations that took place. Topics included Paris' (2012) definition of culturally sustaining pedagogy and his five characteristics of culturally sustaining educators, the culture of power (Delpit, 2006) and funds of knowledge (Moll, 1994). These conversations took place in my classroom

during our planning period and after school. Each conversation was recorded and analyzed for common themes at a later date.

Other data types included one-on-one interviews, a survey from Teaching Tolerance (2019) regarding common beliefs in the classroom and two post questions that summarized the teachers' final reflections regarding culturally sustaining pedagogy in a written response format. Each participating teacher was interviewed independently. The interview consisted of 13 questions that gathered information about their teaching experience and background. The survey was adapted from Teaching Tolerance and included 13 questions about common beliefs that teachers may have in the classroom. Topics included "color-blindness," achievement gaps, and culture and second languages in the classroom. The post question was administered at the conclusion of the study. Similar to the pre-question, teachers were asked to write down their thoughts about culturally sustaining pedagogy, specifically what it means to them. The second question asked teachers to determine if they felt culturally sustaining pedagogy had a place in their classroom. Both post questions were open-ended questions.

Data analysis. The data collected before, during, and after the study were used to determine what white teachers in this diverse school district knew about culturally sustaining pedagogy. First, the pre-question was used as a baseline and a way to analyze any growth demonstrated by the teachers throughout the study.

The audio recorded discussions were examined by looking for recurrent themes or connections in a group setting that would help me to fully understand what the teachers in this case study understood about culturally sustaining pedagogy and how they used or did not use their students' cultures in the classroom. I was able to identify significant

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statements made by the teachers and grouped them into units of information or "themes." After discovering recurrent themes in the conversations that took place, I was able to write a description of what the participants experienced and how they felt surrounding culturally sustaining pedagogy. This included verbatim examples from the audio recorded discussions. I also looked for similarities across all participants' responses to the survey and conversations.

The individual interviews helped me to locate the various strengths in each teachers' background and experience and compare their knowledge and expertise with their beliefs about culturally sustaining pedagogy. Years of experience, strengths, and teaching background were analyzed and connected to their responses to see if their years in the field affected their openness or responsiveness to culturally sustaining pedagogy.

The survey, adapted from Teaching Tolerance (2019), was also analyzed and coded for trends in responses. I looked for similarities in responses to the survey questions to see if there was any connection between the teachers' beliefs. Coupled with the group discussions, trends that existed pertaining to each teacher's individual beliefs surrounding culturally sustaining pedagogy were determined.

At the conclusion of the study, I compared each teachers' pre and post questions to determine any new understandings or change in perspective. I analyzed this data to determine how these teachers evolved or didn't evolve as culturally sustaining educators.

By analyzing all of these data sources, I was able to present a description of the experiences, beliefs and opinions of each participant and their common, as well as their individual differences in how they view, respond to, and bridge cultural differences in a

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diverse classroom. The findings discovered during this study are detailed in Chapter Four. This is followed by the limitations of the study as well as implications for future research which are outlined in Chapter five.

Chapter 4

Findings

Introduction

Data was collected for seven weeks to investigate my research question, "How do white teachers in a diverse school district view, respond to, and bridge cultural differences in the classroom?" In order to present the findings, chapter four is divided into two major sections. The first section informs the reader about the teacher participants. This begins with a brief summary of the individual interviews to better understand the case study participants and the baseline data regarding their previous knowledge on culturally sustaining pedagogy and culture. In order to protect the confidentiality of each participant, each teacher was given a pseudonym.

In the second section, a discussion of the findings that emerged during the study, organized by theme, are presented. Six themes were revealed in the data analysis: (a) using funds of knowledge, (b) the relationship between race and teaching, (c) deficit mentalities (d) challenges that teachers face in the classroom, (e) defensiveness, and (f) why talking about race is so hard. Following the discussion of these themes, the post question results are summarized. Additionally, the chapter presents a summation of the findings.

Getting to Know the Teacher Participants

Martha. Martha has a bachelor's degree in elementary education as well as early childhood, a master's degree in education and a master's degree in reading. She has been teaching for 24 years with experience in kindergarten, first, second, fourth and fifth grade. Martha taught in four different schools, one of which was an urban school with a

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diverse population and two that were upper-middle class with a primarily white population. The fourth school is her current placement in which she has been teaching for 12 years.

Martha received the Teacher of the Year award once in every school she has taught in. When asked why she wanted to be a teacher, she explained her love for children that was apparent, even when she was very young. According to Martha, her greatest strength as a teacher is her creativity as well as her ability to form strong bonds with her students. When asked about her greatest weakness, she replied, "time because there is never enough of it." She believes that her ideas about teaching are not different from those around her and when asked if she was ever told to do something in her classroom she thought was wrong, she could not recall any examples. Her teaching is influenced by her coworkers and her students. Additionally, Martha's role models were two teachers she had as a child who really made her enjoy school.

Finally, when asked about how she incorporates culture into the classroom, Martha responded: "I'm always curious to learn about the cultures of others. Therefore, I ask and encourage my students to share any parts of their cultures that they would like. In the past, they have shared customs, stories, food, and artifacts."

Joan. Joan has a bachelor's degree in elementary education with a minor in English, and a master's degree in special education. She has been teaching for 17 years in various positions including preschool disabled, inclusion 3rd through 8th grades, self-contained EBD (emotionally and behaviorally disturbed), resource room, and general education ELA (6th & 8th grades). Over that 17-year span, she has taught in 4 different districts. Two of those districts were upper middle class with primarily white students and

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one was lower middle class, with a pretty evenly diverse population with no real majority group. She has been in her current school for four years, where she is teaching fourth and fifth grade inclusion as well as resource room. This district is very diverse.

Joan always knew she wanted to be a teacher. She stated that she loves children and always wanted to help them feel good about themselves and their abilities. Joan believes knowledge is power and she wants to help children feel confident in how smart and capable they are. When asked about her greatest strength as a teacher, she responded with "patience: patience with myself, patience with parents, patience with coworkers, and patience with understanding that everyone learns in their own way." She believes her greatest weakness as a teacher is making assumptions, such as assuming everyone understands a lesson, assuming all parents are going to be actively involved, and assuming that what she requests for a student will be granted.

Joan feels her ideas might only be different compared to others who have been in the profession longer or shorter than she has. She believes, "those who have been in longer than me might be intimidated by technology or new pedagogy. Those who have been in shorter time than me might not have the experience or knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of the profession." Joan's biggest influence in her teaching is her students, as "they drive me to be better, more creative, more interactive, more diversified" and her role models are her coworkers as "they are great teachers with lots of good ideas and a passion for the profession." When asked if she was ever told to do something that she thought was wrong, she quickly responded with teaching to the test. "In special ed, growth is so much more important than proficiency, but standardized testing only

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measures proficient levels, and makes my kids feel inadequate and makes my teaching look substandard."

When asked about using culture in the classroom, Joan replied, "I try to make my teaching as relevant as possible to my students. That means we celebrate holidays from multiple cultures, we read books from multiple cultures, we have students share about their life experiences to gauge their schema. I find out as much as I can through getting to know you and interest inventories, and I try to make my classroom a safe and inclusive environment where my students can open up about their lives, and then I can include that information in my lessons as much as possible."

Velma. Velma has been teaching for 17 years. Throughout that 17-year span, she taught at five different schools, one of which she described as upper-middle class, one predominantly middle class, and three middle to lower class. She currently holds a bachelor's degree in microbiology, a master's degree in student personnel services and holds certifications for elementary education, kindergarten through 8th grade, high school biology, and her supervisory certification. She taught 9th through 12th grade chemistry, 7th and 8th grade middle school life science, 7th and 8th grade middle school physical science, and middle school health. She is currently the guidance counselor and the health teacher at her current school where she has been teaching for 6.5 years.

Velma has received the Teacher of the Year award in her current district and also received an award for her "PD project" in a previous school. Velma took the alternate route method with her background in science when becoming a teacher as she always wanted to work with children. She feels that her greatest strength as a teacher is her ability to create relationships with students and her weakness is low tolerance. She does

not feel that her teaching ideas are different than those around her and she is most influenced by the people she worked with and what she has observed in the "world of work." When asked if she was ever told to do something in her classroom that she didn't agree with, she responded with having to put the objectives on the board and SGOs, as she feels they are a waste of time.

Finally, when asked how she incorporates culture into the classroom she responded: "That's a hard question. I don't know if I incorporate it but I am conscious of it to make sure I clarify for understanding and make sure I don't offend. When I taught nutrition, it was interesting, because you could incorporate different cultures based on foods and everyone learned from it."

Cherie. Cherie has been teaching for five years. She taught in two schools, both in the same district as either a 6th grade reading teacher or fourth grade general education teacher. She has been in this current school for four years where she currently teaches general education fourth grade in an inclusion setting. She has an associate degree in humanities, a bachelor's degree in literature, and a bachelor's degree in education.

Cherie was inspired to become a teacher by her English teacher during her senior year of high school, "who instilled in me a better love and understanding of literature and encouraged me to pursue teaching" and her grandmother who was also a teacher. She feels that it was her grandmother who influenced her teaching the most. When asked about her greatest strength as a teacher, Cherie responded with organization and concluded that her greatest weakness is classroom management because she likes to have fun and is not a serious person. Cherie does not feel that her ideas of teaching are

different from those around her and does not recall a time when she was asked to do something in her classroom that she felt was wrong.

When asked about how she includes culture into her classroom, she responded, "I try to incorporate teaching my students about other cultures and beliefs, especially if I have students in my class that don't have 'traditional' views, cultures, and beliefs. I've had students ask to present on their culture and I've welcomed it openly."

CSP and Culture: What Do We Already Know?

Prior to the onset of the audio recorded discussions, the four teacher participants were asked to respond to the following pre-question: "What does culturally sustaining pedagogy mean to you?" Martha, the general education teacher who has been teaching for 24 years responded, "Culturally sustaining pedagogy means keeping various cultures of students alive in the classroom." Joan, the special education teacher with 17 years in the profession wrote, "Teaching practices that are current and relevant. Teaching methodologies that are culturally sensitive and relatable to student's real-life situations. Teaching ideas that allow us to learn or hear about diverse cultures in school." Velma is the school counselor who previously taught middle school science. She responded, "Culturally - relating to culture. Ex: Mexican, Turkish, Indian from India, Chinese, Japanese, Puerto Rican, Native American. Sustaining - meaning ongoing, continuously moving forward, adding to. Pedagogies - learnings/educational training." Cherie, the general education teacher with five years of experience wrote, "Culture in the classroom. How does my culture dictate my interactions with students? Does my culture play a role in my instruction? My culture vs. culture of my students. Culture of others (colleagues) vs. my culture/upbringing."

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The term, "culturally sustaining pedagogy" was new to all four teachers. When I asked if they recognized "culturally relevant" or "culturally responsive," they all agreed that those terms sounded more familiar. Martha remembered studying "culture" in college. She states, "in reading in the content areas, they made a big deal about how culturally, politically correct, the textbooks have to be. When you look at the pictures of the kids, there's one of this, and there's one of this, and there's a kid in the wheelchair" (Martha, discussion transcript, October 10, 2019). Joan, who recently received her master's degree in special education in May 2018, recalled studying culture in her graduate courses as well. "When they started talking about this in grad school, it's when I started realizing they changed the names on the standardized tests" (Joan, discussion transcript, October 10, 2019). Velma recalled taking multicultural classes in school as she stated, "We're conditioned as people for multiculturalism. We've all had the classes. We've all had friends that are of different cultures and we've been raised to embrace it" (Velma, discussion transcription, October 10, 2019). Cherie also studied Black pedagogy as an undergraduate. "I studied Black pedagogy when I was in school about how the way the children of the 1920's were raised in order to set up the scene for Hitler to take over and stuff" (Cherie, discussion transcription, October 11, 2019).

As they bounced ideas off of one another in conjunction with their pre-question responses, it became apparent that they had a general and rudimentary understanding of what culturally sustaining pedagogy means. Their previous experience with the term was limited even though they all recalled studying culture or multiculturalism in school. In comparison, Paris's (2012) definition of culturally sustaining pedagogy is a pedagogy that "seeks to perpetuate and foster - to sustain - linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism

as part of the school for positive social transformation" (p. 1). While the teachers touched on various aspects of this definition, none of the teachers had a full understanding of the term.

Throughout the study, the teacher participants also developed an ongoing definition of culture that evolved as the weeks progressed. It was a challenge to define the exact meaning of culture. Joan stated, "I think if you ask ten people, you'll get ten different answers (Joan, discussion transcription, October 10, 2019) to which Martha replied, "You'll get ten different answers from me depending on are you talking about the culture of your classroom, are you talking about your Irish background culture, are you talking about your team?" (Martha, discussion transcription, October 10, 2019)

We began to study Paris' definition of culturally sustaining pedagogy and as we picked it apart together, their idea of culture began to evolve. "Everybody has their own definition of culture" (Martha, discussion transcription, October, 11, 2019). Findings from each discussion revealed that the teachers agreed that culture is not simply limited to race or ethnicity; instead, it is very fluid, multifaceted, and overlapping. "There are cultures within a culture. There's overlap between cultures, if you think about it from other than just an ethnicity or heritage perspective" (Cherie, discussion transcription, October, 11, 2019). Components that make up culture mentioned by the teachers included heritage, language, one's community and community needs which are impacted by socioeconomic status, home life, parental involvement in school, upbringing, food, music, clothing, sexual preference, and the classroom culture. Major emphasis was placed on the culture of the classroom which included the ethnic backgrounds of the students, the number of boys and girls in the room, the learning styles of the students, and

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the special education and general education population in each room. Each teacher agreed that a lot of time is spent building a classroom culture based on the students they get each year.

"And I think too, what the community needs are, affects your culture. We have a very low socioeconomic community, for the majority" (Velma, discussion transcription, October, 11, 2019). All the teachers agreed that community was a part of their definition of culture. Because of this, each teacher mentioned that they invite guest speakers or readers into their classrooms when applicable. However, their involvement in the community outside of school was limited. Martha said that she attends the games, recitals, or other events of the students when she is invited and Joan said that she goes into the community when she must deliver an IEP. Cherie discussed how she drove around the neighborhood when she was first hired as a teacher five years ago to learn about the neighborhood but has not been in the community since. These three teachers do not live in the community and have a commute ranging from 20 to 60 minutes each day. In comparison, Velma lives in the community and is very knowledgeable about the history of the town.

Funds of Knowledge: Validating Students' Culture in the Classroom

The teachers in this case study put a major emphasis on getting to know their students and were adamant about getting to know each child as an individual. Martha firmly stated, "A good teacher gets to know the whole child and understands the thinking and the processes of the complete child. I also think they should recognize the differences among the students whether it's their tastes, their strengths, or weaknesses" (Martha, discussion transcription, October 2, 2019).

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Every single teacher discussed specific ways in which they learn about their students and they felt that building a relationship with students was imperative before participating in meaningful instruction. "You have to understand your students and the background that they come from and they have to feel a level of comfort in your classroom before they're willing to accept that you're going to be teaching them and take the knowledge you'll teach them" (Joan, discussion transcription, October 2, 2019). These included getting to know you activities such as "All About Me" posters, playing games in which students had to ask and answer personal questions, having students bring in "Me Bags," as well as simply talking to each student about their lives. A lot of the "getting to know you" activities take place in their classrooms during the first couple of weeks of school but some continue throughout the year such as "Monday Morning Discussions." Martha stated, "I get to know the child as a person. I am interested in their life. I know how many brothers and sisters they have. I know what sports they play. You get to know them as a child. When they know that you care about them, then they're much more receptive" (Martha, discussion transcription, October 2, 2019).

Martha also discussed "bibliotherapy" and how when she reads to her class, they all sit on the floor and make text-to-self connections that help students to bridge similarities between themselves, their peers, and characters or events from the text. Velma, the school counselor, gets to know each student by taking them to a nonthreatening place such as the front steps of the school, outside on a picnic blanket, or in her office where all of the chairs are low so that she and the student can be on the same level. "And what I see as a counselor, especially with the new kids that come in, I call it baby steps. These kids need to form a relationship with me before I can even pry into

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what I need to get into. I've got to be able to get closer to them to be able to ask some of the questions I need to ask" (Velma, discussion, transcription, October 2, 2019). Each teacher expressed the desire to get to know their students in order to make teaching relatable and purposeful.

Based on the positive responses I received from the teachers in regards to getting to know their students, I introduced funds of knowledge. According to Moll (1992, 1994) funds of knowledge are sources of knowledge that are central to students' homes and communities (Tracey & Morrow, 2012, p. 124). While the term was new to all four teachers, they agreed that funds of knowledge had a place in the classroom. Velma responded, "I think some of these are important to help you get to know your kid and to bring relevance to what you're teaching" (Velma, discussion transcription, November 25, 2019). When asked if they would use funds of knowledge in the classroom, Joan stated, "Sure, I mean maybe to specifically remind me of information or things I should be seeking. Maybe as a visual, purposeful, reminder of oh you know, I kind of know the first four on here just through conversation, let me make a purposeful attempt to ask about their favorite TV show" (Joan, discussion transcription, November 25, 2019).

When I asked which components of funds of knowledge would be most useful to them, the teachers agreed that home language and family values and traditions were most important. The teachers expressed that they gathered a lot of this information through their "getting to know you" activities and by simply taking an interest in their students' lives and having discussions with them. However, they felt that some of the categories were not needed and they would not go out of their way to discover them. One of the categories up for debate was caregiving. Overall, the teachers felt that a students'

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caregiving such as whether or not they were swaddled as a baby, did not have relevant implications in the classroom. For example, Cherie stated, "I think it's important to know some of these things but like, I don't need to know whether or not my kids got pacifiers as a kid or they co-slept, or they were swaddled or they were breastfed or bottle fed" (Cherie, discussion transcription, November 25, 2019). For caregiving, they instead expressed a need to know who is at home with the child currently, as well as the child's structure at home in regards to chores and household responsibilities.

Another questionable category was family occupations. While Velma and Martha agreed that family occupation did not matter, Joan questioned whether or not knowing about the family occupations could lead to bias. She stated that based on a parent's occupation, their time at home could be limited, allowing a teacher to expect low parental involvement. Similarly, certain family occupations, such as a police officer or a teacher, might lead a student's teacher to assume that the child comes from a strict household or a household with a lot of parental involvement. Below is an excerpt from our discussion about funds of knowledge on November 25, 2019.

Joan:	Are these funds of knowledge, are we saying that they lead to bias or prevent bias?
Danielle:	Essentially, they're supposed to prevent bias because in a perfect world, we would get to know each student using these funds of knowledge.
Martha:	Okay but we know a lot of these already.
Joan:	Okay so let me be devil's advocate because I'm looking at some of these examples they have listed for family occupation: fishing, office, construction, police officer, right? In my head, I'm going okay well, someone whose father is a fisherman for a living is most likely gone a lot or traveling a lot because they have a job where they have to find things that move around. I'm also thinking in my head, teachers not listed there but there have been plenty of

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times where my own children's teachers have said to me 'oh your kids are so lucky you're a teacher' because I sign the planner, I make them do their homework. You know, expectations that I have of my parents in my classroom, I do in my own home. So now, I'm wondering if that doesn't lead me to a bias to think that perhaps the policeman's child is more honest than the construction worker's child.

Danielle: Making assumptions?

Joan: Making an assumption like 'oh he's being raised by a policeman,' like following the law, and all of those things are important in that home.

Martha: A rule guy.

Joan: Whereas perhaps, well, I'm married to a construction worker and he has a different set of rules than I have. So my question is, could these not do the opposite and lead to more bias? Like the more you find out about your kids?

Velma: I agree with you on that.

Martha: I don't think in a negative way though.

Joan: No I don't think so either but I'm just saying is there potential that these things do the opposite effect that the more you find, the more you dip into the funds of knowledge, and you find out that perhaps, it triggers in your brain, you're…

Cherie: You're Italian! You must do five fishes for Christmas. Let's talk about it.

Joan: Does it feed into a bias?

Martha: No, I don't think we as teachers, and certainly not this group, are biased in the first place because we learned that you know, a boy in my class's dad is a policeman. That doesn't mean anything.

Joan: No, I don't think of them differently. Okay let's say the opposite, like if there's a boy in the class and his dad is a policeman and he is a lot behaviorally. He's having real outbursts. I'm not going to say 'huh, that's odd that he's breaking all of these rules but he's raised in a home with a parent whose career is all about rules. That's a little odd.' I'm not going to also say there's not plenty of times where we'll have a kid whose parent is a teacher in the

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district and we never get a planner signed or homework's not done. And you're like 'ugh, this kid's mom is a teacher. What is going on?' I'm just wondering if we have expectations based off of what we …

Martha: I don't think that an expectation is a bias.

Joan: Like a preconceived idea.

Velma: I don't think an expectation is a bias.

Martha: No, I don't think that's a bias because I do expect 'you're a teacher mother, I'm a teacher mother.' My kids' homework was done every night. And I expect the same from other teacher parents.

Joan: Okay I'm just saying, maybe preconceived ideas is better to say than a bias.

Martha: Yeah. I don't think it would be bias.

It can be concluded that the teachers did not fully grasp what funds of knowledge are or how they could be used beneficially in the classroom. Joan argued that funds of knowledge could perpetuate bias but after discussion with her colleagues, the term bias was changed to expectation. They all agreed that expectations would be set based on categories such as "family occupation." Both Martha and Velma agreed that expectations and biases are not the same. Later in the discussion, we revisited this idea and the teachers agreed that by truly getting to know each student, any bias or preconceived expectation would be eliminated. However, the teachers failed to recognize the many benefits of funds of knowledge and how they can be used in the classroom as vehicles of learning. Research shows that funds of knowledge have many positive implications in the classroom such as positive self-esteem and meaningful learning (Tracey & Morrow, 2012, p. 125).

Ironically however, in order to include culture in the classroom, the teachers confirmed that getting to know the students is most important so that they are able to plan instruction that is relevant and relatable. The teachers also agreed that culture is taught and included when applicable. Specific examples included using multicultural books, Black History Month, asking students about their specific culture and holidays and having them share that with their peers, requiring students to take Spanish in school, teaching the history of their community, and teaching about acceptance and diversity. They stressed that whenever culture comes up in conversation they teach it or when they can align it to the curriculum. The teachers also stressed that they try to make learning relevant to the students by doing things such as changing the names or the scenarios in math word problems to the lived experiences of their students. Cherie stated that she allows students to write their Back to School Night letters in Spanish and uses her basic understanding of the language to say things in Spanish in the classroom. Martha discussed that in her old school they had "Ethnic Day" which was a celebration of the many ethnicities in her school where students brought in food to share with their peers. However, in this current district, there are no such activities.

Race and Teaching: It Goes Both Ways

Being a fellow, white, female teacher, I feel it is important to understand both sides of the story. Implementing a culturally sustaining classroom requires a lot of time, education, and a great deal of self-reflection. Therefore, while it is important to support a culturally sustaining classroom, it is also important to look at the many components that surround this pedagogy from the perspective of white, female teachers.

One of the most obvious components is race. During the very first recorded discussion, I asked the teachers if race, ethnicity and/or culture affected teaching. All of the teachers almost unanimously replied yes. While the teachers assured me that they do everything they can to get to know their students as individuals, open themselves up so that their students get to know them as well, and adapt their teaching style to fit the needs of the students every year, they couldn't deny that being a different race or culture from their students affected instruction. The teachers agreed that there was an obvious disparity between their culture and the culture of their students and it would be impossible not to visually see these differences.

At the same time, one could argue that race and teaching is a two-way street. While these four teachers made attempts to be culturally sensitive and teach about diversity, they discussed that sometimes they felt that this respect was not reciprocated. The transcript below was from our meeting on October 2, 2019.

Joan: Okay, so I grew up in a small town. I don't think I had any African Americans at all in my entire school career, nothing. I lived in a community that was upper middle class. I think the expectation for us was that we went home to two-parent households, we were financially stable, we had parents who stayed home and had dinner with us, and didn't have to go to work at night, talk to us about our school day, knew who our friends were, knew our friends' parents, and we got good grades because they were involved in our academics and we were involved in afterschool clubs. We didn't get into trouble. That was the expectation for us. And I think through no fault of their own, my teachers just expected that because of the environment they were teaching in, the culture that we were living in, the town, that's the way it was. I don't teach in that community. I teach in an entirely different community. I teach in a community where the majority of my population is ethnic in some way, you know, diverse. I teach in a community that is low socioeconomic status. I teach in a community where a lot of my parents are going to work at night and sleeping during the day and are not involved in my kids, my students' education and I don't think that through any fault of our own, we sometimes fall into

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those stereotypical, 'well you know the parents aren't home, we're probably not going to get this signed, we're never going to get this homework back,' because it's like a routine or set pattern of behavior. And I don't think it's because we set out to be that way. I think it's what has happened in the environment and the culture that we teach in on a routine basis and so the expectation kind of is for a repeated cycle of patterned behavior.

Velma: Right. If we were teaching in Cherry Hill and you knew that it was mom and dad and he happened to maybe be a physician or owned business, and you know, just different than what we have.

Danielle: So do you do anything different because of where you teach?

Joan: Do I teach them differently? No. My expectation doesn't change. I don't teach them differently. I forget who said it but one of my favorite quotes is if you lower the bar, they will reach it every single time. I don't change my expectations. I may vary the way I present the information to them. I vary the way they can present their retention of the information to me.

Velma: I think also too in changing how they present showing what they've learned because you may have to work harder with them in the classroom because it's not getting done at home. You have to make adjustments and time in your day.

Joan: When you do your lyrics project. The way you do your song lyrics project. They can do it home. They can email it to you. We print it out here for them if they need to. We make it so that the project is approachable for all of the situations that our kids are in. You don't change the expectation for them but just the way that they achieve that expectation because of the environments that they're in.

Danielle: So the original question was does race, ethnicity or culture affect teaching? Do you think it affects teaching? Do you think it affects your teaching specifically?

Cherie: I think race could affect teaching in certain situations. Like I know, because of the backgrounds that my kids come from, I know there is not a lot of support for a lot of them and getting to know them in the beginning of the year, that's part of what I learn. What's the support like at home? I don't send home a lot of homework because it ends up being a lot of my kids don't get support at home. I don't have projects they have to do at home and bring in. They always get an opportunity to do it at school because there's not the support at home. In a lot of these kids' lives, it's just the

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area that we're in. I come from the same background as Joan. My default is to go, well mom and dad are home to help you. What do you mean you're not doing it? Like what do you mean nobody is there? What do you mean you woke yourself up this morning? Like that boggles my mind. My dad watered down my juice for me until high school! That's where I'm coming from. That's my default, that there is somebody there to take care of you, that your culture is similar to mine even though I know it isn't but like, that's another middle-class white family. And you know that's different."

Danielle: Do you think your students perceive you differently as far as culture?

Martha: Um, I don't think so in this district. First of all, I don't think everybody in this district is socio-low income.

Danielle: There's a big mix. That's what makes it so difficult because there is such a mix.

Martha: So of course they have to perceive me differently. I don't look like their mother. So in that case, yes, some of them. You know, I don't perceive me differently. I don't perceive them differently. A kid is a kid. I'm also not changing what I expect or whatever just because they're a different culture. I still expect respect. I still expect work to be done. I expect quality in their work and I give them the same. But I think you'd be lying if you said... Now by the time they get to this grade level, in fourth grade, they may be used to seeing, they may be used to this by now because the majority of our teachers are all women, a majority of our teachers are white.

Velma: That's a good question. To be honest, sometimes I wonder. I do wonder.

Danielle: I wonder too, how they see us.

Cherie: I've never had issues with it.

Danielle: Me either. Knock on wood.

Joan: Oh, there have been plenty of times. And I would not say in this grade level, in the elementary. But in middle school, a million times I was called a racist. That's the go to. I would say unfortunately in the past, that's the go to, is that you're a racist. If they perceive something as unfair to them, then you're just a racist.

You don't like me because I'm black. You don't like me because I'm this. He got a different consequence because he's black.

Danielle: Has that ever happened to either of you?

Cherie: It has in the middle school setting.

Joan: And I will say I've had it happen from the students and I've had it happen from their parents.

Cherie: I've definitely had from the parents.

Danielle: I'm just curious now. How did you respond to that?

Cherie: I let administration handle it.

Joan: I don't. I don't respond to that and not only do I let administrator handle it, I do not put any credence into that whatsoever. None. Absolutely not. Because when you acknowledge that you give that energy, and it's ridiculous. It's not true, it's never going to be true. So when I am in a situation where that kind of delicate subject is thrown around, I stick to the issues. I stick to what is documented. I stick to what is protocol. I stick to what is routine and I don't even give that an acknowledgement.

Martha: I had something curious happen a couple of weeks ago. I had a student that I thought was a very good student, very seemingly smart, only knew him a week or two, and he got in some pretty good trouble a few times, just as far as respecting the rules in the cafeteria and respecting the rules in the classroom. It didn't involve me directly; it involved other adults that were in charge. So I spoke to the child's teacher from last year, trying to get a little insight because I'm seeing two different things and I was told that that child had a history of disrespecting women.

Danielle: Really!

Martha: And it might be cultural.

Joan: Oh, he might come from a household where women are not necessarily…

Cherie: And I've had that issue in the past because of the culture of the family, I didn't think that would be the case.

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Martha: You know how many conversations we have about using the computers and following the directions of the teacher. The parent has to sign the agreement. The child has to sign the agreement. We are not having those computers on our desk for ten minutes and there were several glitches that me and another teacher were trying to iron out. Meanwhile this child goes and gets on the internet and starts looking up things they were not supposed to be. We just had this whole discussion. We talked about the agreements, the contracts that were signed. While we are trying to put out these other fires, he's going to go ahead and do something he wants to do and when he was called on it by the other person, he was laughing like it was a joke.

Joan: Because he didn't necessarily respect the fact that she was a woman telling him no. Got it.

Martha: And it happened with somebody in the lunchroom as well.

Danielle: Wow. So then, how did you or her or the person respond?

Martha: Well she spoke to him about it and then I followed up saying I expect the same level of respect. And the rules are for everybody and not just for you and these are my expectations and so far so good, but we'll see.

Because their upbringing was substantially different than the students they teach today, the teachers admitted that sometimes it is difficult to understand their students lived experiences and/or struggles. Cherie said it best, "what do you mean you woke yourself up today? Like that boggles my mind. My dad watered down my juice for me until high school!" (discussion transcription, October 2, 2019) However, the teachers insisted that they did not change instruction but instead made learning accessible and "approachable for all of the situations that our kids are in" (Joan, transcription, October 2, 2019).

Both Joan and Martha have been in the district for many years and have taught multiple generations from the same family. Because of this, they discussed a recurring pattern in the community that they have seen through the generations. Joan explained that

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this routine cycle sometimes allows them to make assumptions about certain students or families based on family members they have taught previously. In this way, they approach some of their students using a deficit mentality, which is explained further below.

However, it is interesting to consider the teachers' side of the story as well. Teachers are required to treat everyone the same way and hold students accountable in the same regard no matter what their race is. Expectations should be the same for all students, which these four teachers repeatedly stated. However, in the excerpt above, from our meeting on October 2, 2019, the incidents shared by Joan and Martha prove that in doing so, the teachers received backlash or disrespect for upholding school rules. While they try to be culturally sensitive, the teachers agreed that everyone must also "meet in the middle" as Joan stated in the very beginning of the meeting, "I think it's a fine line between being accepting of someone else's culture and being neglectful of your own" (October 2, 2019).

Another challenge in teaching is using and incorporating the schema of all of the students in the classroom. This is especially challenging when the student population is very diverse. After a heated discussion about standardized testing and the obvious achievement gap that exists in schools today, the teachers reluctantly admitted that their white students were the ones who performed better on standardized testing and brought more schema with them to school. However, when discussing this achievement gap, the teachers were adamant that this was due to parental involvement rather than race or culture.

The teachers were asked to rate the following statement on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being "Strongly Agree" and 5 being "Disagree Strongly:" The gap in achievement among students of different races is about poverty, not race." Velma, Joan, and Martha rated this statement as a 2, between "Agree Strongly" and "Neither Agree nor Disagree." Velma wrote, "In the area that I teach, there are people of many different races on free and reduced lunch. It's not about race, it's about income - who is home to assist them?" Joan replied, "When your parents/guardians have grown up struggling or without many opportunities to be exposed to things, they unfortunately continue the cycle." Martha added, "It can be because of poverty but parenting is the most important factor." Cherie was indifferent about this statement, rating it a 3 for "Neither Agree or Disagree." However, she did write, "I think both factors contribute to the gap we see in achievement."

I used Joan's own children as an example to put this into perspective. This is an excerpt from our meeting on November 5, 2019.

Danielle:	But let me play devil's advocate for a second. Your kids are lucky. They get to do karate, they get to go to Storybook Land, go to museums, parks, and everything else. And I think stereotypically if we're talking about race, what race gets to do more of those experiences?
Martha:	But that has to do with the family!
Danielle:	I agree but didn't we say that's a part of culture?
Joan:	My kids get to go to karate and do Storybook Land because I work my butt off and because I was brought up in a culture where that was important.
Danielle:	And I think most white parents, the majority, provide those experiences for their kids. And I'm not saying all of them, because we know that's not the case, but the majority speaking, who brings

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more background knowledge to the table whenever you're reading anything in your classroom?

Joan: But that's not me. That is not a culturally sensitive thing. That is a parent, taking control of parenting or not taking control of parenting. Listen, you all met Steve. He comes from that culture. He lives across the highway. We bought his eighth-grade graduation outfit for him. He had nothing. Absolutely nothing. He still works, he goes to school full time, he works full time, he sends money to his mother, and had none of those cultural experiences. He came to the table with a very limited schema. That kid and his mom busted their butts and she said to him, school is important.

Danielle: But do you think that's the norm?

Joan: I don't have control over what's the norm.

Danielle: I know you don't. But I'm just saying, do you think that's the norm? And how does that affect society?

Martha: It affects education, it affects the classroom, it affects the teachers, it affects society. It affects everyone. It's a trickle-down thing.

Joan: As an educator you can only do so much. I can put the Spanish words up on the wall. I can say Feliz Navidad and Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukkah and Shabbat Shalom, and I can say all of those things, and bring your Diwali cakes, and I can do all that, but when you leave my culturally sensitive, nurturing environment, I don't have control over anything else. So I don't know that I necessary perpetuate that, I can only deal with what I'm given.

Velma: Then you have the bias of students' families that say I don't need to learn this.

Cherie: Or learn anything. Or your teacher is a woman so you don't need to listen to her.

Joan: We had a parent last year who flat out said, 'I'm teaching my children to resist white power!' What is that? I can be as culturally sustaining as I can but...

Cherie: It goes both ways.

The teachers agreed that there is no denying that race affects teaching. When defining culture and addressing the obvious achievement gap in school, the impacts of home life and parental involvement are undeniably a huge factor in the success of the child. Joan insisted that her children bring more schema to the table because she works really hard. The teachers also agreed that society creates a norm and unfortunately, teachers can only control what happens in their classroom. I can attest to the fact that Martha, Joan, Cherie, and Velma try very hard to incorporate various schemas and lived experiences in the classroom. However, in situations where students or parents call their white teachers racist because they were not following the rules, or when parents teach their child to "resist white power," the question then becomes, where is the middle ground? Teachers can be culturally sustaining, but "it goes both ways" (Cherie, discussion transcription, November 5, 2019).

Deficit Mentality

According to Harry and Klingner (2007) it is commonplace for educators to refer to students as having "learning needs or challenges." In this way, students are stigmatized with labels which causes teachers to focus on students' weaknesses or shortcomings rather than celebrate their strengths and capabilities. This is referred to as a deficit mentality. Many times this deficit mentality is associated with race and many teachers do not realize that they approach students in this way (Harry & Klingner, 2007). The teachers in this case study demonstrated a deficit mentality on multiple occasions without even realizing it.

When the teachers described their upbringings, they described childhoods that were significantly different than the experiences of their students today. The teachers

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were quick to point out the challenges that their students face on a regular basis. During our very first conversation Joan stated,

> I teach in a community where the majority of my population is ethnic in some way, you know, diverse. I teach in a community that is low socioeconomic status. I teach in a community where a lot of my parents are going to work at night and sleeping during the day and are not involved in my kids, my students' education (Joan, discussion transcription, October 2, 2019).

During that meeting, the teachers could agree that their students came from home lives that were less than perfect. Due to the challenges that their students face and what the teachers see on a daily basis, the expectations are inadvertently set by the teachers. Using Joan's own words, "we sometimes fall into those stereotypical, 'well you know the parents aren't home, we're probably not going to get this signed, we're never going to get this homework back,' because it's like a routine or set pattern of behavior" (Joan, discussion transcription, October 2, 2019). These stereotypes or assumptions perpetuate the deficit mentality.

We discussed Paris' characteristics of a culturally sustaining educator. One characteristic stood out in particular when discussing deficits. The specific characteristic was: "An understanding of the ways deficit approaches have historically and continue to perpetuate racialized inequalities, and an understanding of asset approaches and how to curricularize them" (Paris, 2017). In previous conversations, the teachers insisted multiple times that they treat all students the same way, holding them to the same expectations, because "everyone is equal on my page" (Martha discussion transcription, October 10, 2019) and no matter what the child's race is "I don't change my expectation"

(Joan, discussion transcription, October 10, 2019). However, in this excerpt from our discussion on November 5, 2019, it becomes apparent that the teachers may in fact change their expectations based on what Joan referred to as "a routine or set pattern of behavior" that they have seen in the community year after year or through generations of the same families. To protect the confidentiality of this family, pseudonyms were used.

Velma:	So you're basically saying that we are culturally sustaining educators?
Danielle:	I want you to be! I hope that you are but not many people are. I'm not one, I don't think. I mean I'm still learning how to be one. Paris is saying that these five characteristics are those...
Joan:	That culturally sustaining educators must possess all of these five things.
Danielle:	So let me ask you, do you have an understanding that deficit approaches create inequalities?
Martha:	Yes. Just because we understand it, doesn't mean we can mop it up.
Danielle:	I mean, I agree with you. But what examples can you give that deficit approaches exist? What are we doing?
Cherie:	I'm thinking, what deficits are associated with different races and cultures?
Joan:	What about the Smith's? So here's a family, that we all knew that if we got one of the girls, we were going to get a smart version, if we had one of the boys, they were going to be, sorry but they were going to be filthy and covered in lice because that is what perpetuated through their family and their culture. Their father was the same way. Their father still couldn't read. He still goes to the high school and has the guidance counselor read his mail to him every day. But what I'm saying is that like, while I have that, hopefully, I'm working toward having that cultural understanding, we kind of also have the understanding that we knew, in that instance, nurture couldn't outdo nature and we were getting what we were getting.

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Danielle:	So getting what you're getting, how does that affect your teaching with that specific family? Did it change the way that you taught him or what you expected of him?
Joan:	Yes because I knew there was a cap. I wasn't going to get a rocket scientist out of that house. I knew that. I was dealing with parents with intellectual disabilities. I was dealing with older siblings with intellectual disabilities. I knew there was a cap. So in that instance, I immediately knew I'd have to change my approach to deliver to my instruction. I still had an expectation for him that I thought was reasonable for him but it was nowhere near the expectation was for my other students.
Danielle:	I'm not familiar with the family. Are they all classified?
Joan:	No. I don't think Sally was classified. She was low but never classified.
Danielle:	So did you modify anything for them, even if they weren't classified?
Joan.	Absolutely. At that point, we kind of knew coming in, they would need life skills. Bob loved to mow the lawn. So we used to let him mow the lawn. He mows the lawn at the high school now. We knew that was going to be the direction that they were going to head toward and so we kind threw all of our eggs in that basket rather than, hey can you guys do long division, basket.
Danielle:	So do you think that's wrong?
Joan:	No, I think actually we did the right thing by them because it wasn't a matter of us perpetuating it, it was a matter of we understood what we were getting with him walking through the door. We started there and if we had seen some kind of, if we saw a lightbulb go off, we fostered that and said maybe we can do some more. There's a point where you have to go okay, how much educational benefit are you getting out of your day by us trying to shove the multiplicative inverse or whatever it is down your throat? I don't think that makes me culturally insensitive.
Danielle:	But see in my mind, by thinking that, you're either pushing them through or that whole idea of being a product of your environment, like with that family, the same cycle keeps happening and happening... here.
Joan:	But part of it too is physical neuropathy.

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Danielle: I think that it's an extreme case, like this family.

Velma: I think sometimes it gives you a baseline. Does that mean I stay at that baseline? Does that mean that I don't try to move them up more? Give them more to work with? No. I do what I can to see how far I can push them.

Martha: Listen, someone's got to cut the heads off the fishes in society. It's just the way it is. You can try all that you want and you can have these expectations but to me that's a pretty big deficit right there, that's more of a deficit than being some kind of race.

Joan: I agree 100%.

Danielle: I think that's an extreme case. If we were just talking about your African American students or think about your ELL population. I read an article this morning. It was saying how one of the ways these types of educators enact this pedagogy is for example, for the Spanish speakers in their classroom, they put Spanish words up around the room so you're appreciating their culture and showing them their culture is important in today's society and the other kids can also pick up on those words. Or allowing them to write some of their work in their native language and I don't know if I necessarily agree with that but...

Joan: Okay I am going to play devil's advocate. When they go for a job interview, and let's say we are all rockstar teachers, and they move through our school district, and they graduate, and they graduate high school, and they're ready to go on to a job interview, and they walk into that job interview, what do you think the chances are that the person interviewing them is going to say 'okay, I would like you to write a portion of your job application in Spanish and I would like you to write the rest of the portion in English.' That is not a reality. So yes, we can appreciate culture. We should appreciate culture. We can appreciate diversity. We should appreciate diversity. However, there are specific rules for society that just are that way. And who makes the rules for society? Society does. We make the rules for ourselves as to what is successful, not successful, most productive, not productive. Exactly what Martha said, somebody's got to cut the heads off the fishes and here's the thing, you can say you're culturally sensitive and all that other stuff, when someone walks into a job interview and their name is Bill and someone walks into a job interview and their name has four capital letters, an apostrophe, and a dash in it, there's a difference there. And I'm approaching a point where I

want to be culturally sensitive, and I want to raise my own children and my students to appreciate others' differences but at the same time, you've got to meet me in the middle of the road.

Cherie: Where do we stop?

Joan: You can't name your kid like some bizarre off the wall name I can't even pronounce and then get upset with me and say I'm culturally insensitive when I can't pronounce the name. So there is something to be said about uniqueness and we all have our own individual lives, personalities, and tendencies, and all those things, but there also is something to be said for, at some point, in order to be successful in society, you need to conform to the norm a little bit or recognize where conforming to the norm would get you more success and where you don't necessarily have to do that. There's a time and place for all of that stuff.

It is interesting to note that the teachers recognized that deficit approaches exist and that these approaches do create inequalities. However, the teachers also felt that there was no way to remediate this as "inequalities exist everywhere" (Martha, discussion transcription, October 17, 2019).

In the example of the Smith family, Joan was very quick to point out all of the "deficits" or negative qualities of the family members. In fact, the only positive quality mentioned was that the girls in the family were smart. In addition to this, the teachers did not see the relationship between the deficit mentality and race. Joan explained it by saying "But part of it too is physical neuropathy" (Joan, discussion transcription, November 5, 2019). I tried to redirect the conversation away from this particular family so the teachers could see how the deficit mentality is prevalent in schools today. However, the overall response was "someone's got to cut the heads off the fishes" (Martha, discussion transcription, November 5, 2019). By using this mentality, teachers may be preparing students for menial jobs rather than pushing them to their highest potential. This perpetuates what Lisa Delpit (2006) described as the culture of power in

which "the rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power" (p. 25).

Challenges for Implementation of CSP

In exploring the challenges that the participants perceived relating to recognizing culture and responding to cultural differences in the classroom, four major themes emerged during data analysis: (a) an inability to appease everyone, (b) limited funding and time, (c) standardized testing, and (d) top-down helplessness.

Inability to appease everyone. One of the biggest concerns that these teachers expressed was their inability to appease everyone. While they believe that they treat everyone equally, they agreed that social inequality exists everywhere and they can only control what happens in their classroom. While they recognize that inequalities exist, Martha summed up their thinking by saying, "Just because we understand it, doesn't mean we can mop it up" (November 5, 2019). I also asked the teachers if they believed that the history we taught in school perpetuated stereotypes which would ultimately contribute to the inequalities that occur in society. To put her thoughts into perspective, Joan discussed her two children and how they attend a primarily white school district and how their teachers "do the best that they can." This is an excerpt from our conversation on October 11, 2019.

Joan:	Now mind you, my kids go to a district where I don't know if they have any students of color in their class. So those teachers are teaching, trying to be as culturally diverse as they can, and they may have a classroom full of white faces looking back at them and they're still making their best effort to be as culturally sensitive and diverse as they can because they want to impart the knowledge and raise respectful human beings.
Danielle:	But when they're learning about the other cultures, especially if there is no one in that classroom that's that culture, do you think

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that these predominantly white teachers, male or female, are teaching stereotypes or things that might not necessarily... like the way we perceive African American history, let's just say, being white, is that perceived by African Americans the same way?

Joan: Look it, history is history.

Martha: We don't know.

Danielle: But why don't we know?

Martha: Because you can't know that unless you live it. I can't tell you that I am giving everybody the ethnic experience that they deserve whether it's African American or Asian or Indian or whatever because guess what, I'm not.

Velma: Right.

Martha: Everybody can say I'm not prejudiced, I'm not prejudiced, but everybody has some kind of prejudice. Prejudice means to prejudge. Everybody has something in their brain, like or not, you have it.

Joan: Diverse has so many different things. I mean a diverse classroom is students of different ethnic backgrounds, a diverse classroom is students of different learning styles, a diverse classroom is students of classified and unclassified, a diverse classroom is boys and girls, a diverse classroom is a male teacher or a female teacher. A diverse classroom comes in many different shapes and forms. So, all of those things happen naturally in a culture because the classroom is its own culture.

Martha: Right.

Joan: So all of those things happen naturally within the classroom.

Martha: But if you're asking us, and I agree with you 1000% but if you're asking, we have no way of knowing that.

Cherie: I try my best to be as unbiased as possible.

Martha: I do too.

Cherie: I can teach from a white female perspective because I'm a white female. I can try to understand a different perspective and do my best and do research but I have what I have and that's the

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experience I can teach from. I personally try to do my best to not teach from a stereotypical or just teach the stereotypes.

Martha: But as Joan said, the culture is different. It's everything. You can only give it your best shot but there's always going to be someone somewhere that's going to have a different mindset and they'll take offense to something.

Joan: Right. Exactly.

Martha: You do the best you can.

In the same regard, what one person believes is a stereotype may not be the same to another. The teachers all agreed because culture is so complex, its many components can mean different things to different people and therefore, some, especially students, struggle to verbalize their idea of culture. This makes it a challenge to fully incorporate culture in the classroom. As the guidance counselor, Velma expressed concerns that when she tries to get to know the students and she asks them about their culture or ethnicity, they struggle to respond to her. "I ask our kids, you know, what is your ethnic background and they go, what do you mean?" (Velma, discussion transcription, October 11, 2019) The other teachers agreed and could relate to this struggle. The teachers agreed that it would take a lot of work to incorporate every single culture into the classroom, especially considering the multiple components of culture that they discussed. If students struggle to define their culture, "then why should we go through the trying to be culturally sensitive when they don't even know what their culture or ethnic culture is?" (Cherie, discussion transcription, October 11, 2019)

Funding and time. The teachers also decided that incorporating everyone's culture is challenging for two reasons. The first one is little funding. When discussing the

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inequalities that exist in schools, Joan and Velma were quick to mention funding. Joan replied:

> What inequalities exist? What resources we have because the top is taking the money and putting it in their own pockets. So that's an inequality right there. The richer feeding off themselves and we are left to deal with what's left. That's an inequality that we have no control over (Joan, discussion transcription, October 17, 2019).

Velma agreed and mentioned how the politicians are the ones who make the decisions about funding. "Even the politicians from the top, hearing from, so they say, from industry, what industry is looking for in students, and what they're pushing down either funding or not funding" (Velma, discussion transcription October 17, 2019). She went on to discuss how limited funding presents immense challenges for teachers when carrying out their curriculum, let alone providing multicultural materials. She stated:

> Right, which is like science and your stem, and that's coming from industry but yet the school district, when you sit in third grade and they're asked to do a condensation experiment, there's no supplies! Who's going to take the whole class down to microwave water? I looked at the teacher and said 'you don't have any supplies' and she says 'we don't but we're expected to do this.' Someone says this is the curriculum but where's the rest of it? (Velma, discussion transcription, October 17, 2019).

With limited funds to purchase multicultural texts that do not perpetuate stereotypes, money is needed. In addition, the teachers agreed that it is ironic that the

schools who do have the means to provide the most materials, including multicultural texts, are usually the schools with the least diversity.

The second reason that incorporating everyone's culture into the classroom is difficult is because in a school such as where these teachers teach, there are many different cultures to cover due to the apparent diversity in the district. Joan said, "There is no way to cover every one's schema. There's no way" (Joan, discussion transcription, November 5, 2019). Martha added on, "Everybody's not going to have every experience in the world" (Martha, discussion transcription, November 5, 2019). Therefore, the teachers confirmed that while they tried their best to cover all of their students' cultures, to fill in the achievement gaps, and adhere to the curriculum, they could only do just that: try their best.

Another concern was time. While all the teachers placed a major emphasis on getting to know their students, Cherie firmly stated that the first couple of weeks of school are not enough to do that, especially with large class sizes.

So, one of the first things is how can you address all of the relevant cultures in the classroom between testing, pacing charts, data collection, etc. The first week isn't enough to get to know your kids and their cultures or where they're coming from. It takes a long time so then like after that first week you're expected to start, at least in our district, to collect data and actually start teaching stuff because you have an entire curriculum to get through. How can I address all of these cultures and all these different things if I have all of these other things I have to do? I can't. So I need a lot more time to spend getting to know students and researching their cultures (Cherie, discussion transcription, October 11, 2019).

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However, this was complicated further by their responses to one of the statements on the survey adapted from Teaching Tolerance (2019): "With all the pressures to raise student achievement, finding and using examples for the cultural, historic and everyday lived experiences of my students takes away (or could take away) valuable time from teaching and learning what matters most" (Teaching Tolerance, 2019). Both Joan and Velma rated this statement a 2, between "Agree Strongly" and "Neither Agree or Disagree." Joan responded, " I HATE teaching for a test score. A classroom is more engaging, fun, inclusive and supportive when a teacher is relaxed enough to enjoy her job of teaching." Velma replied, "There are not enough hours in the day and time spent doing this could be better spent working with students who need additional help." On the other end, Martha rated this statement a 4, between "Neither Agree nor Disagree" and "Disagree Strongly," simply stating, "These items can be combined." Cherie rated it as a 5 for "Disagree Strongly" and replied, "Raising achievement is not what matters most for me. My goal is to help students become well rounded while accomplishing what administration requires me to do/teach."

Because of the pressure placed on teachers to cover a wide curriculum, sometimes these "getting to know you" activities are pushed aside so more time can be spent on following the pacing charts and producing trackable data. Based on their discussion and their responses on the survey, it is clear that these teachers looked at incorporating culture and culturally sustaining pedagogy as something extra for them to do rather than something that could align with what they are already doing in the classroom.

Standardized testing. This leads into another obvious challenge: standardized testing. Standardized testing was one of the inequalities that was addressed by the

teachers in the discussion group. However, the teachers agreed that unfortunately, all they can do is prepare their students, in the best way they know how, to take the test. Furthermore, their hands are tied as they must follow the state mandated regulations.

The teachers agreed that there is a cultural bias in standardized testing. Reluctantly, they confessed that it was obvious that generally speaking, overall, their white students were the ones to achieve higher scores on these tests as they were stereotypically the ones who had the greatest schema on the subject matter. However, they also agreed that it would be impossible to appease everyone and that a measurable standard had to exist in school and in society. They agreed that standardized testing has tried to become multicultural as Martha stated, "I think they work real hard these days to not be economically biased, and racially biased" (Martha, discussion transcription, October 17, 2019).   Even so, they agreed that the achievement gap is apparent because everyone is different, with different lived experiences.

Furthermore, through a heated discussion, the teachers confessed that the school system creates a "box" that students are required to fit into, measured by standardized tests and when students don't fit into this box, teachers are quick to refer them to the Child Study Team. To explain this, Cherie stated,

> Education as a whole, we've got this box. But does education and we, as the people that go enforce that, if you will, do we expect them to fit in a certain box? Is that box fair? We have all of these kids that we know don't fit into this box but aren't we still trying to fit them in the box? (Cherie, discussion transcription, October 17, 2019)

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With a special education background, Joan agreed and noticed how they see this on a daily basis in school:

The standardized test marginalizes the learner because they expect the learner to fit into a specific box. We know because we see it every day that the majority of learners come with all of these things you're talking about, these inequalities, these different cultural beliefs, these different home lives, they don't fit into that marginalized box (Joan, discussion transcription, October 17, 2019).

Velma added,

That's the box of education, and historically what education has been, and we're still pushing kids into that even though that's not the purpose of education anymore, like schools are built so you can be a factory worker (Velma, discussion transcription, October 17, 2019).

However, the teachers felt defeated in trying to fight the "box" as they must follow the rules and carry out the standards that come from the top.

Top-down helplessness. Another inequality they mentioned was having to follow a strict curriculum and/or pacing guide that is given to them by their district. As stated earlier, when discussing how they incorporate culture in the classroom, they stated they do it as often as possible, when it applies to what they're teaching. Is it the fault of the teachers if that is not enough when they are carrying out the state mandated curriculum? If the curriculum favors white, middle-class ideals, is it the teachers' fault when they are required to implement it? As Martha, stated, "It's a trickle-down effect" (Martha, discussion transcription, November 5, 2019).

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What we do, and how we do it, comes from the top. It's top down because everything we're doing now, all the stuff that we're doing in our schools is because of federal funds and so because we take the federal funds, we have to do things the way that somebody else is telling us to do it. I don't think it's right (Velma, discussion transcription, October 10, 2019).

From that perspective, the teachers are at the bottom of the totem pole, carrying out the demands set forth by those at the top. "However, you want to talk about an inequality, while you're talking about 80% of teachers are white female, the people telling us white, teacher females what to do are old, white men. So perhaps the cultural bias doesn't come with the teacher, perhaps the cultural bias comes with the people who tell the teacher what to do (Joan, discussion transcription, October 17, 2019). These "old, white men" as Cherie pointed out, "have no experience in education" (Cherie, discussion transcription, October 17, 2019).

On November 5, 2019, we continued to discuss Paris' characteristics of a culturally sustaining educator. As we unpacked the characteristics and discussed inequalities in schools, we began to discuss how many of these inequalities trickle down from the top. Below is an excerpt from our conversation that day.

Danielle: Someone said something about the system, like we do what we're told. How it comes from the top. So if we think about what's coming from the top, what inequalities exist?

Joan: What inequalities exist? What resources we have because the top is taking the money and putting it in their own pockets. So that's an inequality right there. The richer feeding off themselves and we are left to deal with what's left. That's an inequality that we have no control over.

Velma:	Even the politicians from the top, hearing from, so they say, from industry, what industry is looking for in students, and what they're pushing down either funding or not funding.
Martha:	I was thinking more along the lines of curriculum, from top down. For example, the top is telling us what curriculum to teach.
Velma:	Right which is like science and your stem! That's coming from industry but yet the school district, when you sit in third grade, and they're asked to do a condensation experiment, there's no supplies! Who's going to take the whole class down to microwave water? I looked at the teacher and said 'you don't have any supplies' and she says 'we don't but we're expected to do this.' Someone says this is the curriculum but where's the rest of it?
Martha:	Right but I'm talking about what we're told to teach. I'm not disagreeing with you, I totally agree, but if we're told we have to teach this, somebody else has decided that that's what's important.

The teachers also mentioned how for many years, even prior to the start of their careers, the expectations for schooling were always the same: students came to school, absorbed the information the teacher lectured to them, and then took a test to demonstrate their knowledge. "And that's higher up. So we, as the people below, have to kind of bend over backwards because that's been our policy as a country for so long" (Cherie, discussion transcription, October 11, 2019).

I introduced Freire's idea of banking education vs liberation education. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freire distinguishes between banking education and what is known as problem posing or liberation education. In banking education, the teacher is seen as a being that has a wealth of knowledge. This wealth of knowledge is shared with the students as they passively listen and accept this knowledge without question. In contrast, liberation education views teachers and students as equals, both having important and relevant information to share as the educational context is actively

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constructed by each participant. The key to liberation education is active engagement whether that be in reflection, writing, or questioning.

The teachers agreed that while their classroom was not a strict example of banking education, they used a mixture of both types. "I think it is important to establish from day one that you are in charge of the classroom but we all work as a team (Joan, discussion transcription, October 2, 2019). However, how they run their classroom is heavily influenced by their administrator. If their administrator favors a strict classroom structure, they have to adhere to these guidelines in order to earn a satisfactory score at the end of the year.

In conclusion, the teachers' argument was that they are simply doing what they are told: following the vast curriculum and strict pacing guides, teaching strategies to help students perform well on standardized tests, and keeping up to date with the most recent strategies and pedagogy, all the while trying to do what's best for the children. However, who really decides what's best? It is needless to say that when looking at it from this perspective, these teachers, and many throughout the country, are stuck between a rock and a hard place. When so much emphasis is placed on observations and an SGP, based on test scores, the threat of being rated as an ineffective teacher at the end of the year, places a huge stress on teachers. I personally can relate to this struggle. Therefore, it is not outlandish to consider this difficult situation from their perspective, which leads to their defensiveness on the topic.

Defensiveness

Throughout the duration of the audio recorded discussions, there was a common theme that I noticed surrounding the topics discussed: defensiveness. While these

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teachers had a combined total of 63 years in the profession, experience in multiple schools, and even some recognition or awards, discussing race and culture in the classroom produced some heated discussions.

During an ardent discussion, I asked the teachers how they felt about language and using languages in the classroom. One of the first points Martha brought up was that this is America. While every teacher can be as inclusive and multicultural as possible, at the end of the day, the students need to learn English, need to pass standardized tests, and graduate. She firmly stated, "I teach as if you're an American. Not as if you're anything different" (Martha, discussion transcription, October 10, 2019).

However, the teachers also concluded an interesting point: if they were to travel to another country, they would not have someone translating everything for them and "bending over backwards" to appease them and include their culture. Bluntly stated, when Velma described her experience sending her American son to Russia to attend school she said,

> But yet other countries don't do that. Why have we as the United States and please don't be offended by this, that we are bending over backwards ? My great, great grandparents came over from Poland and they had to learn English. And there was no choice. And there was no second thing in the office or in the hospital. And when Michael went to Russia, I spent hundreds of dollars for a translating company for all of his medical records and his school stuff and certified them. I couldn't just do google translate, it had to be certified that it was translated properly before they would let him in the door (Velma, discussion transcription, October 10. 2019).

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Martha agreed and replied,

And is anybody certifying anybody coming into this country? No. You're in

America. If I'm in France, I would expect myself to be tested in French. I am in

America. I expect to take tests in English (Martha, discussion transcription,

October 10, 2019).

I also introduced Django Paris' characteristics of a culturally sustaining educator.

These characteristics were questioned by the teachers, especially the first one: An

understanding of the systemic nature of racialized and intersectional inequalities and their

own relative privileged or marginalized position within those systems." The teachers

were quick to question their place in society, denying that they were what Paris

determined as "privileged."

Martha:	This is biasedly stating that the educator realizes that they are in a privileged or marginalized position. I think that's a biased statement.
Danielle:	Why?
Martha:	How do you know what kind of position I'm in?
Joan:	I think it means do you recognize that you are marginalized within a position, as the educator, within a position where your school district is primarily African American or are you privileged because your economic background is different than the environment you teach in?
Martha:	No it says a culturally sustaining educator should possess this.
Cherie:	But it does say privileged or marginalized.
Joan:	I think it means exactly what you're saying but do you recognize that you are marginalized within a position where your school district is primarily African American or are you privileged because your economic background is different than the environment that you teach in?

Danielle:	Remember that I told you that 80% of the teaching population is white, middle class female. So does that add another layer?
Velma:	We represent that.
Martha:	So, you're just saying that I should understand that it's white middle class female?
Danielle:	Sure.
Joan:	That I'm in the majority and not the minority?
Danielle:	Correct. So how are we privileged by being white middle-class females?
Martha:	I don't necessarily think I am privileged. At all. I think that's a biased statement.
Cherie:	I feel like that's what it's saying. That we understand.
Martha:	You can understand it. But I don't because I don't agree with it.
Velma:	How does he know what our mode of operation is as an educator? Some of us have been in one district, some of us have been in many districts, some of us have been in many districts throughout various socioeconomic areas.
Martha:	Just because a person is white, also middle class, doesn't mean that they are privileged.
Joan:	I think he just means keep that in mind when you're standing in front of the classroom. I think that's what he's really trying to say. Keep in mind that you are the typical, wherever you're teaching, the typical across the country is white middle-class female.
Martha:	But what if you're teaching in a black upper class or white upper class?
Joan:	No but you specifically. You as a white, middle class, female are in the majority through the country as a teacher, in the profession.
Martha:	But that's not what it says though.
Cherie:	An understanding. To me it's saying there are racial inequalities.
Danielle:	But do you think there's racial inequalities in school?
Martha:	There's racial inequalities everywhere.

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Cherie:	Yeah for sure.
Joan:	There's inequality everywhere.
Velma:	I was just talking to somebody saying that their child tested into some elite school, some special program. So now this child is not in the regular school district so now we got segregation going on.
Danielle:	So why do they get to do that? Do you have to pay to get in?
Velma:	No. You've got to test into that. And the question is how many people know about it.
Danielle:	And who works with their kids that would be able to pass the test to get in there?
Joan:	Inequality is not just racially… it happens everywhere in everything we do because people are people and we have different brains and we have different thoughts and different mindsets and different life experiences and we have different backgrounds and different schema. So, I think the whole thing boils down to yes, okay fine, there are definite inequalities whether it be racial, whether it be gender, whether it be sexual preference but we work very hard to recognize, acknowledge those and not feed or perpetuate those things. Do we do the best we can at it? Absolutely, every single one of us does. Does it mean we cover every single base, every single time? No because I'm not a superhuman.
Cherie:	But we do Joan, but maybe not every teacher in the country does that. Some people just don't care.
Joan:	Correct but I think the majority, especially people in our field, because we care about people in general, are maybe more in tune to being sensitive to things because we don't want to hurt people. I'm not out to come to work and hurt people every single day.
Velma:	And because the large majority of teachers are women, I think women are more compassionate and nurturing in general.
Martha:	But that's a bias.
Velma:	It is but think about it!

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Martha:	But that's what I'm saying! There is way too much emphasis even discussing all of this! What happened to people are people?
Joan:	Just be kind! I think you have to be more purposeful to disregard social awareness than you have to be to incorporate it. You have to make a bigger effort to not be culturally aware and socially sensitive. You're working hard at being a jerk.

Both Martha and Velma were quick to deny their privileged place in society while Cherie and Joan understood Paris'(2017) first characteristic as simply recognizing that they are white, females. However, the overall consensus was teachers do the best that they can to not perpetuate inequalities.

The second characteristic that caused teachers to become defensive was: An understanding that education participates in and often perpetuates such inequalities, though it can also disrupt them" (Paris, 2017). While the teachers all agreed the deficit approaches and inequalities exist, they insisted that they do their best, as "you can't teach everything" and "inequalities exist everywhere." The teachers agreed that at least in their school where they teach currently, they do not perpetuate inequalities because they treat all their students the same regardless of race or culture. This is an excerpt from our discussion on October 17, 2019.

Martha:	But again, this is criticizing because you're saying education perpetuates those inequalities and I don't agree with that.
Danielle:	Okay, let's talk about those inequalities. Do you think there are inequalities in school districts? I'm not just saying this one. In America.
Cherie:	Yes!
Joan:	Of course!
Danielle:	What are they?
Joan:	Financial, racial, gender, all of those.

Velma: What the schools are able to offer students.

Danielle: Why?

Joan: Because we don't live in Norway where education is free and available to everyone.

Danielle: So then is that not true? That our school systems perpetuate inequalities?

Martha: Not by design and not purposeful.

Joan: I'm sure it happens, yes!

Martha: But it happens everywhere and in every job.

Danielle: But that's not the question. The question is do inequalities exist in schools?

Joan: Yes, of course.

Cherie: I think so, yes.

Velma: Yes.

Joan: Yes, because not everything is fair and equal all of the time.

Danielle: I agree.

Martha: Fair is a four-letter word in my house.

Joan: But Fair is not equal. What one person needs is not the same as what one person needs so fair is not necessarily equal.

Martha: And what is racially biased or inequality to one person may not be to another. It depends who you are, where you come from and what bothers you.

Cherie: There's a lot of people who aren't like that though.

Martha: That's life and that's in every aspect and every job and every place in the world. Is there some? Yes. Does education perpetuate it? I don't think so.

The teachers reluctantly agreed that inequalities exist everywhere, both in school and in society. Martha was adamant that the inequalities that exist in school are not purposeful, which relates back to our discussion on how much of what is required in schools comes from the top. Teachers carry out what they are told to do which would explain why Martha believes the inequalities are "not purposeful and not by design."

However, it is also interesting to look at how the teachers' idea of equal shifted during this conversation. Throughout the seven weeks, the word "equal" was thrown around often. The teachers treat everyone equal and students are offered equal opportunities because children are children and everyone is the same no matter what their race or culture is. In this conversation, Joan states: "But fair is not equal. What one person needs is not the same as what one person needs so fair is not necessarily equal" (Joan, discussion transcription, October 17, 2019). In this instance, Joan begins to realize that perhaps not all students are treated the same way, which corresponds to our discussion on the Smith family and how a deficit mentality sometimes alters a teacher's definition of equal.

Looking Within: Why Is It So Hard?

I knew when embarking upon this journey that this study would not be easy. I chose four colleagues whom I admire greatly, who have various backgrounds and strengths, and who I knew would be honest with me. I can attest to their dedication, their creativity, and to the ways that each and every one of them make my school a better place. However, I knew that by participating in this study, I would learn things about them that I didn't know before and that they too, would learn things about themselves that perhaps were new to them also. This type of learning can be difficult, eye opening,

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and for lack of a better word, painful. Therefore, it put me in a profoundly awkward position. However, it also helped me to bring awareness to culturally sustaining pedagogy and begin the dialogue that is so needed in our diverse school district. So the question herein lies: Why is talking about race so hard?

This can best be subjectively explained by Janet E. Helms' (1990) White Racial Identity Model. This model helped me to understand the feelings of these teachers better and quite frankly, also understand myself. It is important to note that the stages are in no way linear and not every person will go through every stage (Helms, 1990). However, as the weeks progressed, it can be concluded that the four teachers in this case study shifted back and forth between the Contact, Disintegration, and Reintegration stage.

Characteristics of the Contact Stage include color blindness while also seeing racial differences. White people in this stage do not demonstrate conscious acts of racism but this position can uncover racist beliefs (Helms, 1990). Before reading Lisa Delpit's seminal piece, *Other People's Children*, I was one of the teachers who professed that I was "colorblind." Because of this, I was not surprised to read their responses to the following statement on the Teaching Tolerance (2019) survey: "I don't think of my students in terms of their race or ethnicity. I am colorblind when it comes to my teaching." Martha wrote, "Children are the same as people. People are people." Joan replied, "I have the same hopes and expectations for all my students, no matter the ethnicity." Cherie responded, "For the most part, I feel I am "color blind" when it comes to my students. I do sometimes think of race and ethnicity when issues arise." Velma wrote, "I don't think about them in terms of race or ethnicity because I am thinking about their knowledge of the subject and whether or not there is support at home."

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While the teachers adamantly assured me that they treat everyone equally, they continue to promote color blindness. A commonality between many of our discussions was that the teachers treat every student the same way regardless of their race. They get to know each child as an individual and teach each child based on his or her needs. However, at the same time, they also discussed how it would be impossible to not visibly notice the racial disparities between themselves and their students and covering everyone's lived experiences would be impossible.

In the Contact Stage, racist beliefs are sometimes uncovered inadvertently which was made apparent as Joan discussed how someone's name could change the outcome of an interview or a person's success in society. She stated,

> When someone walks into a job interview and their name is Bill and someone walks into a job interview and their name has four capital letters, an apostrophe, and a dash in it, there's a difference there. And I'm approaching a point where I want to be culturally sensitive, and I want to raise my own children and my students to appreciate others' differences but at the same time, you've got to meet me in the middle of the road (Joan, discussion transcription, November 5, 2019).

Additionally, when the teachers discussed the Smith family, which was obviously an extreme case based on the family demographics, the term "equality" that was so commonly used, definitely shifted as the teachers discussed how their expectations did in fact change based on the needs of these family members.

In the Disintegration stage, new experiences and information challenge their worldview. At times, this may cause feelings of guilt and shame (Helms, 1990). This study opened up the dialogue on culturally sustaining pedagogy but more specifically on

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topics surrounding the pedagogy such as race. Cherie was a perfect example of this stage. She frequently questioned her instruction, wondering how her race affected her students or how she suppressed the culture of her students in the classroom. She frequently asked the others to rethink or deeply consider how they might do the same, which showed me that she was beginning to take on the responsibility of her actions.

In the Reintegration stage, the white person may realize they do have privileges but it is because they deserve them. This was made apparent by Joan, who when confronted with the idea of providing her own two children with meaningful out of school experiences, were simply the result of her "working her butt off." Both Velma and Martha struggled to identify their "white privilege" as well as they both denied that they were privileged at all.

These teachers, along with myself traveled along this continuum. I noticed that as some teachers moved to a different stage, others remained behind. There was movement back and forth in a non-linear way as we began to develop an anti-racist identity. Not one person in this case study, including myself, ever reached the Autonomy stage which is characterized by a clear understanding of our white racial identity as we pursue social justice (Helms 1990). However, it is my hopes that this study will open up the possibilities for that to occur both in this district and in districts across America. "If we are to successfully educate all of our children, we must work to remove the blinders built of stereotypes, monocultural instructional methodologies, ignorance, social distance, biased research, and racism. We must work to destroy those blinders so that it is possible to really see, to really know the students we must teach" (Lisa Delpit, 2006, p. 183).

Post Question Results

The results of the post questions showed that the teachers strengthened their knowledge of culturally sustaining pedagogy as well as saw the value of incorporating it in their classroom. When asked to again share their idea of what culturally sustaining pedagogy meant to them, they had more specific and concise answers. Martha wrote "Schools should continue to learn about, study, and celebrate all cultures in the classroom." Joan replied, "It means that a teacher is purposeful in their teaching so that lessons are meaningful, relatable, and culturally diverse and sensitive." Velma's response was, "This means understanding the culture of your students and yourself and being mindful that you are not teaching solely from your cultural perspective. We need to be mindful of our students' cultural backgrounds." Cherie answered, "The idea of incorporating and considering multiple/all cultures in my classroom. This could be in my instruction and interactions with my students."

The teachers also responded to the following question: Does culturally sustaining pedagogy have a place in your classroom? Why or why not? Martha replied, "It absolutely does. However, I think attention should be paid to all cultures, not just minorities. I personally try to be sure to acknowledge and celebrate all cultures." Joan wrote, " Yes. It should have a place in every teachers' classroom because it means the teacher is interested in current practice and personally connected to her students." Velma responded, "Yes. I believe it has a place in all classrooms but there needs to be some type of 'norm' in teaching especially where you have a transient population. Respecting and embracing cultural difference are important but what is as important as how and why. Are we able to reach our students - teach them what society believes they need to know

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to be productive but do it in a way that they can embrace." Cherie responded, "Yes, because I try to be culturally sensitive in my classroom. My ideas on culturally sustaining pedagogy, I believe, help me to help my students become well rounded, independent thinkers."

All four teachers responded that it does have a place in their classroom. However, two of the teachers did note that there needs to be a "norm" in teaching, especially due to the transient population in their district. Another aspect brought up by Martha was that attention should be paid to all cultures and not just minority cultures because ... it goes both ways.

Conclusions

I reflected upon the answers to the pre and post question, the survey results, and weekly discussions in my teacher research journal. The responses to the pre and post questions, the survey feedback, the audio taped discussions, and the observations in my teacher research journal provided triangulated data. The data suggests that overall, the teachers in this school make attempts to incorporate culture into the classroom but these attempts are limited to superficial efforts that skim the surface of culturally sustaining pedagogy. In addition to this conclusion, themes emerged from the data. These included (a) using funds of knowledge, (b) the relationship between race and teaching, (c) deficit mentalities (d) challenges that teachers face in the classroom, (e) defensiveness, and (f) why talking about race is so hard.

After analyzing the pre-question it was discovered that the four white teachers in this diverse school district had limited knowledge on culturally sustaining pedagogy. However, they were very receptive and open to the idea of learning about

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culturally sustaining pedagogy as well as discussing their experiences and teaching styles.

The results of the survey and the audio recorded discussions confirmed that while the teachers made efforts to incorporate culture into their classroom, these efforts were rudimentary, including things such as Black History Month and using multicultural texts. Other findings included that all the teachers were in agreeance that race affects teaching and an obvious achievement gap exists in schools. However, the teachers believed the gap is attributed to parental involvement and home life, as opposed to race. The teachers in this school exhibited color blindness and they placed a major emphasis on treating everyone equally, even if their definition of "equally" was transient throughout the discussions.

The challenges of enacting culturally sustaining pedagogy were explored, including the inability to appease everyone, little time and funding, standardized testing and top-down helplessness. This led to exploring where the "real cultural bias" comes from: those who create and implement the standardized testing, vast curriculum, and strict pacing charts. The teachers showed defensiveness when their teaching was questioned especially because they have little say in state mandated tests and the curriculum. Furthermore, the teachers agreed that "this is America" and "everything is not equal all of the time" and unfortunately, even though they may recognize the biases that exist in schools and in society, they are not able to fix them entirely.

Using Helms' (1990) White Racial Identity Model, I was able to analyze the teachers' behavior and responses which helped me to determine that they traveled in a

non-linear fashion between the Contact, Disintegration and Integration stages. It is my hopes that with future dialogue, we call all reach the Autonomy stage.

Finally, the post question results showed that the teachers did learn more about what culturally sustaining pedagogy is and saw the value of using it in their classroom. The goal of this study was to bring awareness to culturally sustaining pedagogy as the dialogue surrounding culture in the classroom was brought to the forefront.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Implications

Introduction

As identified in the literature review, student populations in schools are becoming increasingly diverse in regards to ethnicity, race, and language. Since the Fall of 2014, less than half of public-school students have been white and this number is projected to decline continuously until the year 2028 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). However, at the same time, 80% of the public-school teaching population are white, female teachers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). As schools become more diverse, it is critical to raise the consciousness of teachers in U.S. schools to reflect on their role in developing culturally sustaining classrooms. This is especially critical as research shows that it is one of the most effective means of meeting the learning needs of all students (Gay, 2010).

The objective of this study was to explore how white teachers in a diverse school district, view, respond to, and bridge cultural differences in the classroom. The aim was to discover what is already being done in schools while continuing the conversation that exists in the literature about the need to create culturally sustaining classrooms. The knowledge gained from hearing the collective responses of these four, white teachers who work with a diverse student population may benefit other teachers or schools who are struggling to implement culturally sustaining pedagogies. These findings can also inform practice and future research.

In this chapter, a brief summary of the findings is presented, followed by the conclusions of the study which relates the findings to the theoretical frameworks and

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relevant literature. The implications of the study as well as recommendations for future research are discussed after that.

Summary of the Findings

For seven weeks, I worked with four white, female teachers to determine what they knew about culturally sustaining pedagogy as well as how they viewed and responded to culture in the classroom. I began with interviewing each teacher one-on-one to gather information about their teaching experience and backgrounds and then asked them to complete a pre-question. The pre-question was used as baseline data. Also within that seven-week period, I organized six discussion meetings with the teachers. For approximately 30 to 60 minutes per meeting, the teachers discussed topics surrounding culturally sustaining pedagogies including how race affects teaching, achievement gaps, characteristics of culturally sustaining educators, and challenges. Teachers were also asked to partake in a survey from Teaching Tolerance (2019). At the conclusion of the study, the teachers responded to two post questions. The pre and post question, the survey, as well as the audio recorded discussions provided triangulated data that suggested how white, female teachers view, respond to, and bridge cultural differences in the classroom in a diverse school district.

An analysis of the data revealed six themes that directly related to how white teachers view, respond to, and bridge cultural differences in the classroom: (a) using funds of knowledge, (b) the relationship between race and teaching, (c) deficit mentalities (d) challenges that teachers face in the classroom, (e) defensiveness, and (f) why talking about race is so hard. Additionally, it was discovered that prior to the onset of the study, these teachers were unfamiliar with culturally sustaining pedagogy and their attempts to

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incorporate culture into the classroom were limited and superficial. However, by opening up the dialogue on culture and race in the classroom, the teachers showed growth in their definitions of culturally sustaining pedagogy and a positive outlook on the topic, as they all agreed that culturally sustaining pedagogy had a place in their classroom.

The data suggests that teachers need more support in learning about culturally sustaining pedagogy and implementing it in the classroom. According to Paris (2012) culturally sustaining pedagogy is a pedagogy that "seeks to perpetuate and foster - to sustain - linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the school for positive social transformation" (p. 1). While the teachers did open up the dialogue on recognizing and addressing diversity of cultures in the classroom, it can be concluded that they did not understand how to become a culturally sustaining educator. They were all willing, especially after partaking in the study, to try to incorporate this type of pedagogy into the classroom. However, many will need assistance in understanding what Peggy McIntosh describes as "Unpacking the White Knapsack" or what Lisa Delpit (2006) explains as the culture of power. These teachers had difficulty accepting how their "whiteness" situated them in society as a privileged individual.

Conclusions of the Study

In this study, the teacher participants engaged in discussions surrounding culturally sustaining pedagogy. The goal was to bring awareness to this type of pedagogy so the teachers could self-reflect on their role in creating culturally sustaining classrooms and ultimately implement culturally sustaining pedagogies.

At the beginning of the study, these four teachers were unaware of the term culturally sustaining pedagogy. Based on the results of their pre-question, their

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preliminary definitions reflected a basic understanding of this complex pedagogy. However, by the end of the study, the teachers showed a more in-depth definition and they all agreed that culturally sustaining pedagogy has a place in their classroom. This is supported by current research which states that teachers recognize the need for culturally sustaining pedagogies in the classroom and are willing to implement them but struggle due to a lack of preparation (Ozudogry, 2018, Samuels, Samuels, and Cook, 2017, Heitner & Jennings, 2016). Additionally, even after partaking in the study, while the teachers recognized the importance of culturally sustaining pedagogy, it was apparent that they were unsure of how to implement it. A study completed by Samuels, Samuels, and Cook (2017) discovered that the teachers that they studied recognized the value of culturally relevant pedagogy but were uncertain on how to apply this type of pedagogy in the classroom, struggling with lack of knowledge on the subject and the inability to imagine how culturally relevant pedagogy could be used daily. I found similar results.

According to Borrero, Ziauddin and Ahn (2018) self-reflection and willingness to interrogate one's own biases and assumptions are needed to create a culturally sustaining classroom. For the teachers in this study, this was the first time they were asked to evaluate their own biases and assumptions which aligns with Gay (2010) who stated that many teachers do not think deeply about their own attitudes and beliefs about culture, race, and ethnicity. Over the course of the six discussions, many of the teachers showed signs of defensiveness and some of the discussions became very heated.

The teachers denied that they were privileged and failed to recognize how being white situates them in a culture of power (Delpit, 2006). Martha summed up their ideas when she stated, "Just because a person is white, also middle class, doesn't mean that

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they are privileged." McIntosh (1990) states that while many white people are taught about racism as being something that puts others at a disadvantage, rarely are the white people taught that white privilege puts them at an advantage and many teachers fail to realize this.

The teachers were adamant about being colorblind as well. There is evidence in literature that many teachers advocate that they are "colorblind" and they teach their students as individuals (Gay, 2010). While getting to know each student as an individual is imperative and all four teachers agreed that they do this, they mentioned several times that they treat each child the same way because "people are people." However, there is evidence to show that colorblindness actually has a negative impact on students (Delpit, 2006, Doucet, 2017).

The teachers were all in agreeance that race affects teaching. Throughout the discussions, the teachers unanimously agreed that there was an obvious disparity between their culture and the culture of their students, and it would be impossible not to visually see these differences. However, while they tried to be respectful of the various cultures in their school, they felt that behavior was not always reciprocated. Two of the teachers presented the group with instances in which they were called racist for upholding school policies and rules.

Many challenges were discussed when implementing culturally sustaining pedagogies. The four teachers noted that while they do their best to eliminate cultural bias in schools, racism and inequalities exist everywhere and while they recognize the need for change, they can only do so much for their students during the school day. They stated that many times in today's society, people are quick to get offended and "they

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can't please everyone." Therefore, they do their best to not perpetuate stereotypes in school but they cannot control what goes on outside of school.

In addition to this, with limited time and funding, implementing a culturally sustaining classroom is not easy. The teachers were adamant that they took an interest in their students' lives and participated in many activities and daily routines that would help them to get to know their students. However, time is limited and this concern is illustrated by Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, (2008) who also found that smaller class sizes would benefit teachers in getting to know their students.

Standardized testing also places immense pressure on teachers, causing many to conform to a standardized curriculum in order to prepare students for these tests (Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008). The four teachers in this study shared similar concerns; due to their inability to change state policies or curriculum, their hands are tied. They must prepare students for the standardized tests even if they know the tests are biased, taking their focus away from implementing culturally sustaining pedagogies.

Teachers were introduced to funds of knowledge during this study which are "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (Paris, 2012, p. 133). While the teachers found some of the funds of knowledge to be important such as home language and family traditions, they felt that others were not as useful to the classroom, such as caregiving. One of the teachers felt that using funds of knowledge could perpetuate preconceived expectations about a child; this demonstrates that she did not truly understand how funds of knowledge could promote meaningful learning (Tracey & Morrow, 2012, p. 125).

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The teachers were also unaware how they viewed their students with a deficit mentality. This is not uncommon as research shows that the deficit mentality is very prevalent in the mindsets of both preservice and in-service teachers (Samuels, Samuels, and Cook, 2017). Harry and Klingner (2007) state that "The intertwining of race and perceptions of disability are so deeply embedded in our way of thinking that many people are not even aware of how one concept influences the other." The teachers in this study did not even realize that as they described their diverse population, they were focusing on the negative qualities, rather than the rich pedagogical opportunities that their diverse population brings into the classroom. These beliefs have a direct influence on classroom practice (Bolshakova, 2015). Literature presents culturally sustaining pedagogy as one that eliminates this deficit approach so that the education can nurture the cultural strengths of students and validate students' lived experiences (Samuels, 2018).

Finally, talking about race and culture is difficult. In order to subjectively view the responses of the teachers during this study, Helms' (1990) White Racial Identity Model was used. The teachers traveled along the continuum in a non-linear way moving between the Contact, Disintegration, and Reintegration stages. Characteristics of the Contact Stage include color blindness while also seeing racial differences. White people in this stage do not demonstrate conscious acts of racism but this position can uncover racist beliefs (Helms, 1990). In the Disintegration stage, new experiences and information challenge their worldview. At times, this may cause feelings of guilt and shame (Helms, 1990). In the Reintegration stage, the white person may realize they do have privileges but it is because they deserve them. While no one, including myself, reached the final

stage of Autonomy, the teachers did move at their own pace through the first three stages.

Limitations

The first limitation with this study was that it took place in a very short time period: only seven weeks. Therefore, it was difficult to cover all of the various components and topics surrounding culturally sustaining pedagogy and using culture in the classroom. While the teacher participants were able to participate in meaningful discussions, they were always on a time limit, with each meeting being approximately 30 to 60 minutes in duration, stifling opportunities for immense growth and understanding. If given a longer time frame, I would spend more time discussing these teachers' ideas and beliefs on the topics and help them to self-reflect on these beliefs. I would push them toward the Autonomy stage of Helms' (1990) White Racial Identity Model and show them concrete ways to implement culturally sustaining pedagogies in their classrooms.

The second limitation was that the study included only four participants. It is important to note that the participants had very different teaching backgrounds and experiences which helped to contribute varying perspectives to the conversations. However, the data collected only represents the ideas of four white, female teachers out of a total of 21 white, female teachers in the school. In order to more fully understand the perspectives and beliefs of the teachers in East Ridgewood Elementary, additional research might involve all of the teachers.

Implications

My study has implications for educators who are interested in incorporating culturally sustaining pedagogy in their classrooms as well as for researchers. First, for

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educators, there are benefits to using culturally sustaining pedagogy in the classroom as it is one of the most effective means of meeting the learning needs of all students (Gay, 2010). However, in order for culturally sustaining pedagogy to be implemented in schools, teachers must be made aware of how using culture in the classroom is beneficial for all, in the form of teacher preparation programs and professional development (Gay, 2010, Harmon, 2012, p. 20, Ozudogru, 2018, Heitner & Jennings, 2016, Rose & Issa, 2018 Logan, Hilton, Watson, and Kickland-Holmes, 2018).

Another implication for educators is the realization that using culturally sustaining pedagogy in schools begins with awareness and self-reflection to interrogate one's own biases and assumptions (Borrero, Ziauddin, and Ahn, 2018). These teachers were unaware of culturally sustaining pedagogy prior to the study and at times, became very defensive when discussing culture and race in the classroom. By analyzing the responses of these four, white teachers, educators may anticipate certain responses from their colleagues and may be better prepared to carry out their own discussion groups and/or professional development, which as the data suggests, is needed. More discussion, reading, and district-wide professional development is needed to help teachers better understand the topic and promote implementation.

For future research, a larger sample size of teacher participants would be beneficial in order to gain more insight into teacher perspectives and readiness in regards to implementing culturally sustaining pedagogy. This could include other white, female teachers who teach in diverse school districts.

For future teacher researchers, more research is needed on the implementation of culturally sustaining pedagogies in a diverse school district. Specifically, once teachers

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have learned about and/or gone through professional development on the topic, applying the theory in the classroom is crucial to find the best methods for implementation so that it benefits the needs of the entire diverse population.

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Appendix A

Pre-Question

Martha

Rowan University

Pre/Post Question:

What does Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies mean to you?

Culturally sustaining pedagogy means keeping various cultures of students alive in the classroom.

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Rowan University

Pre/Post Question:

What does Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies mean to you?

Wed. Joan
4th Prep
1:30

* Teaching practices that are current and relevant
* Teaching methodologies that are culturally sensative and relatable to student's real life situations
* Teaching ideas that allow us to learn or hear about diverse cultures in school

Version Date: *09/25/19*

1

Velma

Rowan University

Pre/Post Question:

What does Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies mean to you?

- At first → clueless.
Always had trouble with the word 'Pedagogies'
Alternate route teacher - batism by bon-fire.
Broke it down:
Culturally - relating to culture
ex: Mexican, Turkish, Indian from India, Chinese, Japanese
~~Puertorican~~, Portorican, Native American

Sustaining - meaning ongoing, continuosly moving forward, adding to

Pedagogies - 'learnings'/educational training

Version Date: *09/25/19*

1

Cherie

Rowan University

Pre/Post Question:

What does Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies mean to you?

- Culture in the classroom
- How does my culture dictate my interactions with students?
- Does my culture play a role in my instruction?
- My culture vs culture of my students
- Culture of others vs my culture/upbringing (colleagues)

Version Date: *09/25/19*

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Appendix B

Survey

Martha
TEACHING
TOLERANCE

Common Beliefs Survey

① I don't think of my students in terms of their race or ethnicity. I am color blind when it comes to my teaching.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	②	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: Children are the same as people. People are people

② The gap in the achievement among students of different races is about poverty, not race.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	②	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: It can be because of poverty, but parenting is the most important factor.

③ Teachers should adapt their teaching to the distinctive cultures of African American, Latino, Asian and Native American students.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	②	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: Teachers should adapt their teaching to all students.

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④ In some cultures, students are embarrassed to speak in front of others so I take this into account and don't call on these students in class.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	③	4	5

Why I feel this way: I've never heard of a culture that feels as such.

⑤ When students come from homes where educational achievement is not a high priority, they often don't do their homework and their parents don't come to school events. This lack of parental support undermines my efforts to teach these students.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
①	2	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: Parental support is paramount. The students need to know their parents care and believe in them. It's a team effort; parents + students + teachers = success

⑥ It is not fair to ask students who are struggling with English to take on challenging academic assignments.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	3	④	5

Why I feel this way: Assignments can and should be adapted to fit students' needs, but can and should still be challenging.

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⑦ I believe that I should reward students who try hard, even if they are not doing well in school; building their self-esteem is important.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	③	4	5

Why I feel this way: It depends on what you mean by "reward."

⑧ I try to keep in mind the limits of my students' ability and give them assignments that I know they can do so that they do not become discouraged.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	3	④	5

Why I feel this way: Students should be challenged.

⑨ Students of different races and ethnicities often have different learning styles and good teachers will match their instruction to these learning styles.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	③	4	5

Why I feel this way: Teachers should match their instruction based on the learning styles of ALL students.

3

10 Grouping students of different levels of achievement for instruction may benefit some students, but it can undermine the progress that could otherwise be made by higher achieving students.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	③	4	⑤

Why I feel this way: _____

_____

_____

_____

11 Before students are asked to engage in complex learning tasks, they need to have a solid grasp of basic skills.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	3	④	5

Why I feel this way: Some skills may be learned in the process of the complex learning tasks.

12 With all the pressures to raise student achievement, finding and using examples for the cultural, historic and everyday lived experiences of my students takes away (or could take away) valuable time from teaching and learning what matters most.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	3	④	5

Why I feel this way: These items can be combined.

_____

_____

_____

107

⑮ Talking about race with my colleagues could open up a can of worms; little good is likely to come from it.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	3	④	5

Why I feel this way: Conversations to benefit students should not be avoided.

5

Common Beliefs Survey

1 I don't think of my students in terms of their race or ethnicity. I am color blind when it comes to my teaching.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	(2)	3		5

Why I feel this way: I have the same hopes & expectations for all my students, no matter the ethnicity

2 The gap in the achievement among students of different races is about poverty, not race.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	(2)	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: When your parents/guardians have grown up struggling or without many opportunities to be exposed to things, they unfortunatly continue the cycle

3 Teachers should adapt their teaching to the distinctive cultures of African American, Latino, Asian and Native American students.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	(3)	4	5

Why I feel this way: Teachers teaching should be respective and inclusive of all cultures whenever possible

109

④ In some cultures, students are embarrassed to speak in front of others so I take this into account and don't call on these students in class.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
(1)	2	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: Nobody should feel embarrassed or forced into something they are uncomfortable doing. There are many other ways that students can show what they know

⑤ When students come from homes where educational achievement is not a high priority, they often don't do their homework and their parents don't come to school events. This lack of parental support undermines my efforts to teach these students.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
(1)	2	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: School and home are a team effort. When one side doesn't do their fair share it falls apart quickly and is a struggle for the teacher

⑥ It is not fair to ask students who are struggling with English to take on challenging academic assignments.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	3	(4)	5

Why I feel this way: Teachers can modify, allow for alternative means of presentation and assessment and may consider referrals, but keeping a low bar doesn't help the student prepare for more rigor or life

2

110

⑦ I believe that I should reward students who try hard, even if they are not doing well in school; building their self-esteem is important.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	②2	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: Effort is always to be Commended, otherwise students will stop even trying altogether and give up on school and themselves

⑧ I try to keep in mind the limits of my students' ability and give them assignments that I know they can do so that they do not become discouraged.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	3	④4	5

Why I feel this way: I do both, give them things I know they can accomplish, because my job is not to frustrate them, but I also like to challenge them once they feel confident. The often surprise themselves with what more they can do!

⑨ Students of different races and ethnicities often have different learning styles and good teachers will match their instruction to these learning styles.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	②2	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: See #3

10   Grouping students of different levels of achievement for instruction may benefit some students, but it can undermine the progress that could otherwise be made by higher achieving students.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	3	(4)	5

Why I feel this way: Effective teaching includes multiple means of delivery of instruction. Varied instruction, including leveled groups sometimes, helps to ensure all learners are being reached

11   Before students are asked to engage in complex learning tasks, they need to have a solid grasp of basic skills.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
(1)	2	3 1/	4	5

Why I feel this way: Scaffolding!.. Gotta build the base before you can walk away and expect students to carry on independently

12   With all the pressures to raise student achievement, finding and using examples for the cultural, historic and everyday lived experiences of my students takes away (or could take away) valuable time from teaching and learning what matters most.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	(2)	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: I hate teaching for a test score. A classroom is more engaging, fun, inclusive and supportive when a teacher is relaxed enough to enjoy her job of teaching

112

13 Talking about race with my colleagues could open up a can of worms; little good is likely to come from it.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	3	4	(5)

Why I feel this way: It only helps to broaden others perspectives and should be looked at as a way of sharing ideas and gaining more knowledge.

5

Common Beliefs Survey

① I don't think of my students in terms of their race or ethnicity. I am color blind when it comes to my teaching.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	3	④	5

Why I feel this way: I don't think about them in terms of race, or ethnicity because I am thinking about their knowledge of the subject (prior) and whether or not there is support at home.

② The gap in the achievement among students of different races is about poverty, not race.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	②	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: In the area that I teach, there are people of many diff. races and many are on free + reduce lunch (poverty) is not about race, it's about income - who is home to assist them?

③ Teachers should adapt their teaching to the distinctive cultures of African American, Latino, Asian and Native American students.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	3	4	⑤

Why I feel this way: We need to adapt our teaching to the needs of all - what is needed to be a productive member of society. + Also Understanding culture is imp. to make the content relevant to the student.

114

④ In some cultures, students are embarrassed to speak in front of others so I take this into account and don't call on these students in class.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	3	④	5

Why I feel this way: ✗ I take into account the individual student + their level of comfort in speaking in front of other. but it is not related to their culture. Eventually I work to get them to speak in front of others. Imp. life trait.

⑤ When students come from homes where educational achievement is not a high priority, they often don't do their homework and their parents don't come to school events. This lack of parental support undermines my efforts to teach these students.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	③	4	5

Why I feel this way: I don't think it undermines my job/effort in teaching, just makes it more challenging to create a support team.

⑥ It is not fair to ask students who are struggling with English to take on challenging academic assignments.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	②	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: It's not a matter of not being fair but a matter of helping them get past the language barrier.

2

115

7 I believe that I should reward students who try hard, even if they are not doing well in school; building their self-esteem is important.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
(1)	2	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: Strong self-concept → strong self-esteem
We are ther cheerleaders of school
+ how we treat them has a direct
Impact!

8 I try to keep in mind the limits of my students' ability and give them assignments that I know they can do so that they do not become discouraged.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	3	(4)	5

Why I feel this way: I give assignments based on
the level of the majority of
the students or what is expected
of their grade level. I will work
with the students to assist them.

9 Students of different races and ethnicities often have different learning styles and good teachers will match their instruction to these learning styles.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	3	4	(5)

Why I feel this way: I don't believe that learning
style is related to race a ethnicity.
It depends on some internal, cognitive
function of the individual.

3

116

10 Grouping students of different levels of achievement for instruction may benefit some students, but it can undermine the progress that could otherwise be made by higher achieving students.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	3	4	(5)

Why I feel this way: __I believe in ability grouping and instructions based on ability__

11 Before students are asked to engage in complex learning tasks, they need to have a solid grasp of basic skills.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
(1)	2	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: __Basic skills are the foundation for more advanced learning esp reading informational text + comprehending scientific mathematical concepts__

12 With all the pressures to raise student achievement, finding and using examples for the cultural, historic and everyday lived experiences of my students takes away (or could take away) valuable time from teaching and learning what matters most.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	(2)	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: __There are not enough hours in the day + time spent spent doing this could be better spent working w/ students who need additional help.__

⑮ Talking about race with my colleagues could open up a can of worms; little good is likely to come from it.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	3	④	5

Why I feel this way: Hopefully this will create a platform for open dialogue + we will be able to learn from /about each other. Share ideas

Common Beliefs Survey

① I don't think of my students in terms of their race or ethnicity. I am color blind when it comes to my teaching.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	②	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: For the most part, I feel I am "color blind" when it comes to my students. I do sometimes think of race and ethnicity when issues arise.

② The gap in the achievement among students of different races is about poverty, not race.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	③	4	5

Why I feel this way: I think both factors contribute to the gap we see in achievement.

③ Teachers should adapt their teaching to the distinctive cultures of African American, Latino, Asian and Native American students.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	③	4	5

Why I feel this way: Teachers should adapt their teaching to all students, considering things like culture and race, but focusing on academic differences first.

④ In some cultures, students are embarrassed to speak in front of others so I take this into account and don't call on these students in class.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	②	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: I keep this in mind, but I call on them when they raise their hand / volunteer.

⑤ When students come from homes where educational achievement is not a high priority, they often don't do their homework and their parents don't come to school events. This lack of parental support undermines my efforts to teach these students.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
①	2	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: Parent support at home, I feel, is an indicator for success in the classroom.

⑥ It is not fair to ask students who are struggling with English to take on challenging academic assignments.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
①	2	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: Especially if they are ESL. If we differentiate in class, why aren't we modifying/differentiating standardized tests?

120

⑦ I believe that I should reward students who try hard, even if they are not doing well in school; building their self-esteem is important.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
①1	2	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: Students need self-esteem to be successful in the classroom.

⑧ I try to keep in mind the limits of my students' ability and give them assignments that I know they can do so that they do not become discouraged.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	②2	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: I also give them assignments I know are a little more difficult in order to challenge them.

⑨ Students of different races and ethnicities often have different learning styles and good teachers will match their instruction to these learning styles.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	③3	4	5

Why I feel this way: I don't think race or ethnicity has anything to do with learning style. I do take my students' learning styles into consideration when planning instruction.

3

121

10 Grouping students of different levels of achievement for instruction may benefit some students, but it can undermine the progress that could otherwise be made by higher achieving students.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	③	4	5

Why I feel this way: Higher achieving students could benefit from teaching skills to lower level students.

11 Before students are asked to engage in complex learning tasks, they need to have a solid grasp of basic skills.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
①	2	3	4	5

Why I feel this way: Although this is true, I still ask students to participate/engage in tasks where they don't have a solid grasp of the basic skills. Some students are just so far behind...

12 With all the pressures to raise student achievement, finding and using examples for the cultural, historic and everyday lived experiences of my students takes away (or could take away) valuable time from teaching and learning what matters most.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	3	4	⑤

Why I feel this way: Raising achievement is not what matters most for me. My goal is to help students become well rounded while accomplishing what administration requires me to do/teach

⑬ Talking about race with my colleagues could open up a can of worms; little good is likely to come from it.

First Thoughts:

Agree Strongly		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree Strongly
1	2	③	4	5

Why I feel this way: In certain cases, good could come from it.

Appendix C

Post Question

Martha

Rowan University

Post Question(s):

What does culturally sustaining pedagogy mean to you?

Schools should continue to learn about, study, and celebrate all cultures in the classrooms.

Does culturally sustaining pedagogy have a place in your classroom? Why or why not?

It absolutely does. However, I think attention should be paid to all cultures, not just minorities. I personally try to be sure to acknowledge and celebrate all cultures.

124

Rowan University

Post Question(s):

What does culturally sustaining pedagogy mean to you?

It means that a teacher is purposeful in their teaching so that lessons are meaningful, relatable and culturally diverse and sensative

Does culturally sustaining pedagogy have a place in your classroom? Why or why not?

Yes. It should have a place in every teachers classroom because it means the teacher is interested in current practice and personally connected to her students

125

Rowan University

Post Question(s):

Velma Scooby D.

What does culturally sustaining pedagogy mean to you?

This means understanding the culture of your students, and yourself + being mindful that you are not teaching solely from your cultural perspective. We need to be mindful of our student's cultural backgrounds.

Does culturally sustaining pedagogy have a place in your classroom? Why or why not?

Yes. I believe it has a place in all classrooms but there needs to be some type of "norm" in teaching especially when you have a transient population. Respecting + embrassing cultural differences are imp. but what is as imp. an how + why. Are we able to reach our students — teach them what society believes they need to know + be productive but do it in a way that they can embrase.

126

Cherie

Rowan University

Post Question(s):

What does culturally sustaining pedagogy mean to you?

The idea of incorporating and considering multiple/all cultures in my classroom. This could be in my instruction and interactions with my students.

Does culturally sustaining pedagogy have a place in your classroom? Why or why not?

Yes, because I try to be culturally sensitive in my classroom. My ideas on culturally sustaining pedagogy, I believe, help me to help my students become well rounded, independent thinkers.