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Examining Professional Development as a Method to Support the Continuous Growth of Teachers on the Cultural Competence Continuum

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Teachers on the Cultural Competence Continuum

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Abstract

This small qualitative study focuses on whether and to what degree professional development on

cultural competency can impact teachers' views and behaviors. This study was motivated by the

persistent and pernicious achievement gap in education. Indeed, despite numerous federal and

state reform policies (e.g., No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, etc.) including the

implementation of school turnaround models, the gap persists as do discrepancies between

behavioral sanctions given to students of color and their white peers. For example, schools

situated predominately in urban areas, servicing students of color and of lower economic status

have higher out of school suspension and expulsion rates than their suburban peers with real

implications for urban students' access to and success in school. Finally, despite a more diverse

student body, teachers remain majority white and female. And yet, despite these daunting

realities, cultural competence provides a potentially powerful tool in combating their impact.

Specifically, one promising way to support teachers in becoming more culturally competent may

be through professional development. This research takes up this possibility directly and

examines a group of middle school teachers' receptiveness to a professional development

intervention with a specific focus on cultural competence. This case has relevance to educational

leaders in urban districts as it focuses on the development and implementation of effective

professional development that can shift teachers' mindsets and perceptions of students of color.

Examining Professional Development as a Method to Support the Continuous Growth of

Teachers on the Cultural Competence Continuum

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Teachers on the Cultural Competence Continuum

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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

The education system in the United States is in crisis. Despite numerous federal educational policy reform efforts such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race to the Top, the achievement gap between White and non-White students persists across our nation. In Connecticut, the achievement gap is consistent with national trends. Based on 2015 national results in reading, Connecticut has the fourth-largest achievement gap between Black and White students, and the sixth-largest gap for eighth graders (NAEP, 2015). The average fourth grade reading scale score for White students was 232, for Hispanic students was 208, and 206 for Black students. Eighth grade reading results showed a similar trend with average scale scores of 274 for Whites, 248 for Hispanics, and 253 for Blacks, with equivalent or larger gaps in math (NAEP, 2015). As a score of 281 in eighth-grade reading is considered proficient, the difference in the scale scores between Black and White students has significant implications including those associated with high school course placement and college acceptance.

The gaps in achievement have garnered a great deal of attention in research and policy. In addition to academic gaps, there are also gaps in school climate data across racial, ethnic and socioeconomic lines. Discrepancies between sanctions such as out of school suspension and expulsion given to students of color and white students are documented as early as pre-school and persist through high-school (Statas, 2014). For example, data from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights found that "African American students without disabilities are more than three times as likely as their White peers without disabilities to be expelled or suspended" (Statas, 2014).

In Figure 1, we see the disproportionate rate at which Black students are suspended and expelled in comparison to White students.

Rates of suspension and expulsion, by race/ethnicity

Black students represent 16% of the student population, but 32-42% of students suspended or expelled. In comparison, white students also represent a similar range of between 31-40% of students suspended or expelled, but they are 51% of the student population.
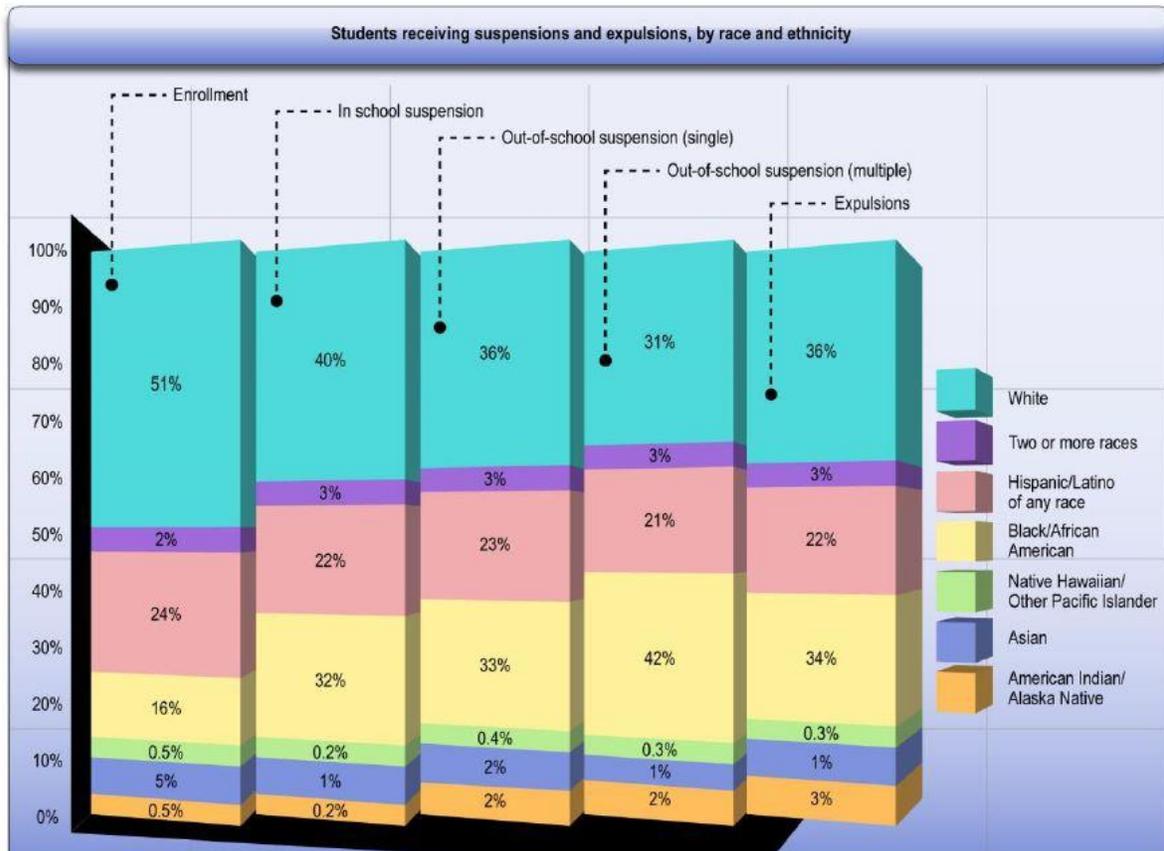
NOTE: Detail may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Totals: Enrollment is 49 million students, in-school suspension is 3.5 million students, single out-of-school suspension is 1.9 million students, multiple out-of-school suspension is 1.55 million students, and expulsion is 130,000 students. Data reported in this figure represents 99% of responding schools.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2011-12.

Figure 1: Rates of suspension and expulsion, by race/ethnicity chart released by the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2011-12.

Research shows that out-of-school suspension decreases students' self-esteem, academic achievement, and attendance; at the same time, it increases students' problem behaviors, depression, and drug addiction (American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), 2003; APA, 2008;

NASP, 2012; Quin & Hemphill, 2014). In addition, some schools adopt zero tolerance policies.

There is abundant evidence that zero tolerance policies disproportionately affect youth of color.

These sanctions may further widen the achievement gap by penalizing and alienating

marginalized students (Payne & Welch, 2010; Welch & Payne, 2011).

One factor identified as contributing to these race-based outcomes stems from cultural

differences between teachers and students. In particular, teachers who are predominantly White

and middle class are often unfamiliar with students' diverse backgrounds and have been shown

to sometimes misinterpret cultural difference as misbehavior (Osher, Cartledge, Oswald, Artiles,

& Coutinho, 2004) with real, negative consequences for students. According to the National

Center for Education Statistics, by 2024, the number of students of color is estimated to be 55%

of students enrolled in U.S. public schools (NCES, 2015). However, in a 2011 School Staffing

Survey, it was estimated that only 17% of public school teachers were teachers of color (SASS,

2012). This is concerning as teachers are viewed as authority figures. Students of color need to

see themselves in prominent roles of authority in schools. They need to have role models who

they can relate to.   As Goldhaber (2015) explained,

> There is a significant literature that argues that a match between the
> race/ethnicity of teachers and students leads to better student outcomes,
> particularly in high-poverty environments with significant at-risk student
> populations. Some, in fact, posit the teacher-student "role model" gap as
> an important explanation for the educational and achievement gaps that we
> see among students. (Goldhaber 2015, p.2).

Beyond this "role model" gap is that racial and ethnic differences between teachers and

students may also represent real cultural differences and these can also serve as a barrier to

student success. This cultural disconnect is well studied and has been found to often lead to poor

self-concepts, discipline problems, and poor academic outcomes for ethnic minority students

(Bazron, 2005). In response, there has been increased focus on teachers' ability to build on student interest, cultural background, and knowledge to teach in a culturally competent manner.

As defined by Diller & Moule (2005), cultural competence is the ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures other than one's own. It entails developing certain personal and interpersonal awareness and sensitivities, developing bodies of cultural knowledge, and mastering a set of skills that, taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching. Furthermore, teachers' cultural competence can be developed as a step to enable teachers to close the gap between Black and White students' opportunities and performance on a variety of outcomes.

To address teachers' cultural competency, there have been a growing number of initiatives aimed at increasing cultural competence through policy. For example, the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) has been developing model policy that states can use as they work to align their teacher licensing systems to their more rigorous standards including those associated with cultural competence. They have identified the following levers through which states can increase educators' cultural competence: 1) pre-service education, 2) ongoing professional development, and 3) licensure (Payne & Welch, 2010).

Beyond INTASC's efforts, one-third of states currently require teacher candidates to study some aspect of cultural diversity in their core preparation courses, and/or to have a teaching practicum in a culturally diverse setting. However, only nine states (Alaska, Arkansas, California, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico, and South Dakota) currently have stand-alone state cultural knowledge or competence standards. The remaining states incorporate

standards related to cultural awareness in their history or foreign (or world) language standards (NEA, 2005).

Despite the interest in and proliferation of such initiatives, there is currently little research on whether or to what degree these approaches are effective in changing teacher mindsets, behaviors or student outcomes. The shift away from a deficit-thinking model in which students' home cultures are seen as less than and towards a model of cultural competence is the aim of such initiatives to improve teacher practice. Additionally, providing sustained professional development over time via planned activities and systematic follow-up constitutes the most effective approach for enduring changes to staff knowledge and skills (Yoon, 2007). This research study builds on these findings by studying the intersection between professional development and cultural competence. In particular, this action research project examines the components of professional development activities that teach cultural competence to see whether teachers can shift from a deficit mindset to a culturally responsive mindset. Specifically, I ask the following research questions:

1. In what ways can professional development influence teachers' cultural competency?

2. How and in what ways might this vary among teachers?

3. What elements of professional development contribute to improving teachers' cultural competence?

In this capstone, I share findings on teacher cultural competence and professional development. These findings are useful to school administrators as they can help to inform the design and selection of professional development activities for cultural competency. This work also has the potential to be meaningful to the education field as a whole by providing insight into

ground-level practices that may provide social justice for marginalized communities, and thus helping to close the achievement gap.

Study Significance

Schools have a legal obligation to enhance the experience of all students, including those from traditionally marginalized communities of color. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, addressed this legal obligation (ESEA). The federal government's role in education through this act involves providing some financial assistance to states to support their lowest performing school districts, mandating compliance to high standards, and enforcing sanctions for schools that fail to meet set criteria. The sanctions result in strict monitoring, and even school closures. In an attempt to provide more support than sanctions, the Obama Administration began granting flexibility to states in 2012 regarding specific requirements of NCLB in exchange for rigorous and comprehensive state-developed plans. These plans were designed to close achievement gaps, increase equity, improve the quality of instruction, and increase outcomes for all students, including those who fall within the criteria of a specific subgroup. The subgroups include marginalized populations such as English language learners, special education students, students of specific racial and ethnic groups, and students who receive free or reduced lunch. More recently, on December 10, 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act, which contained a strong emphasis on equity and preparing all students for college and career readiness. Despite the mandates accompanying these policies and presumably those coming with the new administration, the gap in performance outcomes between subgroups continues to persist. It is imperative that schools focus on educating all students. To that end, schools must

remove barriers that impede efforts to close the aforementioned gap, including those in regards

to teachers' recognition, appreciation and understanding of students' culture.

CHAPTER II:

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section I explore research on cultural competence and effective professional development. The research on cultural competence is broad in the sense that there are different ways in which the skill set of competencies associated with it is defined. Ladson-Billings (2001) has contributed extensive research on cultural competence, defining qualities that culturally competent teachers possess. Banks (2004) affirms these competencies, as identified by Ladson-Billings and other theorists, as a means to reduce the negative impact of administrators' and teachers' stereotypes and prejudices on students of color. The National Education Association (NEA) concluded in 1995 that cultural competence is both a moral and ethical responsibility, and that the impact of having educators with the ability to challenge and motivate diverse student populations can dramatically improve our educational system and student outcomes.

Research on professional development varies in terms of what is identified as effective. The criterion used to evaluate the components of professional development demonstrates varying results. I explored research findings of both effective and ineffective professional development approaches in the interest of identifying elements of effective professional development to be used in my case study. Yoon (2007) and Darling-Hammond (1999) made a strong case for the implementation of professional development containing elements of sustained support and systematic follow-up. Bayar (2005) offers a promising practice for professional development in his adaptation of six components based on the findings from research on the teacher's perspective of professional development. The combination of Banks' (2004) competencies and Bayar's (2005) components provides a comprehensive approach that could be used to provide professional development to teach cultural competence to teachers.

Cultural Competence and Teacher Practice

Many in the field of education, including activists and scholars, have long argued that there is a need for teachers to learn cultural competence (Banks, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2001). The need is great as schools, like many other institutions in our society, are being criticized for inequities based on race, religion, and social status. The school system is perceived as one institution in which inequalities are prevalent. In this section, I define cultural competence and explain its usefulness. I will use case study examples to show how current practices in schools lack the element of cultural competence. I will also provide examples of practices in schools that do demonstrate cultural competence. In each, an examination of teacher mindset will be explored.

Defining Cultural Competence

Cultural competence can be defined as the acquisition and maintenance of culture-specific skills required to (a) function effectively within a new cultural context; and/or (b) interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. In theory and research, cultural competence is broadly seen as underpinning the capacity to "survive and thrive" in a new cultural milieu (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Ward, 1996). A teacher's ability to "survive and thrive" in a setting that is different from their own personal background is an equity indicator. It can be a determining factor for establishing relationships with students and families, and for helping students achieve.

This approach follows the work of Ladson-Billings (2001) who identified culturally competent teachers as those who: (1) have an understanding of culture and its role in education, (2) consider it a responsibility to learn about a student's culture and community, (3) use student

culture as a basis for learning, and (4) promote the flexible use of students' local and global culture. Cultural competence as defined by this research is an important skill set for teachers.

While there are many reasons education has become ground zero in the discussion around cultural competency, two of the most prominent, interrelated and relevant to this study are: (1) the history and legacy of racial segregation and discrimination in the U.S. education system; and (2) the current demographics of the teaching force. On the first issue of the legacy of discrimination, student success in school is determined by the dominant culture. The dominant culture is "a term referring to a group of people who influence and control many aspects of a culture or a political system" (Cross, 2000, p. 19). The dominant culture is usually, but not always, held by the majority and achieves its dominance by controlling social institutions such as communication, educational institutions, artistic expression, law, the political process, and business. The dominant group may be at liberty to impose their privilege through such avenues, and by proliferating their own set of values and norms. A few American dominant cultural traditions are: democracy, heterosexism, racism, "standard" English, capitalism, White privilege, individualism, classism, and patriarchy (Heil, 2016). This definition implies that in schools/educational institutions, students not of the dominant culture must assimilate to achieve success as determined by a set of norms.

Taken together, these realities have often served to alienate those very students who most need access to quality public education and opportunities for empowerment. Bradshaw, Mitchell, O'Brennan, and Leaf (2010) reported that African American students had significantly greater odds of receiving teacher-reported office disciplinary referrals. They are also over-represented in a range of school disciplinary outcomes, including classroom referrals (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Rocque, 2010), out-of-school suspension (Eitle & Eitle, 2004; Gregory & Weinstein, 2008;

Hinojosa, 2008), and zero tolerance-related expulsions (Tailor & Detch, 1998). Emerging

research has also documented some evidence of disproportionality for other groups, including

Latino students (Peguero & Shekarkhar, 2011). Latino students are overrepresented in

exclusionary discipline at the secondary level (Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Skiba et al., 2011).

Beyond the obvious need to make schools more welcoming places for the students they

serve, studies on cultural competence in education also confirm the importance of cultural

competence in teaching. Such research suggests that teachers need to understand the influence of

personal bias and privilege on student and teacher relationships (Banks 2004; Ladson-Billings

2001). This is a critical factor impacting teachers' ability to affect the conditions by which

students learn. Banks (2004) affirms that this competence reduces the proliferation of

stereotypes, prejudices, and misrepresentations of others, and allows learners to see the deeper

aspects of culture.

As demonstrated in Collins's (2008) matrix below (Figure 2), the dominant group may

impose ideology onto other groups. In this case, the matrix shows how aspects of race, class,

ability, language, appearance, sexuality, and gender are interconnected and together impact

people's experiences. This is in contrast to a perspective that does not embrace intersectionality

and instead focuses solely on one element of identity at a time. According to Hill Collin's theory

(2008), the closer a person exists via their identities on each dimension relative to the center of

the diagram, the more dominant they are perceived by others. The inner circle closest to the

center represents the ideology that is perceived as dominant within a given culture. For example,

in the US we might understand white, heterosexual, and men to be perceived as more dominant

than other groups. People who fit the criteria furthest from the center are non-dominant and thus

may be oppressed by the dominant group. It is worth noting that a person can have

characteristics from the inner and outer circle and that not all elements of identity may be equal

in terms of the weight these identities hold in a given societal context. For example, a person

may be poor and uneducated, but given their status as a heterosexual European-Anglo American,

they are closer to being perceived as someone of the dominant race.

Figure 2: Collins: The Matrix of Domination and Oppression (1990)

Given these realities, it is important that teachers understand the cultural norms that define the relationships that they have with students. They should be aware of cultural differences that students perceive as barriers. For example, the differences in the perception of what is respectful and what is disrespectful are one barrier. Teachers in this case study frequently wrote office referrals for students based on behavior that they categorized as disrespect. The frequent amount of office referrals written for non-compliance and disrespectful behavior speak to the disconnect between teacher and student perceptions of respect. One such barrier involves making eye contact. Eye contact is a way of communicating with others. Depending on which cultural situation an individual is in, eye contact gives out different signals. Appropriate eye contact levels differ from culture to culture. For example, visual contact is encouraged in the United States of America. If you look at someone in the eye, while speaking to him or her, you come across as confident, trustworthy and interested. Frequently glancing away from the person or refusing to make contact can signal low self-confidence, disinterest and a suspicious character. However, in Mexico, eye contact sustained too long is viewed negatively and suspiciously. In Asia, Africa and Latin American, sustained contact can be perceived as a challenge or affront to authority. Students are not encouraged to hold visual contact with teachers, children with parents or inferiors with superiors. This is simply to show respect and not disinterest. (Johannasen, 2010)
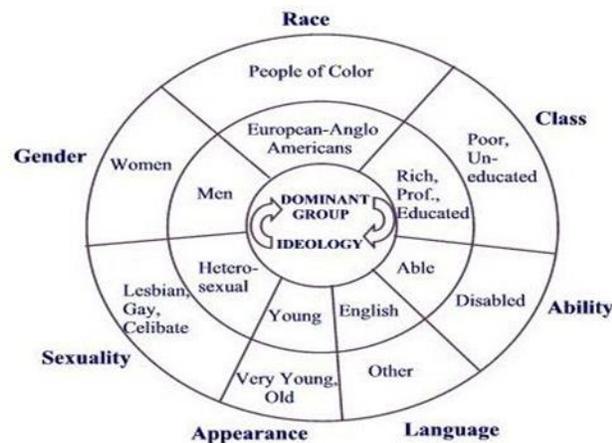
Another example of a culturally based barrier could be a teacher's bias about how other cultures acquire knowledge. In the dominant U.S. culture, information is gathered through research, publications, and technology. The dominant culture appreciates evidence that can be measured and documented in such ways. On the other hand, other cultures acquire information through "non-academic" sources—for example, through elders, nature, spirits, or symbols. Some cultures do not have the same quantity and quality of experience with books or similar forms of research. These cultures may place greater value on information and knowledge acquired through oral tradition (Pratt-Johnson, 2006). Teachers who are trained to be culturally competent may be more aware of personal biases that impact their mindset regarding what information is deemed valuable. These teachers would be more effective in building relationships with students and understanding their learning styles. Culturally competent teachers are willing to learn about student culture and norms and use it to enhance the learning environment.

A culturally competent teacher who is aware of his/her own biases and student learning styles may be able to "contextualize or connect to student's everyday experiences, and integrate classroom learning with out-of-school experiences and knowledge, helping students make the link between their culture and new knowledge" (NEA, 2005). This link may engage students by providing an entry point to academic success by limiting the impact of culture as a barrier. Becoming culturally competent is a process, as articulated in Campinha-Bacote's (1998) diagram (Figure 3). While the model speaks specifically to those in the health field, it is relevant to all practitioners in public service fields who work in communities that may differ from these practitioners' backgrounds.

Campinha-Bacote's (1998) model describes cultural competence as a process by which an individual uses his/her cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural skill, cultural

encounters and cultural desire to adapt when working with others. Campinha-Bacote's (1998) diagram below (Figure 3) shows the process teachers need to engage in to become more culturally competent. In the model, it is described from the lens of a health practitioner. The process can also be used in the field of education. Taken together, the work of Campinha-Bacote (1998) and elements described from Transcultural C.A.R.E. Associates (1990), we can summarize the process through the lens of an educator. For example, **cultural awareness** would allow a teacher to explore her own background, personal beliefs, and bias that may be barriers to developing positive relationships with students from different backgrounds. **Cultural knowledge** would help teachers to gain a new perspective on culturally diverse groups by integrating their own beliefs, practices, and values with new learning and experiences. This would improve the home and school connection, ultimately providing a more inclusive program for students. **Cultural skill** would help teachers to understand how to obtain and use relevant information and data points to support students' ongoing success. The analysis of data would help administrators also, as they plan programming based on student need. Knowledge of **cultural encounters** would support positive social interactions and climate in schools, where teachers are able to look beyond stereotypes, and other forms of bias and ignorance that are barriers for diverse groups of students. Finally, **cultural desire** is the intrinsic motivation that gives a teacher the motivation to engage in the process of becoming culturally competent (Transcultural C.A.R.E. Associates, 1990).
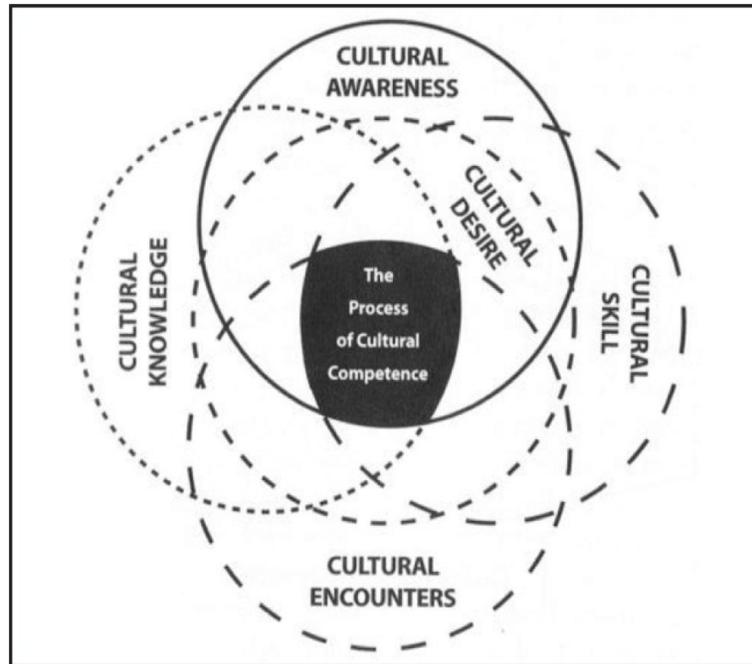
Figure 3. The Process of Cultural Competence in the Delivery of Health Care Services, by the Transcultural C.A.R.E. Associates (1990).

Professional Development

It is well known that professional development (PD) sustained over time via planned activities and systematic follow-up constitutes the most effective approach for enduring changes to staff knowledge and skills (Yoon, 2007). Given that we know that cultural competence can alleviate a deficit mindset, we will need to consider how to instruct teachers to become more culturally competent to achieve this outcome and resultant benefits to students. A promising professional development approach would be to incorporate factors that teachers identify as effective. Bayar's (2014) research provides an opportunity to follow such an approach. In his study, he randomly selected 16 teachers from 18 elementary schools to interview to ascertain the components of effective professional development activities. Participants reported that effective professional development activities should include the following components: 1) a match to existing teacher needs, 2) a match to existing school needs, 3) teacher involvement in the

design/planning of professional development activities, 4) active participation opportunities, 5) long-term engagement, and 6) high-quality instructors. Aligned with much of the research on effective professional development for teachers, I utilized Bayar's (2014) respondents' elements to guide the development and implementation of the cultural competency sessions for teachers in this study.

The district in which my research site was situated offer teachers three types of professional development. The first is the pre-service training, commonly referred to as "onboarding", in which all teachers new to the district participate in a series of one to two-hour training sessions to learn about the district's strategic operating plan, programs, and services. The sessions occur two weeks prior to the start of the school year, lasting two days for a total of 16 hours. A district support personnel or a seasoned teacher leads each session. All teachers participate together, regardless of school assignment or school design, and are grouped by grade level or content area bands. The second form of professional development includes monthly district sessions of either full or half days. Teachers register for sessions with guidance from the school principal and/or coaches. The coaches and principal make suggestions based on a teacher's grade level and content area. The third type of professional development offered to teachers is school-based. Principals plan school-based professional development sessions based on their school's improvement plan and resources. Some sessions focus on new program implementation such as the expeditionary learning literacy program, while others are more general, focusing on the common core standards. It was this third type of professional development that I used to deliver the cultural competency training in this study (i.e., the intervention).

Professional Development and Cultural Competence

Professional development is a major strategy for building cultural competencies. There are many professional development programs that address different aspects of diversity; the best are highly interactive, long term, and part of a larger school-based plan (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Joyce & Showers, 1995). We need to learn more about how to provide teachers with professional development that mirrors this strategy. Such information will help those working with teachers, schools, and districts to provide teachers with professional development increase their cultural competence. If we learn how to teach cultural competence to teachers, they will learn how to better form relationships with students, break barriers, and close the achievement gap. That said, it appears that many attempts at using professional development to teach cultural competence have been ineffective. The result is often surface-level understanding of cultural competence that manifests in poor instructional choices. For example, Schmeichel (2012) argued that:

> well-meaning educators [who] often assume that culturally relevant pedagogy means simply acknowledging ethnic holidays, including popular culture in the curriculum, or adopting colloquial speech, and predicted that attempting to implement culturally relevant teaching in this way can result in awkward classroom moments, ineffective instructional practices, and counterproductive teacher–student and teacher–parent relationships (pg. 225).

In many cases, diversity training and trainings on cultural awareness are packaged as cultural competence professional development. To shift teachers away from a deficit mindset to a growth oriented mindset (Dweck, 2006), we must acknowledge that learning about culture begins as an inside-out process with individuals developing cultural self-awareness first (Singleton & Linton, in press; Tiedt & Tiedt, 1990). Providing the opportunity to learn about various cultures alone will not help teachers to develop their cultural competence. The process involves more than learning about other people. For members of the dominant culture, this

maxim is even more important as many have not had to examine their invisible culture-based beliefs or other's cultural norms. Participants who negotiate more than one culture have a wealth of experience and skill in moving back and forth between cultures and associated expectations (Trueba, 2002).

This leads us to search for key components of professional development that engage teachers in the process of becoming more culturally competent. To do so, Bayar's (2005) model can be adapted as a framework for providing professional development. Each of the six elements of quality professional development can be aligned to the key aspects of cultural competence, as noted: (1) teacher needs yield to cultural awareness; (2) school needs yield to cultural knowledge; (3) teacher involvement in professional development yields to cultural knowledge as well; (4) teacher participation in professional development yields to cultural skill; (5) long term engagement yields to cultural encounter; and (6) high quality instruction yields to cultural competence.

In terms of the intervention that I used for this case study, I worked with the English Language district coach to provide a series of professional development sessions that contained each of the six elements of quality professional development, which Bayar (2005) identified. First, the introduction of the professional development, the session outcomes, and the agenda explicitly aligned to data that spoke to (1) the element of teacher need, and (2) the element of school need. In particular, climate data collected from teacher and student surveys and student office referral data was used.

Together, this data showed that the middle school students received more office referrals than the elementary school students. The average class size for elementary school students was 24 in comparison to the middle school average class size of 15; however, middle school students

accounted for the majority of office referrals. Additionally, the office referrals have a section in which teachers are to state the action steps taken to provide an intervention to the students. Middle school staff did not complete that portion, while elementary staff did so. This disproportionality, coupled with a lack of explanation by teachers for student referrals and what I perceived from survey responses as a school culture often difficult for students of color, drove my conclusions regarding the need for the intervention at the middle school levels. This data was shared with staff to identify the purpose for the professional development.

Second, the design of the professional development served to address elements from Bayar's (2014) model. Teacher involvement and participation were addressed as the professional development included activities that allowed teachers to engage, participate, work in teams, discuss, and reflect. The leadership, which consisted of two teachers, met with the presenter to set the agenda. Teachers were asked on a voluntary basis to meet with the team during a planning period to help plan the training. In the next section, I will further explain the process for designing the professional development sessions.

In addition, Bayar's suggestion of long-term engagement was addressed by providing two sessions on the topic of cultural competence, ongoing access to the presenter, literature on cultural competence, and frequent email communication on the topic. And finally, the professional development focused on high quality instruction, and was addressed through the selection of the presenter for the professional development sessions. The English Language district coach has firsthand experience as an immigrant. She has training in the turnkey model of professional development delivery, knowledge of cultural competence, and knowledge of the Hartford Public Schools' policies. In addition to her background and professional knowledge,

she also has teaching experience, having worked as a bilingual teacher, resource teacher, and

literacy coach.

The Intervention

This intervention study was focused on providing teachers with professional development

on cultural competence. Each professional development session took place on-site with all

certified staff members and was conducted during a 90-minute period. The first professional

development session focused on cultural values and norms. It was presented by the district coach

for English Language Learners. The aim of this session was to develop teachers' cultural

awareness and knowledge. Specifically, the content focused on defining culture, and identifying

one's value system and norms. This was done through two activities.

In the first activity, teachers worked in groups. Teachers were allowed to form their own

groups. Each group discussed the meanings of words that were on notecards. The words were

culture, *norms*, and *values.* After the discussion, groups were provided with chart paper and

markers with the task of creating a graphic representation of cultural values and norms that shape

school climate. Each group's representation was posted on chart paper and displayed on the

walls in the room. Each group then had the chance to share what was discussed as their

representations were developed. In the second activity, teachers participated in a four corners

exercise using the cultural competence ladder of influence. As an exit slip, teachers responded to

two questions: 1) How can you begin to embed this new learning in your daily practice, and 2)

What does this learning mean for your students, school or community?

The second professional development session focused on bias and perception. It was

presented by the district coach for English Language Learners. The aim of the professional

development on bias and perception was to improve teachers' cultural skills and improve cultural

encounters. In this activity, teachers viewed photos of well-known figures relevant to people of Hispanic, Islamic, and West Indian culture. They were asked to identify each person, and the person's significance. The purpose was to help teachers gauge their knowledge of the indicated social culture. Some photos, such as one of State Representative Edward Vargas in dirty sweats and a baseball cap, garnered negative attention. The names, titles, and significance of the figures were then provided. It was shared that State Representative Edward Vargas was playing baseball with city youth to support the Boys and Girls Club. The presenter asked the group to list aspects of the pictures that led to assumptions.

In the second activity, teachers were asked to write down five personal values and to not share them with the larger group. The presenter provided a definition of culture, values, and norms, for the purpose of a shared understanding. The group agreed on the definitions and they were posted. Teachers read vignettes from the book, *The Respectful School*. The presenter asked teachers to highlight any examples of values, norms, or bias found in the stories. The presenter then asked teachers to refer back to their five personal values, and to reflect on how those values may impact similar situations to the vignettes that often happen in schools. As an exit slip, teachers responded to two questions: 1) How can you begin to embed this new learning in your daily practice, and 2) What does this learning mean for your students/school or community? Table 1 below provides an outline of each session.

Professional Development	Session 1: Values and Norms	Session 2: Bias and Perception
Aim	to develop teachers' cultural awareness and knowledge	to improve teacher's cultural skill and improve cultural encounters
Design	small work collaboration teachers selected groups	Individual tasks and whole group sharing
Activity	• Define *culture, norms,* and *values.* • Discuss the definitions • Draw a graphic representation of cultural values and norms that shape our school climate	• identify well-known figures relevant to people of Hispanic, Islamic, and West Indian culture • Discuss significance of Ed Vargas
Activity	• Four corners exercise using the cultural competence ladder of influence	• Identify five personal values • Shared understanding of culture, values, norms • Book Activity "The Respectful School"
Reflection Closing	• Exit slip questions: 1) How can you begin to embed this new learning in your daily practice, and 2) What does this learning mean for your students, school or community?	• Exit slip questions: 1) How can you begin to embed this new learning in your daily practice, and 2) What does this learning mean for your students/school or community?

Table 1: Professional Development Sessions

The purpose of the professional development sessions was to support teachers' growth in cultural competency. Each professional development session followed a clear outline, with explicit aims, activities, and closure. The professional development sessions were held at the school site. All teachers, including the eight who were invited to participate in the study, attended. The sessions were considered part of the teachers' typical responsibilities. The professional development sessions were led by the English Language district coach. The coach worked with the leadership team and two teachers in designing the activities. The coach presented several options for each session for the leadership team and two teachers to select from and ask for input. The coach asked questions about previous professional development sessions, and climate amongst staff. Prior to engaging in the professional development, the coach visited each school site, the

elementary and the middle school site during a formal learning walk, and during an informal walkthrough with the leadership team.

The first professional development session focused on values and norms with an aim of supporting teachers' cultural awareness and knowledge. The second professional development session focused on bias and perception. The focus for each session was a result of a review of office referral data, communication between myself and teachers, and observations of student and teacher interactions. Teachers perceived the middle school students to be disrespectful. Students received office referrals for non-compliance and insubordination. When asked what students were doing specifically, staff stated that "back talk" and "aggressive tones" were a major concern. While observing student and teacher interactions in hallways, I noticed that teachers and students used sarcasm and aggressive tones when speaking to one another. I also noticed that teachers and students had different comfort levels with personal space, making eye contact, and handling conflict in public. Teachers were reminded to use language from the PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention Supports) model when re-directing or de-escalating students. Students were reminded to follow directions and disagree respectfully, following PBIS language and rubrics, which were posted for their use. Therefore, the topics for the professional development were selected based on the need to help teachers form better relationships with students by helping the teachers to understand how their individual backgrounds shaped their practices.

In addition, I thought that it was important that participants were provided with topics that explicitly dove into personal views and bias which can impact decision-making. I hoped to give teachers the space to connect their backgrounds and value systems to the decisions they make on a regular basis with students. The decisions that teachers make based on their

perception of non-compliance and insubordinate behavior impacts student learning outcomes. My hope was that teachers would ultimately decrease the amount of office referrals that they wrote based on student behaviors. I looked specifically at level one behaviors categorized on the office referral form as insubordinate behavior. Those behaviors that included disrespect, and defiance were all behaviors that may have been subjective based on teacher bias or perception and therefore may be influenced by new learning.

The coach offered additional professional development to teachers in the form of data team support, specifically availing herself to individual teams during student support team and planning meetings. The data cycle already enacted at the school also provided teachers the opportunity to address student academic and social needs. There was a week dedicated within the data cycle to look at social data specifically. In addition, the coach sent emails to the staff offering to support them by assisting during parent teacher conferences or individual meetings. The coach provided articles to teachers on cultural competence, English Language learners, and trauma following the sessions. She invited teachers to join a book club with another school using the book, *The Respectful School* (Wessler, 2003). Teachers read vignettes from the book during the professional development session. In the following section, I give some specifics regarding the activities utilized in these sessions and their connection to needs expressed in the data and connection to cultural competency.

Session 1: Activity 1

The words *culture*, *norms*, and *values* were posted on the smart board. The groups were asked to discuss the meaning of each word. After the discussion, groups were provided with chart paper and markers with the task of creating a graphic representation of cultural values and norms that shape school climate. The purpose of this activity was to help teachers see the culture

and climate that exists in the school. To expand teachers' cultural competency, teachers need to be knowledgeable about these elements and their role in promoting and sustaining such cultures. Each group's representation was posted on chart paper and displayed on the walls in the room. Each group then had the chance to share their graphic representations.

Teams were allowed to ask questions about the designs and the discussion that led to each graphic representation. One middle school group drew a picture of several buildings that surrounded the original school building that they were relocated from. The participants talked about how the culture had since changed. The coach asked them if there were aspects of the culture that still existed or if the culture was different. The responses varied. Some stated that the culture and climate were the same because the families who valued education at the old building site had not changed their expectations.

Session 1: Activity 2

In the second activity, teachers participated in a four corners exercise using the Continuum of Cultural Competency (Figure 4). Teachers were asked to move to the corner that best represented their assessment of themselves on the continuum presented below.

Cultural Competence Continuum

	Cultural Proficiency	Systems and organizations hold culture in high esteem, as a foundation to guide all of their endeavors.
	Cultural Competence	Systems and organizations that demonstrate an acceptance and respect for cultural differences.
	Cultural Pre-competence	Awareness within systems or organizations of their strengths and areas for growth to respond effectively to culturally and linguistically diverse groups.
	Cultural Blindness	Expressed philosophy of viewing and treating all people as the same.
	Cultural Incapacity	Lack of capacity of systems and organizations to respond effectively to the needs, interests and preferences of culturally and linguistically diverse groups.
	Cultural Destructiveness	Attitudes, policies, structures, and practices within a system or organization that are destructive to a cultural group.

National Center for **Cultural Competence** (NCCC). Cultural Competence Continuum. Adapted from *Toward A Culturally Competent System of Care, Volume 1*, Cross et al.

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Figure 4. National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC). Cultural Competence. Adapted from Toward a Culturally Competent Continuum from Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health (2004)

Of the six categories, cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, cultural pre-competence, cultural competence, and cultural proficiency, four were posted in the corners for teachers to select from. The four selected were: cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, cultural pre-competence, and cultural competence. Cultural destructiveness and cultural proficiency were discussed beforehand and the group decided that those categories would be situated in the center of the room. Teachers in each group were asked to discuss how they chose their corner. During the activity, four teachers moved to different areas. The teachers who moved

from one area to another stated that it was difficult to meet these categories of cultural

competency because there were things that they did not have control over, and these impacted

whether culturally competent strategies and policies could take place. For example, one teacher

said that she could not become culturally competent because she has no control over what the

district offers to diverse populations. No teachers stood in the middle, representing the

categories cultural destructiveness and cultural proficiency. Teachers stated that they had the

belief and the desire, but were not able to make decisions nor have the resources necessary to

become culturally competent or proficient. During the discussion, teachers shared their

individual views of how the district and the school could make changes to become more

culturally responsive. Teachers mentioned a need to have staff translate documents, and more

support for Spanish speaking families.

As an exit slip, teachers responded to two questions: 1) How can you begin to embed this

new learning in your daily practice, and 2) What does this learning mean for your students,

school or community?

Session 2: Activity 1

The first activity for the second session began with a whole group activity. Teachers were

shown images of well-known figures relevant to people of Hispanic, Islamic, and West Indian

culture. They were asked to identify each person, and the person's significance. The coach

selected the following figures: State Representative Edward Vargas, Mexican Activist Cesar

Chavez, Senegalese singer Akon, Jamaican singer Bob Marley, and Jamaican soccer player

Raheem Sterling. They were selected from a list of 10 people identified by the leadership team

and teachers who volunteered to help with the planning of the professional development. The

team and teachers selected 10 famous people who students had studied during Black history

month, Hispanic cultural month, or had learned about through one of their literature assignments. Some photos, such as one of State Representative Edward Vargas in dirty sweats and a baseball cap, garnered negative attention such as, "the uncle playing with all of the neighborhood kids." In this context, the term uncle was negative in that it is often used to describe a person who cares for a child that is not his own, who would otherwise be called a step-father, but is not legally married to the child's mother. The names, titles, and significance of the figures were then provided. It was shared that State Representative Edward Vargas was playing baseball with city youth to support the Boys and Girls Club. The presenter asked the group to list aspects of the pictures that led to assumptions. The teachers shared assumptions based on his clothing. They did not speak specifically about race.

Session 2: Activity 2

In the second activity, the coach re-visited the definitions of culture, norms, and values from the previous professional development session, and provided a definition for the purpose of a shared understanding. Teachers were asked to think about their families, their parents, religious beliefs, etc., and to write down five personal values. They were asked to put them aside and not share them with the larger group. Teachers read vignettes from the book, *The Respectful School* (Wessler, 2003). The presenter asked teachers to highlight any examples of values, norms, or bias found in the stories. In one vignette, *Equal Opportunity Violence,* teachers read the story of Sam and Michael. Sam reported his friend Michael to the police. He became scared of Michael and decided not to be a bystander. Michael disliked people of various groups, some which were represented by the populations of teachers in the professional development session such as Jews and "gays", as he referred to them. Teachers were asked to refer back to their five personal values, and to reflect on how those values may have impacted the way in which they responded

to Michael and Sam. Teachers read a second section from the book, *The Respectful School* (Wessler, 2003), in which they read about a colleague who referred to students who had been targeted with bias, prejudice, and harassment as "stealth kids." Again, teachers were asked how their personal values could impact the decisions that they make in working with the teacher and supporting the students. Teachers were asked to share only if they were comfortable.

CHAPTER III:

METHOD

I conducted an action research project as a qualitative, single case study to examine the use of effective components of professional development in helping teachers become more culturally competent. This study follows the descriptive design (Yin, 2009) using qualitative methods. This design provides a useful method for investigating the phenomenon of teacher cultural competency in the context of teaching practice. I used surveys to document the use of professional development on cultural competence in an urban school setting with eight middle school teachers. I provide education leaders with information that can be used to develop teachers' cultural competence.

The purpose of this small qualitative study was to better understand how, in a diverse and high-needs school environment, teachers' cultural competency may be extended to support student success and teacher effectiveness. The project was contained in one site with the goal to describe teachers' experiences with an understanding of cultural competency. The purpose was not to make claims regarding the study to other contexts. As such, like many small qualitative studies similarly aimed at better understanding the lived experiences of participants, the sample of eight teachers was sufficient.

Study Site

At the time of the study, I was the principal of a Pre-K through 8th grade neighborhood school, and it was at that school where I conducted the study. The school is located in an urban neighborhood where 60% of the students are African-American, 39% are Hispanic, and 100% receive free lunch. Fifteen of the fifty-nine staff members identify themselves as minority. Teachers working in the part of the city in which the study took place are perceived as having a

lack of cultural competence, as evidenced from high turnover and parent survey data collected

from yearly school climate data. Few parents answered the question on the survey, "Adults at

school respect cultural diversity." At my school in particular, 13 of the 47 parents surveyed

responded that they agreed somewhat with this statement, and one parent disagreed.

As already discussed, I focused on the middle school grades as they had the highest

turnover rate amongst staff in the school. In addition, the middle school had the highest incidents

of office referrals and out-of-school suspensions relative to the other grades in the school. By

comparison, students in grades 5 through 8 received 370 office referrals and students in grades

kindergarten through 4 received 140 based on mid-year PowerSchool data. The comparison

suggested that there was perhaps a difference in how behavior was perceived at the middle

school site and hence may indicate a need to bolster teacher cultural competency. The difference

in perception may be that the middle school teachers perceived the middle school students as

those who required sanctions to correct their behavior, whereas the elementary teachers

perceived behavior as something that could be resolved using classroom management

techniques. As such, these characteristics made the middle school site appropriate for obtaining

information on teachers' cultural competence while supporting local growth and development in

this area.

The justification for conducting the study at the site was that cultural competence was an

issue of great contextual significance to the school and myself as the administrator. It is also

important to consider that the focus of this study is on teachers' perceptions and views rather

than an evaluation of their practice or student outcomes. Therefore, the findings from this study

cannot give insights into the degree to which teachers implemented their understandings.

However, given that beliefs often drive behaviors, this study remains useful in this process.

Another reason this site was appropriate for this study was that professional development is hard to change mid-stream and is often decided upon external to the school (i.e., by the district), with the principal having control over only a few sessions. As such, it is unlikely that I would have been able to find a principal willing to give up professional development days for a topic the researcher saw fit (i.e., the focus on cultural competence). As I controlled the schedule at my school, I could adjust it for the purposes of the intervention.

Sample

I used convenience sampling to identify teachers experiencing the phenomenon at the school site. The focus was on the middle school teachers, because, as I already highlighted via the school level data, they had the highest need for interventions and supports. As a reminder, school-wide office referral data showed a difference in the number of office referrals between elementary and middle school teachers. Grades 5 through 8 were considered middle school and were housed in a location separate from the pre-K through fourth grade students. The team consisted of eight teachers, two per grade level. Grades 5 and 6 worked as a team; however, they were not departmentalized. They all taught core subjects to a homogenous class of students. Grades 7 and 8 were departmentalized, with each teacher focusing on one of the four core subject areas: language arts, humanities, science, or math. Of the eight middle school teachers at this site, six had teaching experience of less than three years in their content area. Of the eight teachers represented in the study, none were bilingual, two identified themselves as African American, and none identified as Hispanic.

Data Collection

A survey (Appendix A) was used to collect data from each teacher prior to participating in the professional development modules. The purpose of the survey was to gain an understanding of each teacher's initial comprehension of cultural competence. The survey does not allow for causal claims to be made; however, it may provide information related to the impact of professional development on cultural competence.

The purpose of the survey was to help understand teachers' perceptions regarding cultural competence and their perceived practices as needs for additional support. This small qualitative case study was meant to track the evolution of participants' views, as do many similar studies in the qualitative realm (some also using surveys) focused on interventions to support participant cultural understanding and competency (e.g., Gunn et al., 2013; He & Cooper, 2009; 2011; Matias & Liou, 2015; Russell & Russell, 2014).

Given that cultural competency is a latent construct and one that remains somewhat ill-defined, such an approach is useful and provides opportunities to build beginning understanding of how work in this area may evolve over time. Specifically, teachers were asked to rate ten statements derived from a collection of sources from the National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) at Georgetown University. I chose statements from the NCCC because of the extensive work done there on communities of practice and sustaining systems for cultural competence. The survey included questions about understanding the influence that one's personal values, cultural norms, and bias have on students. Included in the survey were questions asking teachers to rate the degree to which they participate in cultural competent practices.

In terms of collection itself, the middle school staffs of ten were invited via email to participate anonymously. Teachers who volunteered to participate were asked to assign

themselves identification numbers with randomly selected non-consecutive numbers. Consent

forms for volunteer participants were made available in the mailroom for those interested in

participating. They were directed to sign and place consent forms in a sealed envelope secured in

the school's union representative mailbox. The union representative agreed to secure the sealed

envelope until the end of the study as to not reveal participants. Although eight responses were

anticipated, ten staff members responded to the initial survey. It is uncertain why there were ten

responses. A reasonable explanation could be that two non-certified staff members took the

survey as well. There are two paraprofessionals who work in the middle school classrooms,

though the email invitation was not meant to reach them.

There were some additional inconsistencies in response patterns with fewer participants

responding to the final survey than the first one[1]. Additionally, for several reasons, I was unable

to accurately track responses over time. For example, the tracking numbers were not consistent

over the course of the study, so participants could not be tracked effectively. Some teachers lost

their self-selected identification numbers. The numbers that teachers listed from the first to the

final survey changed. To provide accurate data, the initial and final surveys were used for

analysis. Five respondents were successfully tracked from the initial to the final survey.

Analysis

I used a qualitative approach for this study. The focus was to explore teachers'

perceptions and views rather than an evaluation of their practice or student outcomes. The data

was analyzed in two ways. First, questions related to participants' views of the professional

development sessions were analyzed using Bayar's (2005) professional development

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[1] While I had initially planned to have a mid-term data point, the low responses rate (n=3)
dictated that I focus solely on the pre/post surveys due to reliability and validity concerns.

components to guide the coding schema. I chose Bayar's framework because of its logical

approach. The six components are easy to identify in professional development sessions.

Additionally, questions regarding participants' perceptions of personal cultural

competency were analyzed using coding stemming from Campinha-Bacote's (2003) framework

for assessing the process of cultural competency: cultural awareness, cultural knowledge,

cultural skill, cultural encounters, and cultural desire. I chose Campinha-Bacote's (2003)

framework because it clearly defines the aspects of culture, breaking it down into components.

The goal here was to see whether, and in what areas, participants' perceptions evolved

over the course of the experience with the professional development sessions. In terms of

trustworthiness, I worked with two colleagues to share the coding schema for the purpose of

inter-rater reliability and analysis. Prior to final submission of my capstone, I will email a copy

of the document to all of the participants for review and comments.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

This case study was conducted over the course of four months to answer the following research questions:

- In what ways can professional development influence teachers' cultural competency?

- How and in what ways might this vary across teachers?

- What elements of professional development contribute to improving teachers' cultural competence?

The results were interesting and, in some cases, surprising, in regards to how an educator's self-perception of being culturally competent contrasted with their ability to quantify or demonstrate cultural competence in their survey responses. Specifically, I focus on two emerging themes from the data:

- Values, beliefs, and norms

- Professional development

Additionally, it is useful to remember the scoring and focus of the survey, before looking at the results of the data. I selected questions derived from the NCCC at Georgetown University, based on its researchers' extensive work on communities of practice. While there is a lot of research on cultural competence in the health field, work done through Georgetown University extends to all human service needs fields, including education. In response to each question, teachers were asked to score questions on a survey using a Likert scale from 1 to 5. The least favorable response was 1 and was articulated as "Things I do rarely or never," or, depending on the prompt, as "This statement applies to me to a minimal degree or not at all." The most favorable response was 5 and was articulated as "Things I do frequently, or statement applies to

me to a great degree." Favorable responses were coded as those where teachers rated statements as: "Things I do frequently" and "The statement applies to me to a great degree." Non-favorable responses were coded as those where teachers rated statements as: "Things I do rarely or never," or "The statement applies to me to minimal degree or not at all." I categorized "Things I do occasionally, or statement applies to me to a moderate degree" as a non-favorable response because the word "occasionally" suggests a lack of consistent commitment to the practice as stated in the survey.

I report findings based on all respondents as well as those tracked from the initial to the final survey. This included eight participants who completed the initial survey prior to the first professional development session and the final survey at the conclusion of these sessions as well as their responses to the exit slips from two of professional development sessions.

For the exit slip, teachers responded to two questions: 1) How can you begin to embed this new learning in your daily practice, and 2) What does this learning mean for your students/school or community? The exit slip comments were collected to examine teachers' experiences through their lens and provided information on teachers' understanding of the information in these sessions and its potential impact on their mindset and actions. Perhaps due to the way these questions were framed and that they were more open in terms of space for responses, exit slip comments tended to cover both main themes. This result then guided my decision to present the survey data aligned with the themes first and then shift to the exit slips to show how these issues were interconnected in participants' responses and experiences.

Values, Beliefs, and Norms

In this section, I highlight the findings associated with participants' reported values, beliefs, and norms as they pertain to cultural competency and highlighted by the survey. Overall, I find that teachers perceived themselves to be culturally competent based on their understanding of culture and their interactions with families. However, despite this view, they also reported that they neither saw themselves as advocates, nor that they sought the influence of others to help them create a climate of cultural competence. The survey questions comprising Values, Beliefs, and Norms were:

- Question 1 – "When interacting with parents who have limited English proficiency, I always keep in mind that limitations in English proficiency is in no way a reflection of their level of intellectual functioning."

- Question 2 – "I have a general understanding of what culture is and how it affects student achievement."

- Question 4 – "I seek information from family members or other key community informants who will assist in service adaptation to respond to the needs and preferences of culturally and ethnically diverse children and families served by my program or agency."

- Question 5 – "I understand and accept that family is defined differently by cultures (e.g. extended family members, fictive kin, and godparents)."

- Question 6 – "Even though my professional or moral viewpoints may differ, I accept the individual and family as the ultimate decision makers for services and supports impacting their lives."

- Question 8 – "I advocate for and review our school's mission statement, goals, policies, and procedures to ensure that they incorporate principles and practices that promote cultural diversity and cultural competence."

Chart 1 below shows the percentages of favorable responses per question. Again, it is important to note that there were fewer respondents at the conclusion of the intervention (n=5) than at the start (n=9), making straight comparisons difficult. That said, we can see that, overall, there was a slight positive difference in the number of staff members with favorable responses, relative to the number of respondents across this category.
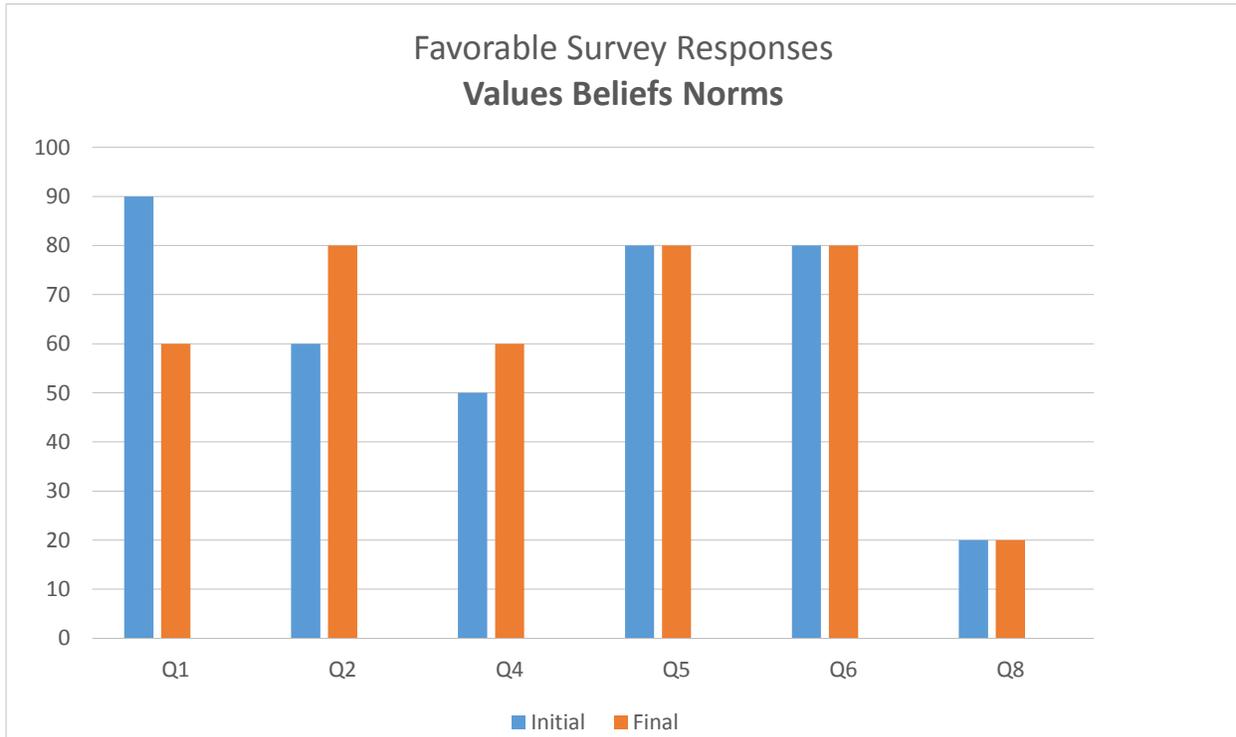

Chart 1: Favorable Survey Responses Values, Beliefs, and Norms

In the following, I explore each item and discuss differences in results between the two survey administrations.

First, prior to participating in the professional development initiative and in response to question 1, which stated, "When interacting with parents who have limited English proficiency, I

always keep in mind that a limitation in English proficiency is in no way a reflection of

intellectual functioning," nine of the ten respondents rated this statement as something that "they

did frequently" or that "applied to them greatly." One of the ten respondents rated the statement

as "Things I do rarely or never, or statement applies to me to minimal degree or not at all."

When, after participating in the professional development sessions, participants were

given the survey again, three of the five respondents rated this same statement as "Things I do

frequently, or Statement applies to me to a great degree" in contrast to the nine out of the ten

who responded as such on the initial survey. Two of the five rated this statement as "Things I do

occasionally, or Statement applies to me to a moderate degree" in contrast to zero of the ten who

responded with either of these options on the initial survey. None of the respondents gave the

lowest possible rating in the other survey administration. Taken together then, it appears that a

shift in thinking about students and families with limited English proficiency may have occurred.

In particular, the shift in the survey responses may be an indication that some of the negative bias

these teachers' held against individuals who were less fluent in English may have diminished.

Question 2 sought to gauge teachers' understanding of the connection between cultural

competence and student achievement. This question had the greatest differences in response

from the initial to the final survey from 6/10 (or 60%) of the respondents stating that the

statement applied to them a great deal, and 4/10 (or 40%) responding that the statement applied

occasionally, to, in the second administration, 4/5 (or 80%) saying the statement applied to them

a great deal, and 1/5 (or 20%) stating that the statement applied occasionally. In this way,

responses suggest that teachers felt that their understandings of the relationship between culture

and achievement had grown.

Question 4 and Question 6 were asked to gain insight into teachers' cultural encounters with families and the community, and toward understanding teachers' cultural awareness. Ladson-Billings' (2001) work speaks about a teacher's understanding and acknowledgement of the value of student culture as a means to connect to and serve students and their families. According to Campina-Bacote's (2003) framework, a teacher's willingness to learn about cultures has an impact on her ability to be culturally competent.

Question 4, "I seek information from family members or other key community informants that will assist in service adaptation to respond to the needs and preferences of culturally and ethnically diverse children and families served by my program or agency," was an outlier. For this question, one teacher responded that the statement "rarely or never applies." It was the only question for which such a response was given. From this survey response, one might ask, how do teachers, and this teacher in particular, gain knowledge about students? Is this an area in which there is a barrier? What does communication look like during these encounters?

Question 5 asked participants to respond to the value they placed on diverse backgrounds and cultures. According to Ladson-Billings (2001), teachers' acknowledgement of bias is a step in becoming aware of the impact that their own culture and background has on their interactions with students and student achievement. Question 5 asked teachers about their degree of understanding and acceptance of different cultures. There was no change in responses between survey administrations. Initially, 8/10 (or 80%) stated that the statement applies to a great degree. On the final survey, 4/5 (or 80%) rated the statement as one that applies to a great degree. One interpretation of this outcome might be that teachers began to acknowledge the diversity of the students, but they still did not fully understand the value of such diversity or how

their diversity could be applied to their pedagogy. If true, such findings are hopeful but suggest more work may be needed to move practice forward.

Question 8 focused on teachers' knowledge and promotion of the school's mission statement and goals regarding advocacy and a focus on cultural competence. There was no change in participants' responses from the initial to final survey with few saying that they advocate for programs and policies that support cultural competency. Such responses suggest a lack of commitment to the school's mission and commitment to cultural competency, and are troubling for a few reasons. First, these findings may indicate a lack of effective communication from the leadership to teachers regarding the importance of these issues. Second, one might argue that if this commitment is weak, so too will be implementation. Such findings also bring up questions regarding teachers' willingness to engage in these issues in the future. For example, according to Bayar (2005), effective professional development addresses an existing school need. Based on teachers' responses, it seemed that teachers did not think cultural competency was an issue of need at the school and hence would be unlikely to advocate for systems that ensure practices that are culturally competent.

Responsiveness to Professional Development

In this section, I highlight findings associated with participants' responsiveness to professional development as related to issues of cultural competency and building positive relationships with students and families. Overall, I find that teachers perceived the professional development as useful. However, they did not believe that they themselves needed professional development on cultural competence, and therefore did not, prior to the school delivered intervention, frequently avail themselves of such opportunities. The survey questions comprising Receptiveness to Professional Development were:

- Question 3 – "I avail myself to professional development and training to enhance my knowledge and skills in the provision of support to culturally, ethically, and linguistically diverse individuals and families."

- Question 7 – "Based on student performance, I believe there is a need for more professional development in the area of cultural competency."

- Question 9 – "Based on teacher to student interaction, I believe that there is a need for more professional development in the area of cultural competency."

- Question 10 – "Professional development sessions devoted to cultural awareness will improve student performance. Family background is a predictor of student success in school."

Table 2 below shows the percentages of favorable responses per question. We can see that, overall, there was a slight change in the number of favorable responses for two of the five questions. For two of the questions there was no change in responses and there was a decrease in favorable responses for one question.
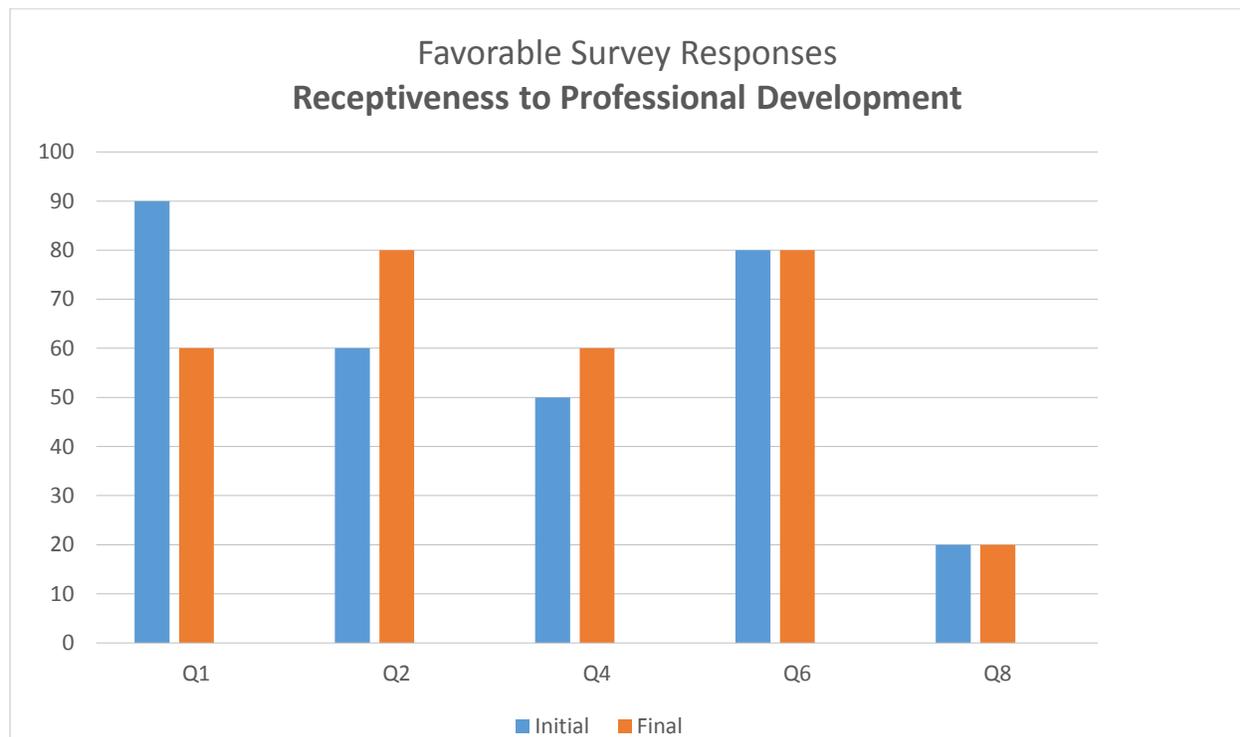
Chart 2: Favorable Survey Responses, Receptiveness to Professional Development

Question 3, Question 7, and Question 9 were asked to gain understanding of the degree to

which teachers are receptive to professional development and training on issues of cultural

competency. For Question 3, on both the initial and final surveys, teachers indicated that they

occasionally avail themselves of professional development that enhances their knowledge and

skills in the provision of support to culturally, ethically, and linguistically diverse individuals and

families. On the initial survey, 7/10 (or 70%) rated the statement as something that occasionally

applies. For teachers, this type of professional development is rarely offered in their district and

hence may reflect a lack of opportunity rather than choice. On the final survey, 3/5 (or 60%)

rated the statement as something that occasionally applies.

Question 7 specifically asked if, based on student performance, there is a need for more

professional development in the area of cultural competency. Question 9 showed no change from

the initial to the final survey. Returning to Bayar (2005) again, a key component of effective

professional development is presenting a theme with a focus that addresses an existing need of

teachers. Teachers are more likely to be receptive when an existing need is being met. Based on

their responses, one might infer that teachers do not see the need for such professional

development. Additionally, their responses suggest that these teachers do not see the connection

between their willingness to participate in professional development and a change in practice that

may result in increased student performance.

Question 10 asked if professional development on teachers' cultural awareness will

improve student performance, and if family background is a predictor of student success in

school. Initially, 6/10 or (60%) stated that the statement applies to a great degree. On the final

survey, 2/5 (or 40%) rated the statement as one that applies to a great degree. From these

responses, we can infer that teachers do not see professional development on cultural competence as a tool to support students' academic success. Teachers may still need to learn more about what the predictors of success are for students with different cultural backgrounds. This was one of the most important findings for me to have uncovered in this study. In our urgency to improve student achievement, we do not always invest in the time that it may take to see an intervention's impact. Some professional development sessions should be designed to shift mindset for teachers to be ready to receive the new intervention.

Exit Slip Findings

In this section, I shift to focus on the findings from the exit slips (see Appendix B for a full list of the exit slip responses) which touched both upon participants' values and beliefs and their views of the role of professional development in expanding teachers' cultural competency. Reading the exit slips helped me gain information that could be used to support teachers. First, teachers overall identified differentiation as an area in need of support. Second, they expressed the need to work together on school wide efforts to promote discourse not just amongst themselves, but also amongst the students.

Initially, I thought that the intervention was successful. While observing the teachers during the first professional development session, teachers were completing tasks and sharing personal experiences. Teachers appeared to be actively engaged during the session. The exit slip comments show that teachers did in fact respond favorably to the professional development sessions. The comments indicate an awareness of bias and their motivation to incorporate more culturally responsive practices in their classrooms. For example, one teacher response stated that "My students will benefit greatly from learning in a bias free community where people from all walks of life are respected and accepted." Such comments suggest that teachers were aware that

bias existed in our school community. Together, the survey responses on values, beliefs, and

norms and the exit slips showed that teachers were aware of the aspects of culture within our

school that did not support all students. This acknowledgement was important because, as an

administrator, I could see that teachers were bystanders in areas where I needed them to be

accountable and committed.

From the exit slips, it became clear that teachers began to connect the social aspect of

student experiences to academic outcomes. Teachers mentioned academic and behavioral

improvement, community, and environment. For example, one participant stated the need for, "A

focus on diversity and how we are all part of whole community," and another stated, "Students

will learn about new cultures and the diversity surrounding them outside their neighborhoods."

Teachers' responses on these exist slips seemed to suggest the expansion of their perspectives

through the intervention.

Additionally, participants' responses on the exit slips and surveys gave some insights into

the ways in which professional development can influence teachers' cultural competency, such as

by providing them with the time and space to explore their own cultural compass. For example,

different teachers shared the following statements highlighting such experiences:

> The learning the discussion with my peers helped me to see that my "preference"
> for auditory learning is a bias and that even though this is the way that I learn I
> need to incorporate more teaching strategies and activities for my students who
> are not auditory learners.

> [The professional development helped me to] Be more open to understanding my
> own biases and the bias of my students' school using that knowledge I can better
> foster a classroom which is closer to bias free.

From these statements, we can see that there is a need to continue providing professional

development on cultural competence. The exit slip comments tell us that teachers did use the

time and space to reflect on their practices. This is evidence that following professional

development, teachers may have begun to unpack their own biases – a step towards potential changes in practice. "To shift the mindset while learning about culture, we have to acknowledge that learning about culture begins as an inside-out process, developing cultural self-awareness first" (Singleton, 1990).

For example, one statement on the exit slip said, "Our school will allow us to address it." Another stated, "It will mean the whole community will begin to appreciate each other's backgrounds and value each person in a higher way," and finally, "Our school community will be strengthened as we grow in this area." While more elaboration would provide a better understanding of how the school would improve following these activities, the statements indicate the start of teachers' mindsets shifting. These quotes were important in that they provide a first glimpse into teachers feeling a sense of a call to action. Teachers wanting to change the impact of bias within the school community may also be more willing to have courageous conversations with colleagues. As part of the cultural competence continuum this demonstrates teachers' cultural pre-competence as they are becoming aware of areas for growth to respond effectively to their students. This early awareness will prime them to remain on the cultural competence continuum with the goal of becoming cultural proficient.

One final note is that, in the findings and subsequent discussion, I did not attempt to measure or compare teachers' cultural competency over time; instead, my goal was to generate ideas for next steps that administrators who organize professional development for teachers may use. The significance of this study is that it provides information related to the impact of the professional development on cultural competence that could be used for administrators in similar urban districts servicing K-8 populations.

Limitations

This study is not without limitations. For example, the small and limited sample makes generalizations difficult and perhaps inappropriate. Second, my position as the administrator of the school at the time of the study and knowledge of the teachers presents a limitation to my research. Specifically, it may have been the case that my presence influenced the results, in that teachers may have provided what they perceived to be desired answers (i.e., participant bias). Indeed, in this study, all participants gave themselves at least a medium score in areas of culturally competence. While such responses may represent reality, they might also be a function of participants being insecure about revealing skill deficits in cultural competence. No matter if the workshops or professional development were conducted by non-evaluative staff, participants knew that I, their principal, had created the survey and would be reviewing the results. I think as a researcher, I might have underestimated the power of participation bias, especially in inequitable power situations. Participants could be encouraged to answer truthfully, but in an educational reform environment where teachers are usually held especially accountable for student performance, it might have been more realistic to understand the teachers' perceptions and concerns about the final nature of this research being conducted by their administrator or to have selected a test site where I was not in an evaluative position.

Finally, while helpful in some ways, the survey did not allow for teachers to provide specific examples or give evidence of what they were thinking or doing in their classrooms. If participants believed they were indeed culturally competent, then they would express that in the survey. The survey became a wonderful tool to capture what teachers thought about themselves, but was not a dependable tool to ascertain what teachers did or used in their practices to demonstrate cultural competency. Because of the enormous role that privilege plays–class, race,

gender, power–participants really might not understand the implications or how their privileges

might be masking everyday bias and, in turn, influencing their behaviors, attitudes, and

interactions with students. This would be another example of White privilege in that the

participants own understanding, bias, and privilege would not allow them to clearly understand

or know how their attitudes or blindness would undermine their ability to be culturally

competent. Educators involved in professional development specifically around cultural

responsiveness must be "motivated to break the prejudice habit [and] stems from two sources.

First, people must be aware of their biases and, second, they must be concerned about the

consequences of their biases before they will be motivated to exert effort to eliminate them"

(Schmeichel, 2012).

Implications for Future Practice and Research

The achievement gap continues to affect marginalized students at alarming rates.

Connecticut specifically has some of the largest gaps as presented in this study. Cultural

proficiency is a skill set that is useful for all teachers as an important tool to help close the

achievement gap. I conducted this research to provide me, as an administrator, with an

understanding of teachers' perspective on cultural competence, and to explore to what degree

professional development could help to improve teachers' cultural competence. Improving

teachers' cultural competence is important because cultural competence helps teachers to break

down barriers that prevent them from forming positive relationships with students. I studied the

gap in student achievement by seeking to understand the relationship between positive teacher

and student relationships, cultural competence, and student outcomes.

The link between the three was captured in a study conducted in Hawaii by the

Kamehamea Schools Research and Evaluation team in 2010. Like the phenomenon seen in

Connecticut, marginalized groups performed consistently lower on assessments. Another similarity is that Native students are disproportionately disciplined while in school in comparison to white or non-native peers. The study used a framework for supporting teachers with components like those presented in the professional development intervention that I used for my study. The components were based on culture-based education (CBE) practices. The findings provided insight into the relationship between CBE strategies and students' learning outcomes. Specifically, Kamehamea (2010) found a set of nested relationships linking the use of culture-based educational strategies by teachers and by schools to student educational outcomes. First, culture-based education (CBE) positively impacted student socio-emotional well-being (e.g., identity, self-efficacy, social relationships). Second, enhanced socio-emotional well-being, in turn, positively affected math and reading test scores. Third, CBE was positively related to math and reading test scores for all students, and particularly for those with low socio-emotional development, most notably when supported by overall CBE use within the school (Kana'iaupuni, 2010). The results speak to understanding what a potentially powerful tool that culturally competence can play in allowing teachers to be more aware, responsive, and effective in teaching students of color or who are from a different culture than their own. These results are more than just an improvement of school climate or teachers' relationships to their students, they can also result in students of color or poverty finding more academic success.

The middle school in which my study was situated represents the phenomenon of disparity in student learning outcomes based on race. As such, my literature review and intervention focused primarily on issues of race as did the intervention. Therefore, this research on cultural competency and professional development is useful for teachers and administrators working in schools affected by the phenomenon of racial disparity in education. That said, these

findings will also be useful for those who work with diverse populations. While some teachers

and administrators may encounter schools without racially diverse students, they are likely to

encounter students from backgrounds different from their own (e.g., class, religion, sexuality,

etc.). Cultural competence speaks to the differences in religious beliefs, economic status, as well

as other cultural norms and values, and hence this research in terms of the ability of schools to

successfully support teachers in learning such skills via professional development opportunities

is applicable.

    As a reminder, in this study I aimed to answer the following research questions:

    1. In what ways can professional development influence teachers' cultural competency?

    2. How and in what ways might this vary among teachers?

    3. What elements of professional development contribute to improving teachers' cultural

        competence?

In this section I respond, via the current study's findings, to each of these questions and provide

what I perceive to be some implications of these results.

        In terms of the first research question, regarding the ways that professional development

can influence teachers' cultural competency, I find little evidence that it can, by itself, influence

teachers. However, the study showed that teachers perceive such professional development as

useful. Teachers appeared to increase their general understanding of what culture is and how it

affects student achievement as indicated in the survey results. In addition, there was a slight

positive difference in the teachers' willingness to avail themselves of professional development

and training to enhance their skills in support of culturally, ethically, and linguistically diverse

individuals and families. Teachers' responses to the professional development sessions as

indicated by the exit slips highlighted these feelings. The exit slips showed that teachers'

awareness of bias was richer and more complex after the professional development sessions.

It is worth noting that some responses on these slips were vague in comparison to the

conversations that teachers were having during the sessions themselves, and in the future such

observational data would be helpful to enhance understanding of the impact of such sessions.

For example, during one of the sessions, a teacher spoke eloquently about how the school would

change with a focus on acceptance. She spoke about how students and staff sometimes behave.

This makes me also wonder if it is the type of professional development, i.e. administrator

driven, that hinders more of these types of difficult conversations as the authenticity of reflection

occurred when teachers were talking to one another. The district has used professional learning

communities to have teachers discuss reading or literacy strategies because it creates a

professional development environment where the teachers have ownership, establish peer to peer

relationships and trust, and has more of the potential to transform their practices. The practice,

however, has not been used to discuss other issues that impact student learning outcomes.

The middle school in which my study was situated represents the phenomenon of

disparity in student learning outcomes based on race. As such, my literature review and

intervention focused primarily on issues of race as did the intervention. Therefore, this research

on cultural competency and professional development is useful for teachers and administrators

working in schools affected by the phenomenon of racial disparity in education. The survey

responses on values, beliefs, and norms and the exit slips showed that teachers were aware of the

aspects of culture within our school that did not support all students. This acknowledgement was

important because, as an administrator, I could see that teachers were bystanders when they

heard students use racial slurs. One respondent stated that sometimes teachers and others do not

address such terms due to language or dialect differences. Teachers agreed that at times they may

not know the specific definition of a word, but can tell from the context whether the word is

being used inappropriately or negatively. Taking these comments with some of the exit slips

focused on how they might respond in such instances, participants' comments indicate some

level of optimism following the professional development session. Teachers were optimistic

about being able to address cultural issues that arise.

Based on the level of engagement during the activities and these statements from the exit

slips, I would argue, despite the somewhat mixed survey responses, that schools should continue

to use professional development as one method to support teachers in their expansion of cultural

competency. These findings suggest that teachers are receptive to professional development as a

means of enhancing cultural competency (despite sometimes saying that they are not interested

or do not feel such development is needed). To continue to provide teachers with this type of

support and to capture its effectiveness, researchers should devote more time to observing

teachers while they participate in professional development sessions, in addition to surveys and

interviews. It is important to be able to collect evidence of teachers responding to the

components of professional development in the moment that the new learning is occurring. It

would be helpful to capture the pulse of the room as teachers engage in various activities to see

what triggers their new learning.

In response to the second research question, I find that professional development needs

vary among teachers. The survey data revealed that of the five questions related to teachers'

responsiveness to professional development, two questions showed more favorable responses,

two questions showed no change in the percentage of favorable responses, and one question

received a decrease of favorable responses. Together then, it seems these teachers experienced

the professional development quite differently. While the study did not get at what specifically

made these teachers feel differently, such information would clearly be useful and suggests that

administrators need to spend more time researching the types of professional development that

engage teachers with different needs and ways of understanding. We need to find ways to better

meet these diverse needs if we hope to make an impact across the faculty.

This issue—that different teachers experienced the different professional development

sessions differently—played out during the first session in which teachers participated in the four

corners activity. Teachers stood in different corners representing where they perceived

themselves to lie on the cultural competence continuum. Even among the small number of

participants, we saw that teachers stood in different places; not all perceived themselves as

culturally proficient.

Additionally, beyond diversity in understanding, teachers' own identities may also play a

role in their understandings and enactment of cultural competency; hence, this would need to be

addressed to move the conversation forward. For example, some teachers made statements on the

exit slips that indicated a need to address cultural competence in a broader sense, providing more

examples of how cultural competence affects different groups of students, and how the skill set is

useful to all teachers, even those who are diverse themselves. One teacher, for example, on her

exit slip stated: "Honestly, I don't think that I have racial bias. I am a black woman, so I tend to

be sensitive and understanding to all people who identify as a minority." Clearly, for this

participant, her identity plays an important role in how she sees herself and her connection to

issues of bias. The professional development sessions need to be differentiated for teachers to

address their specific needs and interests. Teachers themselves may need to identify their own

bias and then have it integrated into the professional development session.

Given this and other participants' statements and the survey findings overall, I would recommend that all new teachers participate in professional development on cultural competence as part of their onboarding into a new school as schools each have their own culture. I would recommend that principals invest the time in building school committees that focus on culture and climate as well as academics that continue to support all teachers.

These findings also suggest a need for principals to work with teachers to develop individual cultural competency goals as part of their yearly objectives. Teachers who are resistant, such as the teacher who did not believe that she needed professional development on cultural competence because of her race, demonstrate characteristics of cultural destructiveness on the cultural competence continuum. By providing continued professional development, such teachers may be able to make broader connections that may change their attitudes and practices.

Finally, in relationship to the third research question, the study did not provide insight into the elements of professional development that contribute to improving teachers' cultural competence. The study was inconclusive as to which specific components were best for enhancing cultural competence amongst teachers. The survey questions showed little change in most of the teachers' responses. I did not get the right kind of information from the survey questions to answer my research questions. The exit slips were fairly uniform in uncovering teachers' professional development needs for differentiation and building a climate of cultural responsiveness.

However, despite these results, I would caution readers from drawing conclusions that professional development in this area will not work in any context. My study was small and such

generalizations would not be appropriate. If anything, my findings are suggestive and warrant

further research. As part of such efforts, a longer period of time to observe Bayar's (YEAR) six

components of effective professional development in isolation would be useful in that it may

provide insight into my research question as to which components teachers find most engaging.

Additionally, other data collection methods would help to enrich our understanding. Though

useful as a first step in this case, in the future a survey may not be best way to collect data from

teachers. The questions did not necessarily give teachers the opportunity to talk about their

learning in complex ways. For example, the survey questions did not ask specific questions about

the components presented in the professional development sessions nor the degree to which they

used these components in their practice. On this note, more data regarding transfer of learning

from the sessions to their classrooms and other interactions with students, parents and colleagues

would be useful.

Indeed, the survey was perhaps too closed to allow for participants to fully express their

learning and views. Perhaps interviews would have provided the opportunity to better capture

teachers' voices. Interviews were not used in this case due to the fact that I was the administrator

and tried to collect data that was authentic. Prior to beginning the interventions at my own

school, I did make an attempt to utilize professional development time in other school districts.

Such a set-up might have afforded me the opportunity to interview teachers who I do not

evaluate and thus lessen the potential sway my position imposed in the interviews. However, it

was difficult to find a district that could accommodate the interventions as most had few

professional development days that were not slated for district initiatives or theme based.

Finally, it is important to note that the school site in which the study was done underwent

a school closure at the end of the year. The turmoil from the sudden closure impacted my study.

The timeline did not allow for me to adjust and collect more data that would have further

informed this work. Teachers were focused on finding new job opportunities, and were visibly

frustrated and anxious during the time that they were to focus on climate and culture. They began

to show a lack of commitment to the school. This may have impacted their willingness to

complete the surveys, causing me to collect data from an even smaller sample than I had

originally planned for. It may have also made participants less focused on issues of climate and

cultural competency, and more focused on finding employment after the school's closure.

Students were frustrated and anxious as well with the closing and this may have

impacted their interactions with teachers and administrators alike. Students began to express a

lack of concern over school rules as they stated that nothing mattered because their school was

closing. Oddly enough, the closure of the school brought about a discussion of racism and

exclusion. Both teachers and students shared the sentiment that if the chemicals were found in a

south end school, or a school in a suburban area, that the school would be renovated and not

closed.

Conclusion

Efforts to eradicate the perceived achievement gap must continue. Efforts require

continuous research, planning, and platforms for courageous conversations. Through this small

case study, I explored cultural competence, teachers' perceptions, bias, and professional

development through the lens of a researcher.

 In particular, I tested the notion that, through professional development, we can teach those who

we rely on to teach our high need students to become culturally competent educators. I studied

the outcomes of professional development, looking at teachers' responses to survey questions as

indicated in findings, as well as experiencing real time teacher reactions during professional

development, watching encounters between students and teachers, following professional

development sessions, and reviewing office referral data before and after the intervention of the

professional development sessions. I acknowledged implications for my work as an

administrator, for the work that I must lead my teachers to do, and for research needed in

education reform policy. I am optimistic that with further efforts to address each of these

implications, more schools, including the school, which I lead, will reach desired outcomes.

　　　　Indeed, despite the somewhat mixed results from this study, I was able to gather

information that could be used in planning future professional development sessions. The study

can be used by other principals attempting to address the broad issue of equity. The findings

captured in the survey results and exit slips indicate a need to continue the work of helping

teachers to become culturally competent. The research itself provided me with the opportunity to

study aspects of professional development that I may not have had time to consider, as well as

take a deep dive into cultural competence using a framework. The results compel me to consider

questions that I may pose to perspective teachers, allowing me to identify areas of growth that

they may need based on their cultural competence skill level.

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Appendix A
Survey Questions

Values	Norms	Beliefs
I avail myself of professional development and training to enhance my knowledge and skills in the provision of support to culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse individuals and families.	I seek information from family members or other key community informants that will assist in service adaptation to respond to the needs and preferences of culturally and ethnically diverse children and families served by my program or agency.	I understand and accept that family is defined differently by different cultures (e.g., extended family members, fictive kin, and godparents).
Even though my professional or moral viewpoints may differ, I accept the individual and family as the ultimate decision makers for services and supports impacting their lives.	I have a general understanding of what culture is and how it affects student achievement.	Based on student performance, I believe that there is a need for more professional development in the area of cultural competency.
I advocate for and review our school's mission statement, goals, policies, and procedures to ensure that they incorporate principles and practices that promote cultural diversity and cultural competence.	When interacting with parents who have limited English proficiency, I always keep in mind that limitations in English proficiency is in no way a reflection of their level of intellectual functioning.	Based on teacher to student interaction, I believe that there is a need for more professional development in the area of cultural competency.
Professional development sessions devoted to cultural awareness will improve student performance.		Family background is a predictor of student success in School.

Appendix B
Exit Slip Comments

Exit Slip Comments: Session 1

How can you begin to embed this new learning in your daily practice	What does this learning mean for your students/school or community
I continue to include and not exclude so this is real concern	Acceptance
Try to incorporate more diverse texts, open discussion about bias	Exposing them to more opportunities
I plan in my health lessons to not assume what students know, such as drugs alcohol and still explore and work to bring different sides to the topics	It will allow students needs to be met easier and give them a better understanding of the world around them and how to deal with it
Offer opportunity to open communication where all have a voice	A focus on diversity and how we are all part of whole community
I'm going to use this new learning in my daily practice by incorporating more diverse articles/books/readings with my students	Students will learn about new cultures and the diversity surrounding them outside their neighborhoods
Bring awareness to my teaching practice Provide exposure to perspectives	It will bring a level of understanding that can be transferred to students –sensitivity –new perspective
More differentiation	Better environment
I have to consistently model how to address differences	Our school community will be strengthened as we grow in this area
Provide student guided learning and discussions	Teachers and students are more able to express themselves
More conscious varied methods for differentiation	It means a better learning environment in regards to all aspects academic social and behavioral

Exit Slip Comments: Session 2

How can you begin to embed this new learning in your daily practice	What does this learning mean for your students/school or community
Choose books and materials that are culturally representative of the community at large (all of Hartford) allow more discussion time to talk about feelings	We are a work in progress We need to be more aware and respectful.
Making sure that our classrooms are inclusive of all, being open, discussing biases at all times not just limited, to months Tolerant environment	

Own and correct when bias happens Deal with reality of the students who are in front of us, take away the offense	
Honestly I don't think that I have racial bias I am a black woman so I tend to be sensitive and understanding to all people who identify as a minority	The learning the discussion with my peers helped me to see that my "preference" for auditory learning is a bias and that even though this is the way that I learn I need to incorporate more teaching strategies and activities for my students who are not auditory learners
Check the instructional materials are appropriate	Foster more acceptance and tolerance towards differences among people
To work to promote non-bias by being open to different opinions and correct bias	It means a better learning environment more respectful
Be more open to understanding my own biases and the bias of my students' school Using that knowledge I can better foster a classroom which is closer to bias free	Hopefully it will help open the minds and hearts of the students school and community
I will be able to encourage students to think about bias in a different way so they can be open to discuss their original thoughts	It will mean the whole community will begin to appreciate each other's backgrounds and value each person in a higher way
I model this behavior	Our school will allow us to address it
I can be more conscious of my biases and focus on creating the most bias free environment as possible	My students will benefit greatly from learning in a bias free community where people from all walks of life are respected and accepted
By making sure I address items that show bias as they come up in the classroom-use these as teachable moments to teach about perspectives and tolerance	These discussions will help prepare students to handle things that come up in a positive way