Professional Development Workshops on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) And Its Impact on the Pedagogical Awareness Level of Educators at ABC Middle School

Scott Napier Floyd

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS ON CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY (CRP) AND ITS IMPACT ON THE PEDAGOGICAL AWARENESS LEVEL OF EDUCATORS AT ABC MIDDLE SCHOOL

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife Brittany and sons Elijah and Isaiah. You have been patient with me throughout this journey and have understood the need for the time I have dedicated to this work. Elijah, you are my little philosopher. You inspire me each day to ask questions and to pursue truth and virtue. Never change. Continue to think critically of your world and how you can improve it. Isaiah, your steadfastness and passion for all of life’s pursuits remind me every day to live without regrets. Never accept anything less than your dreams. Live the life you have imagined. Lastly, I dedicate this work to my wife Brittany, my African Queen. You inspire me daily with your care for our family and with your commitment to kindness and well-being of all human beings. I love you in this life and the next.

“The unexamined life is not worth living.”

—Socrates
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I give thanks to God for providing the path. My faith in you and in your path allows me to pursue this sometimes-treacherous journey with courage.

I would like to express my gratitude to my parents, Drs. Lane and Susan Floyd. They have inspired me in my pursuit by laying the foundation for excellence in each of their respective doctoral fields. My father, the best man I know, has left a lasting legacy of educational leadership. His commitment to educating ALL students planted the seed in me to pursue equitable educational opportunities for all students but, in particular, traditionally marginalized students. I strive daily to continue this path for my Black sons Elijah and Isaiah, and I only hope that one day they realize the investment of my dedication to this work is for them. My mother, Dr. Susan Floyd, has instilled in me a positive mindset, the importance of fortitude, and the impact of perseverance. I hope that your legacy lives on through me regarding these three attributes.

Lastly, I appreciate the support from my committee members, especially that of my Chairperson, Dr. James Kirylo. Your guidance in designing this research study and writing this dissertation has been invaluable. Your work in this field has also provided me with valuable knowledge and inspiration to fight the good fight.
ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of professional development workshops on culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) and its impact on the pedagogical awareness level of middle school educators at ABC Middle School. This study took place during the Fall 2020 semester with seven participants: two eighth-grade social studies teachers, one seventh-grade science teacher, one eighth-grade science teacher, a German language teacher, a physical education teacher, and a front office clerical worker. Data were collected through pre- and post- questionnaires, post workshop journal reflections (written), field notes/researcher notes, and individual interviews. The results revealed that the workshop series had a positive impact on the educator participants’ development of pedagogical awareness. The study intervention resulted in increases in the participants’ willingness to develop the appropriate mindset needed for providing CRP as well as participants’ acquisition of new knowledge associated with the development of CRP.

Keywords: professional development workshop series, culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), pedagogical awareness, willingness, appropriate mindset, new knowl
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRT .................................................................. Critical Race Theory
CRP .................................................................. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
PD .................................................................. Professional Development
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In the United States, public education is supposed to be the ultimate equalizer of society, the leveler of the playing field, the gateway to opportunity for the fulfillment of dreams for all children regardless of their color, creed, culture, or community. However, questions arise as to how well America has held true to this promise and whether truly equitable opportunities exist for all students attending public schools in the United States. Because of the significant increase Black and Brown K-12 students in U.S. public schools, these questions remain critical.

Most students in public school classrooms in the United States are students of color (53.3%), a percentage that is projected to increase through at least fall 2028 (NCES, 2019). These statistics are staggering when considering the levels of cultural awareness educators require to positively impact students from differing racial/cultural backgrounds. This issue is especially significant in the face of statistics showing that 72% of public school educators are White and female (NCES, 2019). Of the 3.2 million public school teachers in the United States, only 18% are non-White (NCES, 2019). Thus, the need for a deep level of awareness and understanding of cultural differences and how these differences manifest in students’ behavior, attitudes, and well-being is paramount. When a substantive level of self-awareness exists, self-evaluation of one’s own role as an educator can occur—a critical self-reflection of one’s own position within the educational
structure, one’s role in educating students, one’s approach to providing instruction and curriculum to students, and one’s pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Although many people inside and outside the realm of education may be familiar with the term pedagogy, many are unsure of what this term actually denotes. Pedagogy has its roots in ancient Greece as paid-agogus or pedagogue, the “leader of children,” referring to the person who would lead the children to the place of education. The word pedagoge eventually evolved to mean the teacher of the children who led children in their learning or their process of becoming educated (Yannicopoulos, 1985). Thus, teaching alone does not suffice as a descriptor of understanding pedagogy. Rather, pedagogy is the process of building learning experiences based on several factors—physical needs, interests, language, cultural practices, social needs, emotional needs, and intellectual needs.

Equally crucial to consider is the autobiographical nature of pedagogy. An educator’s pedagogy is fueled by his or her prior experiences, values, ideology, and mindset (Pinar, 2004). Therefore, while pedagogy can and should be constructed and planned based upon student information, it is inherently a reflection of the core basis of an educators’ being. According to Wheeler (2013),

True pedagogy is far more than someone instructing. Pedagogy is leading people to a place where they can learn for themselves—creating environments and situations where people can draw out from within themselves, and hone the abilities they already have, to create their own knowledge, interpret the world in their own unique ways, and ultimately realize their full potential as human beings.
However, the complexity of pedagogy can also take on many specific forms. For example, such terms as critical pedagogy and culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) have surfaced to hold merit in arguments for the most effective methods for educating children. These terms will be elaborated upon Chapter Two, but for the sake of establishing a basis, pedagogy will be used in this document to denote the basic strategies and methods of educating.

The other key component of education, which is very closely related to pedagogy, is a word that is equally often perceived as simple, belying its complex nature—curriculum. K–12 and postsecondary educators alike use this term freely, as well as big-business educational resource companies and consulting firms. However, the ways in which each of these entities or individuals uses the term vary across a wide spectrum. Therefore, it is necessary to lay a foundation for the discussion to follow as to the meaning of curriculum. The most commonly recognized difference across the wide spectrum of definitions involves two basic concepts: the formal structural arrangements of learning versus the actual substance of what is being taught. Toombs (1993) put it this way:

The idea of a curriculum has been differentiated across a wide range of meanings. One basic view is that curriculum is “what is taught.” A narrow view holds that curriculum is “the body of courses that present knowledge, principles, values, and skills that are the intended consequences of formal education.” The broad view holds that “the curriculum . . . will have to be conceived as the name for the total active life of each person in college (school).” Even the set of choices from which the curriculum can be defined is broad. (p. 176)
Curriculum, originally coined as “currere,” has Latin roots, meaning to “run the course” or “running of the course” (Pinar, 2004, p. 565). A further understanding of the word that reflects its original meaning requires the consideration that “currere” refers to an “existential experience of institutional structures” so that the creator of the curriculum is able to realize that it is truly reflective of people’s autobiographical-selves (Pinar, 2004, p. 565). Therefore, in that light, perhaps with an essentialist nature of specific content standards, indicators, assessments, and prescriptive curriculum, educators have “ignored the individual’s experience of those materials” (Pinar, 2004, p. 519). For example, if Teacher A implements the same content standards, indicators, assessments, and prescribed curriculum as Teacher B but differs in his or her autobiographical understanding of these components of the curriculum, the actual, resultant teaching or pedagogy can be presented very differently. Furthermore, if Teacher A’s autobiographical understanding of the curriculum does not match the biographical realities of his or her students, a question arises as to the impact on the students themselves.

One research-based method of forging a link between an autobiographical curriculum that differs tremendously from the realities of the students being taught is by beginning with basic student data and then delving further into more specific student data. For example, standardized test scores in core subjects and demographic data paint a basic picture of a student. In contrast, qualitative data about the student’s home life, community existences, and even student interests can aid teachers in designing student-centered curriculum rather than a teacher-centered curriculum.
Although local school districts have mandated curriculum standards from state departments of education, school district leaders and school administrators must have formative ways of collecting student and community information and then using this information to modify their curriculum and pedagogy so that it is academically, culturally, and developmentally relevant to the particular learners. State curriculum standards are generally the guide from which educators develop curriculum maps or pacing guides. Teachers develop unit, weekly, and daily lesson plans based on these documents in order to deliver the prescribed curriculum. These “essential” bits of knowledge, skills, and concepts are crafted to prepare students for postsecondary options, whether they will further their education at a postsecondary institution or enter the workforce.

Most importantly, the vital information garnered from standards and pacing guides must include data and anecdotes collected from interactions with students. Well-crafted educator–student relationships foster the intentional and unintentional collection of this qualitative data. Forming and maintaining positive relationships with students are critical for academic success, especially when trying to impart knowledge and skills to students who struggle with learning (Decker, 2007). Equally critical is assessing the formative, qualitative data collected from students concerning student writing and reflection and using this data to inform future instructional decisions.

For example, “when the interests, lives, and cultural resources of students are drawn upon and studied,” instructional curriculum decisions can be made in the interest of increasing learners’ engagement through strategic methods of building the classroom community by incorporating students’ cultural background into the curriculum (Gillaspy,
It is essential that the curriculum that teachers deliver, facilitate, or impart take into consideration the students’ instructional needs, interests, and cognitive processes. If educators are to truly develop children who come from diverse communities, they should accommodate the values and mores of the community where the children have been raised. For example, some schools may not be successful due to trying to fit a curriculum and pedagogical model into a school society that simply does not reflect the cultural context of the community.

The divide between educational experiences provided and students’ reception of the experiences in many ways can be viewed along racial lines. For example, many White teachers may be unable to relate to their Black students in ways that demonstrate their understanding of how to motivate, manage, and provide relevant instruction for Black students (Howard, 2010). The statistics are clear, ever-present, and ever-powerful—82% of all public educators identify as White (Marcy, 2010). Moreover, Black students are disciplined 3 times more frequently than White students (Civil Rights Data Collection, 2014, p. 28), and Black students perform significantly lower than White students on every measure of academic measure (Pew Research Center, 2017, p. 33). Howard (2010) stated it best,

The development of cultural competence and racial awareness is painful, difficult, and frequently avoided by many people in general, and practitioners in particular: It requires opening oneself up to critical inspection, harsh criticisms, and condemning opinions of others, and it entails having to listen to the unflattering assessment of one’s own actions. This is especially painful when an individual believes firmly that she is fair to all students, equitable when it comes to
providing learning opportunities, and committed to creating a just learning environment. Critical reflection is an ever-evolving task that it is never complete. (p. 117)

Teachers employed within school systems view students differently according to their racial category. There are notable differences in society’s definitions of Black and White students. However, these differences are due not to race but culture. Culture is developed within a person in response to the experiences he or she experiences/endures throughout life, not on account of genetic inheritance. However, the impact of race and culture is felt in every facet of the human condition. As framed by Howard (2010), Palmer’s notion of “we teach who we are” has significant implications for the teachers of today’s learners in diverse schools and offers critical implications for developing greater cultural competence. What is important within a critical reflection and self-assessment framework is for educators to ask themselves the vital question, Does “who I am” contribute to the underachievement of students who are not like me? (Howard, 2010, p. 114). Educators are not immune to the impact of racial conversations, racial data, racially driven crimes, or analyses of events from a racial standpoint. Thus, the impact of educators’ underlying beliefs pertaining to student differences due to race could have a potentially extremely adverse influence upon the educators’ ability to educate students of color. Potential outcomes include poor academic achievement by African American students since negative racial stereotypes can subconsciously impact the attitudes, mindsets, and motivations of educators.

For years, scholars have analyzed the relevant data and communicated about the underperformance of African American children in school compared to their same-aged
peers from other cultural groups. Authors have postulated various reasons for the underperformance—lower socioeconomic status, lack of parental support, and numerous other factors. Gloria Swindler Boutte’s “Educating African American Students: And How Are the Children?” (2016) provided an interesting and relevant view of the importance of improving the educational experience of African American children in America. However, while Boutte did not discount the impact of the aforementioned factors, she matter-of-factly contended that another considerable factor contributed to the disparate educational outcomes of marginalized children: “the role that educators and school play in the equation” (Boutte, 2016, p. 11). In other words, in order for the state of African American students to improve, educators must embed CRP into their schools and classrooms.

In that light, educators must develop a thorough understanding of the development of racial categories as socially constructed phenomena before attempting to implement models such as CRP. This understanding is also necessary before implementing strategies such as critical literacy, comparison/contrasts of Standard American English and African American Vernacular, implementation of Afrocentric pedagogy, or strategies that develop students’ critical consciousness to help them fully understand the impact of race in America. Once this understanding of race and its impact on educators’ mindsets has been developed, the teachers can then begin to understand the noted differences in students from a cultural awareness perspective rather than along discreet lines of color or race. Then the work of designing and implementing CRP in schools and classrooms can begin.
Statement of the Problem of Practice

As the researcher for this study, I am the principal of a middle school in the Southeastern United States that serves 586 students in grades 7 and 8. Out of the total school population, 81% of the students are “economically disadvantaged,” 61% are Black, 25% are White, 10% are Hispanic, and 4% are classified as Multiracial. Statistics show that 68% of teachers are White and 72% are female. The school has a rich history of providing equitable education opportunities for African American students. In 1881, the school’s founder opened the school for former enslaved Africans/African Americans to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic as well as technical and homekeeping tasks (Botsch, 1997). The school operated as a K–12 institution for African Americans up until the integration of schools. It then became a lower secondary school for White and Black students enrolled in the ninth and 10th grades.

In the 1980s, the school was positioned as a middle school serving students enrolled in sixth through eighth grades. Ultimately, however, the school evolved to serve seventh- and eighth-grade students as a direct feeder school to the high school. During the 2018–2019 school year, African American students were disciplined at an 8 to 1 ratio compared to White students (ScholarChip, 2019). Black, Brown, and Multiracial students also consistently scored well below White students, as measured by standardized assessments in ELA and mathematics in 2019 (SC State Report Card Data, 2019). Collectively, as the principal of the school, this data troubled me. I wondered why Black students were being disciplined at an 8 to 1 ratio compared to White students. I wondered why Black students performed well below White students at the school on standardized assessments in ELA and math. I wondered what I could do as the leader of the school to
have a positive impact on these inequitable student outcomes. Based on these data and considerations, I began to contemplate whether a series of professional development (PD) workshops designed to build teachers’ cultural awareness could positively impact their pedagogical approach regarding the provision of fostering CRP. The assumption was that the more aware they were, the likelihood of them being more critically mindful in how they administered discipline and how they approached their instructional practice would be positively impacted.

**Research Question**

The study sought to answer the following research question:

What impact will PD workshops on CRP (CRP) have on the pedagogical awareness level of seven middle school educators at ABC School?

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research was to examine the impact of PD workshops on CRP and its impact on the pedagogical awareness level of seven middle school educators at ABC School.

For the purposes of this study, a series of PD workshops on CRP was defined as a 6-week seminar in which seven educators were led in interactive discussions and simulations designed to increase their awareness of concepts related to CRP. Participants were guided through exercises that encouraged them to reflect on their current pedagogical and instructional practices. Next, educators were exposed to samples of culturally relevant pedagogical instructional, structural, and managerial practices and asked to provide examples of how they could implement similar aspects of the examples in their practice.
For the purposes of this study, cultural awareness was distinguished as a level of understanding of behaviors, attitudes, approaches, and beliefs of Black and Brown students, particularly African American students, since 61% of the students at the school were African American. This awareness level in educators is typically manifested in an ability to reflect on situations, behaviors, and even educational experiences in a manner that includes the nuances of how minority (Black) students interpret, act, and interact with people and situations. Based on the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings (2014), the term CRP was distinguished for the purpose of this study as the awareness and valuing of cultural-minority peoples’ values, behaviors, and attitudes, especially as they differ from the dominant culture’s ways of being.

**Theoretical Framework**

The framework guiding this study was based on being relevant or responsive to the cultural needs of minority students. Critical to each of the approaches in the framework is a definite level of awareness and understanding of how students’ cultural ways of being impact their approach and attitude toward learning. After educators experience improvement in cultural awareness and understanding, they can then use cultural knowledge and competency to frame the educational experience to better suit the cultural needs of learners. All aspects of the educational experience—from the educational environment, to basic classroom rules and structures, to actual instructional strategies and curriculum) are included in educational pedagogy. According to Howard (2010), pedagogical knowledge involves an understanding of how “to transform” an understanding one possesses of an academic discipline “into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations in ability and background presented by
students (p. 15). The research indicates that it is imperative for educators to understand the autobiographical nature of the curriculum. Accordingly, they need to reflect and ask themselves, “Does who I am contribute to the underachievement of students who are not like me?” (Howard, 2010, p. 114). Then, through their own understanding, educators can begin the emancipatory work of public education by providing experiences that are truly equitable for all students regardless of their race or cultural heritage.

**CRP**

The concept of CRP, originally proposed by Gloria Ladson-Billings in 1995, is an approach that involves providing an educational experience for minority students that recognizes American education as built upon Eurocentric value-laden practices and consequently seeks opportunities to embed aspects of Afrocentric or other minority cultural canons. CRP comprises three main components: academic achievement (defined as intellectual growth), cultural competence (the teacher’s ability to help students celebrate their culture while building the knowledge and fluency of another [dominant] culture), and sociopolitical consciousness (the ability to take the learning beyond the classroom and analyze and solve worldly problems; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Ladson-Billings (2014) later added to the three original pedagogical pillars an understanding that systems are constantly changing and the need for educators to develop in students the ability to sustain such an evolutionary mindset. For example, the author explained, although many teachers have implemented strategies that embed culturally relevant examples and express strong beliefs in academic efficacy, they “rarely pushed students to consider critical perspectives on policies and practices that may have a direct impact on their lives and communities” (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 17).
Methodology

This study’s research methodology was based on a mixed-methods action research design. The data collection instruments consisted of pre- and post-questionnaires, formal interview records from participants, the researcher’s field notes as documented during each session, and scheduled participant journaling.

Seven educators were chosen to participate in this action research study based on the responses they provided in an initial interest application. Participation involved attending a series of PD sessions. The group of participants spanned the seventh- and eighth-grade levels and represented a variety of content certifications. In particular, one of the questions included in the interest application required potential participants to indicate their level of experience with PD related to cultural awareness and culturally relevant education. Another question asked the participants to provide a self-perceived rating of the degree to which they already engaged in culturally relevant educational strategies and systems in their professional practice as educators. Based on the participants’ responses to these questions, as well as the information indicating their level of interest in participating in the study, participants were selected to provide a diverse range of experience levels relating to the provision of culturally relevant education.

Their perceptions of race and attitudes toward providing CRP to minority students in the school were measured initially and again after each of the six (total) 1-hour sessions that I facilitated. Following participatory action research methodology, the teacher-participants’ post-session reflections (including open-ended questions, opinion-gathering prompts, and scale-rated measures) guided the subsequent sessions. Pre and
post surveys administered to the educator-participants were also used to measure the impact of the intervention.

The study’s physical location was a lower secondary school in the southeastern United States. Since this investigation comprised an action research study, it was imperative for the PD sessions and data gathering to occur at the school site. The 6-week series of PD experiences were conducted in the training room of the school building.

**Significance of the Study**

CRP has three interrelated components: student learning (academic achievement), cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. By engaging in specific content-related learning, consistent reflection, and pertinent discourse with other educators related to these topics, educators can develop an appropriate mindset for providing CRP. Initially developing the needed level of cultural awareness and cultural proficiency prepares teachers to take the next step toward changing their practices and pedagogy to an approach that is culturally inclusive for minority students.

This study offers recommendations to educators to help them improve their provision of equitable learning opportunities for students by specifically focusing on strategies related to providing students with a culturally relevant pedagogical experience. Considering the study findings, will enable educators to reflect on their current pedagogical practices and aspects of their current mindset while learning about approaches that can better fit the needs of their learners. Specifically, educators will be able to see specific examples of content that will provide opportunities for framing their perspective and mindset, along with examples of interpersonal communication and
instructional, curriculum, and classroom management strategies that can benefit their provision of CRP.

**Researcher Positionality**

Concerning research conducted on the impact of educators’ perceptions and beliefs about race and how this impact affects their approach to pedagogical decisions and implementation, I have had to recognized the need to be abundantly aware of my own positionality in the research. This research is relevant and critical to my understanding of how to improve educational opportunities for Black students, and I feel it necessary to consider the aspects of my position in society and in the lives of Black students in the school setting. Society recognizes me as a White, southern male. That said, I am married to an African American woman and have two biracial sons. While we are able to choose our race in America, American society considers my sons Black. I am also the principal of a public school in which 55% of the students are Black and come from impoverished neighborhoods. Therefore, my positionalities toward this research are complicated. As a White, southern male, I could be considered an outsider to this research phenomenon since I have not directly experienced what it is like to be a Black student in American public schools.

As the principal of the school in which many of the research participants are enrolled, I am an “insider” within the research study. I must keep this understanding at the forefront of my mind when making research decisions or when gathering data to ensure that my positionality does not impact the research in a matter that would alter the evidence. For example, my being in a position of authority, as the “boss” of these educators can create the impression that the educator-participants must respond in a way
that I want them to respond or fear reprisal. One fortunate existing aspect of our school-wide culture that has set the stage to alleviate such pressure is an idea called collective leadership. We are designated as a collective leadership school by our state department of education. Essentially, this means that we have organizational structures as well as school-wide practices and mindsets designed for collective decision-making all under the umbrella of our school vision and mission. Educators understand that their voice, and thus their opinions matter, especially when it comes to their own professional learning. Nonetheless, I understand that I must specifically communicate to educator-participants my expectation for their complete honesty throughout the workshops and research gathering. Based on these analyses of positionality, I feel that it would be important for this research study to be designed using the reciprocal collaboration approach, in which the research is completed in collaboration between insider and outsider teams (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 40).

To offer further understanding of my multiple positionalities and connection to the research, I provide the following excerpt from my dissertation reflection journal:

One warm but crisp, September afternoon in the Pee Dee region of South Carolina, Sebastian and Stephen walked home from school together as they always did when the weather permitted. They talked and joked the whole way home and then dropped off their book bags at home so that they could get busy with the primary task of the day—afternoon play time. Both Sebastian and Stephen’s parents worked late so their afternoon routine of walking, stashing their book bags and then meeting back up to play at either of their houses occurred like clockwork each afternoon—especially during the fall when school was back in
session from the summer break. Both of the boys liked being back in school but they liked most the guarantee of afternoon play time together for a few hours each day before each of them had to go home for homework and supper.

This particular after-school playtime session was no different. While on their walk home from school, the boys designed a masterful plan for building a tree house fort in a large oak tree across from Sebastian’s house. Twenty minutes later they were busy climbing the tree, hammer and nails in hand. Both of the boys were fearless as they climbed and navigated through the vast web of oak branches. Stephen worked on an area near the periphery of the tree while Sebastian crafted the main post which was a section of the tree-house fort designed around the large tree trunk. Stephen was sure to gather rocks and acorns for defending the fort from this peripheral post. He brought his trusty slingshot that he usually used for popping Palmetto Bugs and mosquitos in order to defend the newly established tree house fort.

Moments later, Sebastian noticed two figures approaching their fort from the bottom of the hill. They had been playing, working and building for a while so dusk was rapidly approaching. When the figures got closer, Sebastian recognized them as Jamar and Tyliek, two boys who were in his class in 3rd grade. Jamar’s hair style had changed since last school year and he looked differently due to now having braids. Sebastian began to descend down so that he could invite the two boys into their newly adopted tree house fort when he heard Stephen shout, “N*&&^%$!” Stephen then began throwing rocks and acorns at the boys while continuing to shout the N word. Jamar and Tyliek immediately took off and ran.
away back down the long hill until they were out of sight. Sebastian did not understand this treatment by Stephen. He asked him if he knew the boys and wondered if he had a problem with them due to past interactions. Stephen did not know the boys. He simply replied, “They’re N*&&%$#!” At this point, Sebastian decided to go inside for supper. He was really puzzled by this scenario and treatment of these boys who Stephen did not even know.

After eating supper, Sebastian sat with his daddy while he watched Jeopardy on their new big box 25-inch television. His father watched the show every week-night and knew the “question” that correlated to every single answer prompted by Alex Trebek. During a commercial break, Sebastian asked his father, “Daddy, what is a N*&&%$?” His father, who always had a way with words, was taken back. He did not know how to respond, at first. He said to Sebastian, “It is a horrible word that racist people use to refer to Black people.” This just further confused Sebastian. “Racist? What’s that?” pondered Sebastian. His father further attempted to explain and Sebastian told his father about the incident with Stephen from earlier that day. Although Sebastian’s dad was unsuccessful in explaining the situation to him, two definite conclusions were made from the incident that afternoon with Stephen, Jamar, and Tyliek and the resultant conversation with his father: 1. Sebastian knew that he needed to find a new after school play-mate and 2. Sebastian sought to understand the phenomenon of race and racism.

The narrative above is a snapshot of the perceptions and racial attitudes of people from a small town in South Carolina in the year 1989. Almost 30 years later, the same racial lines and perceptions define our realities as we see them
from different cultural lenses. Stephen viewed Jamar and Tyliek as different, sub-human beings because of their race. Sebastian did not see the differences in the same light but the exposure to the bigoted actions on that day opened his eyes to an all new world of the history and social construction of race. Sebastian was/is me—Scott Napier Floyd—and I have been driven by this very occurrence to understand and eradicate unfair, inequitable, and downright bigoted treatment of people due to race. In fact, I feel that other than being a loyal and loving husband to my beautiful Black wife and a caring and patient father to my two biracial sons, this pursuit is my life’s purpose. Thus, I have a deep interest in this topic and particularly in how public education can positively improve the lives of African Americans. In many ways I am an insider to this research: I am a principal of a middle school with 55% Black students and 90% of students who are impoverished, my wife is African American and my sons are biracial. However, I am a White, Southern male which also provides me with an outsider’s viewpoint. Throughout this research quest, it will be very important for me to continually acknowledge the impact of my multiple positionalities and record my thoughts and decisions in regard to my perspectives.

**Summary of the Findings**

Using a pre- and post-intervention questionnaire, journal reflections and prompts, formal interviews, and field notes collected during workshops, I was able to examine the impact of a workshop series on the educator-participants’ development of CRP. Examination of the data collected revealed two dominant themes: (a) educator-participants’ willingness to engage in the work and (b) educator-participants’
development of the knowledge base needed for providing CRP. For the first theme, I was able to see the participants’ development through the quality and quantity of input provided during and after workshops related to their dispositions and mindsets while engaging in conversation and journal writing. For the second theme, the researcher was able to observe participants’ knowledge development through their comments within the workshops and reflective writing responses that showed a synthesis of concepts learned during the workshops. Chapter 4 presents a further discussion of these themes.

**Dissertation Overview**

Chapter 1 of the dissertation included an overarching framework for providing a contextual understanding for the study and the research questions. Chapter 2 offers a review of the pertinent literature focused on the topics of Critical Race, CRP, cultural awareness, and educator development strategies. Chapter 3 describes the specific methodological approach taken as well as information about the study participants. Chapter 4 discusses the study findings and initial interpretations of the intervention phase. Chapter 5 includes analysis and implications of the study with recommendations for further research. The chapter also includes an action plan for sharing the findings with the participants and other educators within the school and school district setting. These chapters delve deeper into the problem of practice and further connect the theoretical framework to the entire research study.

**Glossary of Terms**

1. **Afrocentric pedagogy** (Afrocentricity): relevant connections to African cultural patterns and cultural production in order to emphasize the legitimacy of the Afrocentric perspective.
2. **Critical race theory** (CRT): “the view that race, instead of being biologically grounded and natural, is socially constructed and that race, as a socially constructed concept, functions as a *means* to maintain the interests of the white population that constructed it” (Martinez, 2014).

3. **Cultural deficit theory** (cultural deficiency mindset): the perspective that minority group members are different because their culture is deficient in critical ways from the dominant majority group (Davis & Museus, 2019).

4. **CRP**: a student-centered approach to teaching in which the students’ unique cultural strengths are identified and nurtured to promote student achievement and a sense of well-being about the student’s cultural place in the world. It consists of three components: a. Student Learning, b. Cultural Competency, c. Socio-political Consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

5. **Eurocentric pedagogy** (Eurocentrism): curriculum that focuses on the ideas and achievements of Western cultures, including Europe and the English-speaking world. It ultimately stems from an underlying sense of European exceptionalism, a notion adopted by students and then passed on in a perpetual cycle.

6. **Marginalized students** (Marginalize): to put or keep (someone) in a powerless or unimportant position within a society or group.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This literature review begins with an account of an essential historical perspective and an examination of critical race theory. Building upon that foundation, literature pertaining to educators’ professional practices is scrutinized through the lens of critical race. Ultimately, an investigation into research regarding preparing educators with the mindset and tools necessary to provide students with CRP is provided. Common themes that are explored include an analysis of the impact of a culturally-deficient mindset, systemic racism in American schools, and the failure of colorblind solutions to address inequities. Following the review of these themes is an exploration of additional understandings of relevant literature related to CRP. Integral discussion topics include curricular considerations, effective professional learning, and innovation (actual and sustained).

Historical Perspectives

Black culture in America began developing 400 years ago as Africans were thrown together from completely distinct African tribes. In order to survive, enslaved Africans had to depend on each other by piecing together the different aspects of their tribal culture into a common language, customs, and traditions (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). American society created race for the purpose of clearly defining free men from slaves. White men were free. Black people were slaves. Since the initiation of race, the
concept has been molded into an idea that reflects characteristics and stereotypes (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). For centuries, the cultural identities of African Americans have been pushed and pulled via politics, labor markets, social institutions, and experiences. In 2019, mass media also had a tremendous impact on Black people’s social image or identity as well as their self-image. The reality is that only 400 years ago, American slavery stripped away their ancestors’ deeply-entrenched ethnic identities. The aspects of identity that once defined them as members of an African ethnic tribe were strategically removed. African American slaves then had to build a common cultural identity for the purpose of survival. From this desire to survive, they developed systems of language, religion, music, kinship systems, and more. The ingenious system of self-preservation blossomed into a unique cultural system identity (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007).

**Critical Race Theory**

Martinez (2014) defined critical race theory as “the view that *race*, instead of being biologically grounded and natural, is socially constructed and that *race*, as a socially constructed concept, functions as a means to maintain the interests of the white population that constructed it” (p. 10). This view provides the foundation for an investigation into effective PD theory and practices and a thorough examination of approaches to educational curriculum development and implementation. Race was socially constructed hundreds of years ago for the purpose of maintaining the economically advantageous system of plantation slave labor (Howard, 2010). Beginning with Bacon’s rebellion, early plantation owners realized that if they did not provide a solution to prevent further slave rebellions, their extremely profitable system of free agricultural labor would no longer exist once neighboring plantations learned of
successful rebellions, which would overthrow the power and dominion of the wealthy planters. Accordingly, planters came together and developed a solution to prevent further rebellions. The unity among African slaves and European servants that had proven beneficial to successful rebellions would be dissolved by elevating the European workers to the antagonistic position of overseer. Immediately, the lines of color were clearly defined—slaves were Black, and those in power were White. A system previously not defined by color had now been redefined on those terms. Thus, race in America came into being (Howard, 2010).

Racism is the institutionalized system of discriminating against a person or persons based on the color of their skin. Racist acts can be done overtly or unconsciously (Martinez, 2014). Critical race theory provides a lens for understanding the intentional and unintentional adverse effects of racist practices in K–12 education. The United States has a history of institutionalized discrimination: From racial slave codes to stereotypical propaganda infused into music, advertisements, movies, and even video games (Robinson, 2004). Deeply entrenched racist practices and perceptions are characteristic of American society. As Ladson-Billings noted, (1999) noted, “racism is ‘normal, not aberrant, in American society’ and because it is so enmeshed in the fabric of our social order, it appears both normal and natural to people in this culture” (p. 212). Even in 2020, many of the legislative, programmatic management, and media exposure decisions made have resulted in the oppression of people from minority groups. However, more prevalently, decisions that were made decades ago that were not inclusive of minority cultural groups still determine who benefits from programs and policies and who does not. Public education is a prime example of this (Groos, Wallace, Hardeman, & Theall,
American students of African descent are strikingly unsuccessful in U.S. public schools. They are disciplined, suspended, and/or expelled from schools at an alarming and disproportionate rate compared to students of European descent (Civil Rights Data Collection, 2014). Black students are also referred and retained into special education categories and classrooms at an unbalanced rate compared to their White counterparts (Robinson, 2004).

The connection between race and culture is vital to understand when attempting to improve educators’ provision of CRP. Many of the nuances and attributes presented by students that are indeed cultural attributes can be mistakenly viewed as racial characteristics. However, it is essential for educators to understand the differences and to be able to clearly delineate between the two, especially educators who identify as White and who teach Black students. This is imperative so that these educators are able to understand that all can develop cultural understanding, awareness, and competency, regardless of their racial label. In other words, White educators are able to build their cultural competency to allow them to better provide for their Black students. One way to ensure that this concept is understood is by making sure that educators understand the social construction of race and the false information that claims any biological component to race.

For example, “recent research on regional and racial variance in Mitochondrial DNA, a traditional marker for human racial groupings, shows a higher proportion of variance within than across racial categories” (Brown & Armelagos, 2001, p. 35). Despite the absence of a biological basis, added to evidence of greater genetic variation within racial groups than between them, the presence of race in America and in American
schools remains powerfully prevalent. However, when viewing American public education through the lens of critical race theory, one can easily recognize the racism that is embedded in U.S. institutions. Analysis of schools’ student outcome measurements and statistics from law enforcement agencies reveals racially-skewed data, a red flag warning of systems that are intrinsically discriminatory. Critical race theory “presupposes the historical and contemporary role that racism plays and has played in education, and asks a more penetrating question: How has racism contributed to educational disparities, and how can it be dismantled?” (Howard, 2010, p. 99). While the referenced disproportionate student outcomes clearly demonstrate racial imbalances, when educators are able to make the connection that the outcomes for Black students do not stem from any inherent deficiencies attributable to race, they are positioned to address the differences that do exist and permeate classrooms—culture.

**Cultural Deficiency Mindset**

Significant connections between educators’ perceptions of race, their approach to educating African American students, and the underperformance of Black students as measured by grade-level tests can be analyzed through the lens of critical race theory (Marcy, 2010). The U.S. educational system is fundamentally structured in a manner that is not conducive to the education of Black students due to pedagogical practices and attitudes that are largely centered around White culture (Marcy, 2010). The cultural deficit theory offers the perspective that marginalized group members are different because their culture is deficient in essential ways from the dominant majority group (Davis & Museus, 2019). In fact, pondering the impact of a culturally deficit mindset among educators brings to mind students who are not provided appropriate and relevant
instruction, particular to their cultural needs, resulting in skill and knowledge levels far
below the grade-level standard. The data have consistently revealed that the majority of
Black students in America fall short of the grade-level content standards, especially when
compared to White students (Musu-Gilette et al., 2017). However, cultural deficit
ideology among educators (i.e., the view of educators who conceptualize the culture of
students from marginalized groups as inferior to dominant culture) can also do significant
damage to the potential of otherwise gifted Black students. Such thinking hinders
educators’ ability and willingness to recognize the strengths of African American
students. Ford et. Al (2001) described this phenomenon with the following observation:
“Too often, educators interpret differences as deficits, dysfunctions, and disadvantages;
thus, many diverse students gain the ‘at risk’ label” (p. 53). Educators must move beyond
a deficit orientation in order to recognize the strengths of African American students.
Changing educators’ thinking about differences among children holds great promise for
recruiting and retaining culturally diverse students in gifted education. On a hopeful note,
Marcy (2010) contended that through critical self-reflection and productive race dialogue,
which are both taught and facilitated in professional learning communities, educators’
perceptions of their Black students would change from a “deficit model” mindset to a
cultural relevancy mindset.

Systemic Racism

The racial contract theory, based upon Charles W. Mills’s work, makes the
following claims:

1. By and large, White supremacy has been a constant globally and locally
for many years.
2. Uncompromisingly, White supremacy should be viewed as a political system that can be legitimately theorized as an entity founded upon a “contract” exclusively among Whites, thus becoming a “Racial Contract.”

(Robinson, 2004, p. 25)

Labeling deviance theory (labeling theory) applies to the disenfranchisement of Blacks, purporting that any behaviors or attitudes that deviate from the Eurocentric normalization of American schools result in the labeling of the child as a “deviant.” This “deviance,” as in the case of K–12 education, is then seen as a child who is “disabled” and thus needs to be served with special education services (Robinson, 2004).

Racial formation theory analyzes the social construction of race and its sociological, legal, and economic impact on individuals and governmental systems (Omi & Winant, 1986). Robinson (2004) explained that the intersectionality of the aforementioned theories provides an understanding of the impact of race on educational institutions today. Each of these theories is central in shaping a lens to facilitate designing a system of professional learning that works to foster an awareness of culture among educators. Equally significant is an understanding of how the socialization of race impacts the development and continuation of culture.

After analyzing the situation of African American students in the 21st century through lenses of the racial contract, racial formation, and the labeling deviance theories, a look at Robinson (2004) is helpful, with its introduction of Afrocentric educational discourse as a viable alternative to Eurocentric educational discourse. Afrocentric educational discourse rejects the negative attributes of Eurocentric educational discourse, thereby offering “legitimate sociopolitical emancipatory implications for African
Americans throughout the enterprise of schooling and beyond” (Robinson, 2004, p. 3).

Through careful analysis of the literature, Robinson reached the conclusion that the continued marginalization of African American students was based on the foundation and continuation of a Eurocentric value-laden educational system.

Solorzano and Yosso (2001) provided a concise but solid understanding of the five components of understanding society—and thus students in public education—from a critical race theory perspective: (a) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism, (b) the challenge to dominant ideology, (c) the commitment to social justice, (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (e) the interdisciplinary perspective. The literature presents examples of many stereotypes of minority people/students that are prevalent in the media as well as those that are proliferated professionally and in educational society. Researchers have explained and demonstrated how each stereotype contributes to a deficit mindset on the part of the dominant cultural group. For instance, Solorzano and Yosso (2001) observed,

The reason they (Black children) do not try as hard is not because they are inherently lazy, nor is it because they are stupid . . . these students belong to a culture infected with an Anti-intellectual strain which subtly but decisively teaches them from birth not to embrace school-work too whole heartedly. (p. 1)

The researchers further provided a four-step strategy for making the transformation from a deficit mindset to an understanding of the facts of life from a critical race theory perspective:

1. Define and give examples of racism.
2. Identify stereotypes in media as well as examples that defy stereotypes.
3. Identify stereotypes in the professional setting and analyze their relationship to media stereotypes.

4. Find examples that challenge and transform stereotypes. (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 7)

Pollack and Zirkel’s viewpoint (2013) contesting inequities is also of interest. The authors claimed that enacting solutions that clearly define the mutual benefit of all students (privileged Whites included) can begin to crumble the walls of inequity. In essence, people’s differences are cultural, not racial. Solutions that address culture, not skin color and not race, can have a lasting impact. When educators are prepared to understand, appreciate, and engage in the cultures that their students represent, opportunities for students who have been marginalized will increase. The researchers also suggested that if educators employ pedagogical practices and learning experiences that engage all learners in practices that promote and accentuate non-dominate cultural ideology, students from dominant cultures will benefit as well, resulting in improved outcomes for these students (Pollack & Zirkel, 2013). When students from the dominant culture have opportunities to learn about and develop an appreciation for unfamiliar cultural attributes from traditionally marginalized populations, their awareness, understanding, and cultural competencies can grow. Increases in these areas help students develop as 21st-century learners and future workers equipped with soft skills for working with people who differ from them.

On a related note, the cultural determinist theoretical framework presents the perspective that “the minority (student) fails because their culture is viewed as deficient” (Pollack & Zirkel, 2013, p. 5). While significant changes to educational institutional
structures and processes are equally warranted, “a re-centered discourse on culture in comparative education that recognizes the value of cultural inquiry and, in particular, of cultural inquiry as a source of destabilization of taken-for-granted categories, and truths” is imperative (Hoffman, 1999, p. 464).

**Colorblind Solutions**

In the divided, racialized society of America in 2020, Americans are surprisingly but staunchly unwilling to talk about race, especially in professional arenas. In 2009, 37% of all Americans felt that a national dialogue on race would cause greater division between the races (Gallup News, n.d.). Ironically, the Pew Research Center (2017) reported that expressing racist or insensitive views has become more common than in previous years. Specifically, according to Horowitz, Brown, and Cox (2019), 65% of Americans felt that expressing racist or racially insensitive views became more common after Donald Trump was elected president. Many who unconsciously conceal their bias consciously describe their reasoning as a “colorblind” approach—that they are not racist and that they treat all people (students) the same. Neville et al. (2013) explained that this colorblind approach serves as a defense mechanism aimed to reduce their anxiety levels over the fear of realizing their racism, confronting their White privilege, and ultimately taking personal responsibility to end racism. However, as referenced by Howard (2010) when citing Crenshaw, a colorblind approach to educating students poses a set of contradictions. That is, “a colorblind approach seeks to conceal the power and ugliness of race, but at the same time highlights the very significance of it by claiming that to acknowledge it would lead to troublesome outcomes” (Howard, 2010, p. 100).
Nevertheless, what is painstakingly obvious is that coincidence has nothing to do with the perpetual failure of students of color. Color, race, and culture are defining characteristics that should not be viewed as coincidental attributes of students who are disproportionately removed from school via suspension, measured as consistently underperforming on assessments, and statistically significantly less likely to graduate high school. At some point, the question must be posed: What’s race got to do with it? (Parker & Lynn, 2002). The time is now. Educators can no longer discuss the “achievement gap” and programming for “underperforming” students without including a discussion about race. Colorblind approaches have not worked and will continue to be unsuccessful until faculties engage in tough, unfiltered conversations about race and these discussions become a sustained component of faculty meetings, PD seminars, and district-level leadership planning meetings. For example, the White–Black achievement gap has increased from 24% in 1992 to 30% in 2015 as measured by 12th-grade students’ reading ability (IES, 2017). A sustained, concerted effort to develop educators’ cultural competence through ongoing critical self-reflection must be a primary component of school districts’ PD initiatives.

CRP

As Chapter 1 explained, CRP is an approach to K–12 education in which educators provide learning experiences for students that reflect the attitudes, mindsets, perspectives, interests, attributes, knowledge, and cultural and societal histories of traditionally marginalized students. The three components of CRP, as coined by Ladson-Billings (1995)—student learning (academic achievement), cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness—provide a framework for educators’ approach, planning,
and delivery of educational experiences. The development of educators who provide CRP to students through their conversations, interactions, decisions, lesson planning, curriculum choices, and execution of instructional strategies requires a substantial inculcation of the necessary mindset.

With respect to student learning, educators who provide CRP are able to relate the required, standardized content learning standards to students in contrast to the ways that would normally not engage them? Teachers who engage in CRP must be able to deconstruct, construct, and reconstruct the curriculum to present material in a manner that makes sense to students (Ayers, 2001). Educational providers of CRP value the most important aspect of their jobs—student learning. They recognize that by consistently reflecting and adjusting their approaches and strategies as culturally relevant pedagogical tools, they can improve student learning for all students but particularly students of color. The development of educator cultural competence is equally imperative for providing CRP.

Without a strong value of cultural competence, many educators (especially those from the dominant culture who have had minimal exposure to Black culture) provide educational experiences to Black children that result in these students having to disguise or lose their own cultural identity. In contrast, educators who provide CRP “recruit students’ cultural knowledge as a vehicle for learning, as well as for understanding how their own cultural background provides a very specific lens for seeing the world” (Ayers, 2001, p. 86). Essentially, when educators can build relationships, acknowledge cultural and familial impact, and adjust their teacher actions to reflect more cultural competence,
students will be able to experience academic success without losing their cultural identities through forced assimilation (Pluretti, 2018).

Finally, the development of the needed educator’s mindset along with the provision of a sociopolitical consciousness is needed to provide CRP. This third component encourages pedagogy that engages learners as activists for change by providing them with inquiry-based learning experiences that expose the realities of discrimination and oppressive policies. Thus, as Ayers et al. (2008) observed, teachers who are termed “culturally relevant” assume that an asymmetrical (even antagonistic) relationship exists between poor students of color and society. Thus their vision of their work is one of preparing students to combat inequity by being highly competent and critically conscious. (p. 164)

Developing the needed level of cultural awareness and cultural proficiency prepares teachers to take the next step toward changing their practices and pedagogy to be culturally inclusive for minority students. That said, this original foundation of awareness is critical. Educators who have not been afforded the cultural experiences of minority culture cannot begin to develop the needed perspective to merely consider changing their pedagogy to align with instruction, curriculum, and practice that is culturally considerate and relevant. According to Plata (2011), “unequivocally, each individual is ethnocentric and believes that his or her pattern of believing, thinking, speaking, and behaving and other cultural attributes are superior to those of individuals from other cultural groups” (p. 50). Without such sustained experiences over an extended period, White teachers begin without the necessary foundation of awareness and thus the needed cultural competence to provide relevant learning experiences for Black students.
**Curricular Considerations**

The fundamental goal for K–12 educators in South Carolina is to prepare students for college and careers (Division of College and Career Readiness, 2019). Preparing children in certain communities within South Carolina requires considering the values and mores of the children’s community of origin. Many schools have not been successful because of trying to fit a curriculum and pedagogical model into a school setting that is simply not reflective of the values of the community. Schiro’s (2013) ideologies, specifically scholar academic and social efficiency, most align with most align with the state standards and state assessment systems that drive educators’ every move in curriculum design and implementation. The scholar academic ideology focuses on the classical canons of educational content, while the social efficiency ideology views curriculum as a means to develop learners into skilled workers based on the needs determined by employers (Schiro, 2013). While these models may work at producing college- and career-ready students from dominant Eurocentric cultural traditions, Black and Brown students continue to fall behind the pack in every educational statistical measurement and data related to postsecondary education and professional careers (IES, 2017).

Since school leaders and district superintendents are profoundly driven by their students’ performance on these state assessments due to the Every Student Succeeds Act accountability measures that measure the overall performance of the school by producing a report cart rating (DCCR, 2019), perhaps these systems of assessment and accountability must change before curriculum changes can occur to address the needs of marginalized children. For example, the curricular approach in the poverty-stricken,
The predominately African American community in rural South Carolina is dominated by the SCDE system of academic accountability and thus by the classical canons of SC standards: assessment and accountability (Schiro, 2013). Thus, the question arises as to the degree of success this system offers this community. The possibilities of K–12 educational and postsecondary success that could result from a curriculum that truly incorporates a Social Reconstruction Ideology offer a promising future landscape for educators to contemplate.

Social Reconstructionist Ideology views curriculum and instruction as an opportunity for students to grow intellectually by analyzing problems within their community and proposing solutions to the problem. For example, a system based on this ideology can “educate the masses of society, make them analyze themselves in relation to society, see and understand the problems of society and develop a vision of a better world based on social justice and then, actualize that vision” (Schiro, 2013, p. 78). The community has many ills, including extreme poverty, lack of industry, and a distrust of the educational system. In contrast, a curriculum that engages students through communal relevance can help students develop the skills and conceptual understandings to be successful while also achieving an enlightened understanding of their worlds and their relation to others’ global situations (Flinders & Thornton, 2017).

Jane Addams’s learner-centered work that addressed and acknowledged the vital necessity of educators’ willingness to acculturate to learner’s minority cultural traits provided an early glimpse of understanding how prescribed Eurocentric curriculum views minority culture from a deficit perspective (Schiro, 2013, p. 54). Unfortunately, the social reconstructionism proposed by Dewey and Counts is rarely included in today’s
curriculum other than in the social studies classrooms of teachers who challenge students to create societal models based on their learned understanding of government and societal structures (Schiro, 2013). Even in these situations, learning usually typifies a project extension after the student has demonstrated a mastery of prescribed content standards. An issue that is not discussed yet should be considered from each theory is the impact of the teacher’s life experiences on his or her interpretation and consequent presentation of the curriculum.

According to Pinar (2004), the educator’s ability to understand the impact of how this “personal practice knowledge” impacts teachers’ delivery of the curriculum to students is of equal importance to the actual curriculum (Pinar, 2004, p. 28). The aim of this current study is to develop an understanding of how the “currere,” the meaning and substance of life one develops through life experiences and an intense understanding of the “agency” involved in making sense of the experiences, frames the curriculum and instruction provided by the teacher. In other words, as Pinar (2004) articulated, “Stated simply, currere seeks to understand the contribution academic studies makes to one’s understanding of his or her life” (p. 52).

Some educators have focused on standardized curriculum and instruction methods while ignoring relevant curriculum resources, forms of responsive pedagogy, and other factors found effective in increasing the reading achievement of African American students. Boutte (2016) argued that educators must embed CRP, critical literacy skills, and instructional practices that encourage thinking, not rote regurgitation of middle-class, Eurocentric educational content. In other words, with respect to working with African American students, educators should reflect on the cultural considerations of their
classroom management plans and adjust them to incorporate cultural aspects of behavior, attitude, and motivation as an integral portion of their classroom instruction and behavior management.

CRP is equally beneficial for White students from the dominant culture since it will allow them to develop the skills to understand and critique their “privilege and advantage” (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 7). In many communities in America, politics exert a heavy influence on educational curricular and instructional decisions. Communities characterized by White parents who oppose an education providing students with CRP because the educational design does not include their White child’s needs can be convinced otherwise. For example, a teacher who approaches pedagogical decisions and the instructional framework using a culturally responsive approach can prepare White students with the perspective needed to be successful adults in America’s ever-diversifying society. White students who are exposed to culturally responsive practices, curriculum resources, and—in particular—activities that develop a socio-political consciousness can gain a diverse mindset that may benefit them in their future endeavors or careers.

As the United States becomes increasingly diverse, all individuals will be required to interact across racial and cultural lines to be successful as productive and impactful adults; that said, even non-diverse schools can prepare students for such interactions (Byrd, 2016). According to Irvine and Armento, as cited by Howard (2010), “culturally responsive teaching has been a staple in U.S. schools for centuries, but it has been most responsive to only one group of students—U.S.-born middle-class, English-speaking, White students” (p. 70). Addressing this “elephant in the room” can facilitate designing
instruction and curriculum that includes all students by first making a commitment to a level of cultural awareness and then a strategic approach to pedagogy (Howard, 2010). Therefore, culturally responsive pedagogy serves as a critical blueprint upon which all students can be educated, particularly in multicultural schools, not a strategy used only for Black or Hispanic students. Critical race theory and CRP constitute avenues for providing rigorous literacy and mathematics instruction and curriculum for all students.

After a deep dive into developing the needed cultural awareness and strategic efforts toward the development of cultural proficiencies, this literature review now turns to preparing educators to begin to “rethink” their curriculum and instruction so that it provides a classroom that is culturally responsive. In order for public schools to promote democratic classrooms, paying particular attention to the actual content standards and sources of the curriculum is necessary to ensure intentional efforts are made to embed Afrocentric pedagogy, African American literature, African and African American history, and strategies to develop students’ abilities to think critically, consciously, and metacognitively.

The essentials of literacy, conceptual math, and civics curriculum are necessary for developing students who are college- and career-ready. Nevertheless, progressivism and social reconstructionism have an equal place at the table. For example, teachers who take a learner-centered, progressivist approach can design curriculum and instruction based on students’ interests and cultural heritage. When educators design instruction and use curricular resources that inspire students to develop skills and conceptual knowledge using the existing problems surrounding their communities and/or society, the learners can see value in the learning process and are motivated to learn while actually creating
impactful change solutions. In order to prepare children in certain communities within South Carolina, educators must take into consideration the values and mores of the children’s community—especially concerning children from poverty-stricken African American neighborhoods.

While the aims of curriculum may be generalized, “the educational experiences that are likely to attain these purposes” may look markedly different from the current curriculum experiences provided by the majority of Eurocentrically-driven school curricula. Conversely, Afrocentric educational discourse can be a viable alternative to Eurocentric educational discourse. For example, according to Robinson (2004), “Due to the fact that Afrocentric educational discourse rejects the negative attributes of Eurocentric educational discourse, it offers legitimate sociopolitical emancipatory implications for African Americans throughout the enterprise of schooling and beyond” (p. 3).

**Effective Professional Learning**

According to Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017), effective PD is “structured professional learning that results in changes in teacher practices and improvements in student learning outcomes” (p. 128). The ultimate goal of this dissertation is to improve the overall pedagogical experience for Black students in America through the implementation of more effective teaching practices and better learner outcomes for Black students. Therefore, it is extremely important for the content and pedagogical decisions made by any presenter of professional learning to take all aspects of the learner-participants into account. Notably, however, while overall changes in teaching practices are ultimately desired, the intense work of transference in
perspective and consequent awareness must precede any changes in practice for this fundamental shift to occur.

Two essential pillars of effective professional development that this study incorporated were active learning and learner/presenter collaboration. According to Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017):

Active learning engages teachers directly in designing and trying out teaching strategies, providing them an opportunity to engage in the same style of learning they are designing for their students. Such PD uses authentic artifacts, interactive activities, and other strategies to provide deeply embedded, highly contextualized professional learning. This approach moves away from traditional learning models and environments that are lecture based and have no direct connection to teachers’ classrooms and students. (p. 43)

Given that the focus of this action research may be considered controversial and politically charged, the presentation of the PD must reflect special consideration given to learners’ perspectives and potential reactions to the content. In order to develop in participants the willingness to accept perspectives they might never have considered previously, PD must be framed in a participatory manner to allow participants the opportunity to share and collaborate their own experiences and perspectives related to the content. According to Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017):

High-quality PD creates space for teachers to share ideas and collaborate in their learning, often in job-embedded contexts. By working collaboratively, teachers can create communities that positively change the culture and instruction of their entire grade level, department, school and/or district. (p. 24)
The days of “sit and get” with respect to PD are over. Just as teaching and learning for children should be centered on the learner, facilitative, relevant, and collaborative learning for adults should follow the same model. Instead of the PD instructor broadcast-spreading the learning to a room full of teachers in hopes that teachers are actually able to learn and grow from observing the presentation, professional learning communities should be designed to sustain the learning (Borko, Jacobs, & Koellner, 2010). Teacher-participants in the learning should also be co-creators of the learning. For example, teachers should contribute to the development of the agenda for each respective PD session. A model of PD is needed that “represents a clear departure from the use of workshops to teach ‘techniques’ toward the use of multiple PD strategies to build teacher capacity to understand subject matter, pedagogy, and student thinking” (Solorzano & Yosso, p. 11). For example, consider the following as it relates to PD on concepts related to race and culture:

1. Define and give examples of race, racism, and stereotypes.
2. Identify stereotypes in film, television and other print forms of media then analyze and discuss media forms that challenge or defy the stereotypes.
3. Identify stereotypes in the professional setting and analyze the relationship to the media stereotypes. Analyze how both are used to justify the unequal treatment of students of color.
4. Find examples that challenge and transform stereotypes. (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 14)

Further supporting these points, Marcy (2010) contended, “through critical self-reflection and productive race dialogue which are both taught and facilitated in professional
learning communities; teachers’ perceptions of their Black students will change from a ‘deficit model’ mindset to a cultural relevancy mindset” (p. 28). Professional learning communities are arguably the perfect setting for these conversations. In smaller, closer groups, educators may be more comfortable in sharing their perspectives and more willing to be impacted by others’ perspectives.

**Innovation—Actual and Sustained**

Educational innovation is challenging to implement. For effective change, the change agent must be diligent in planning, reflection, and consideration (Evans, 1996). Change does not come packaged in a program with bells and whistles for easy access and implementation. Rather, its implementation requires an intense understanding of the complexities of the persons involved in the change, the status and structure of the organization, the need for the change, and the context and breadth of the innovation. Fundamental change “requires people to not just do old things slightly differently but to change their beliefs and perceptions” (Evans, 1996, p. 5). For centuries, educational institutions have tried to adapt to the changing needs of students by altering existing systems and structures with tweaks and/or additions to programming. However, these approaches to doing old things slightly differently simply have not worked. In order for America’s public education system to work in the 21st century, real, substantial change must occur. Instead of stitches and bandages to the pre-existing Eurocentric educational model, today’s educators need a complete mind shift in terms of understanding and perspective.

Building a shared vision of a school that truly “flips the script” for Black and Brown students in America requires educators to communicate three essential elements:
(a) a clear picture of current reality, (b) a clear statement of the desired outcomes, and (c) a collective choice about how to proceed (Senge, 2012, p. 88). The first and most integral step is to inculcate an awareness of color-consciousness (implicit cultural bias) that may be present. Educators must realize accordingly that differences in students, such as motivation, interests, abilities, and standardized test performance, are due to a lack of cultural accommodation on educators’ part and not because of any biological inferiority stemming from race or students’ skin pigmentation (Martinez, 2014). Opportunities for parents and community members to learn, reflect, and share must be included in the visioning process (Evans, 1996). Equally critical is providing students an opportunity to express their views about the presence or lack of their own cultural practices and views in the current educational structure.

Recently, teachers have voiced their discontent with many of the structural decisions made regarding salary, classroom size (school funding), and out-of-touch mandates from legislative bodies. This opinion has manifested itself in teacher strikes, planned walk-outs, and protests. On top of this aggressive national movement is the aging of the workforce, which Evans (1996) characterized as follows: “The teaching force is now composed mainly of people in middle age and in mid-to-late career who have been teaching in their current school for twenty years or more” (p. 93). While experience has its benefits and wisdom comes with age, aging does not “stimulate innovation or increase one’s appetite or readiness for change” (Evans, 1996, p. 94). Put simply, any major change proposed must be carefully and strategically engineered and implemented to reflect the positions and perspectives of the people, not merely including considerations of the validity or structure of the change itself (Evans, 1996). The depth of the
complexity of the innovation must be accurately and deliberately portrayed to the learners. That said, the manageable scope of this initial change can provide learners with an opportunity to “breathe” and accept the challenge. By truly addressing the problem from an innovative perspective that has never been attempted previously, the change agent has the potential to provide such feasibility of innovation (Evans, 1996). The substance of change must be carefully rendered so that this controversial mind shift can be effectively facilitated. By presenting the focus of the innovation with clarity and precision, educators will remain open to the subsequent implementation of the proposal.

Summary

This literature review provided an understanding of the problem of practice, beginning with the history of the social construction of race, the development of African American culture in the face of the tactics used to oppress, and analysis of K–12 education through the lens of critical race. More specifically, the literature review demonstrated the history of racially discriminatory practices, White domination, and Black subjugation as evinced through practices that have maintained inferior student outcomes throughout history of American education. The impact of educators from the dominant culture who maintain a cultural-deficit mindset is examined as it relates to the provision of educational opportunities as well as student outcomes. Eurocentric curriculum and pedagogy are contrasted in the literature to Afrocentric discourse as a means for understanding how K-12 schools ignore the culture of Black students. The literature review also presented an analysis of colorblind solutions that overlook the problem and exacerbate negative student outcomes and evaluated CRP and responsive/activist curriculum based on their potential to provide emancipatory
educational opportunities for Black students. Lastly, a review of the research was provided on professional learning experiences that facilitate a transformation in educators’ mindset to perspectives needed to provide CRP as a sustained innovation among educators.
CHAPTER THREE

ACTION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Statement of the Problem of Practice

The problem of practice that this study sought to understand and reconcile was the degree to which educators at a lower secondary school in South Carolina provide CRP based on their level of cultural awareness. The need for educational experiences that embrace minority/Black culture is evident in that 75% of the 586 students are Black or Brown and, in particular, 61% of the students are African American. These student demographics are especially fundamental in light of the fact that the majority of the school’s educators are White and their experiences with learning opportunities to understand and become aware of minority culture and consequential provision of culturally relevant educational experiences are severely limited.

Research Question

The research question for this study is, “What impact will PD workshops on CRP have on the pedagogical awareness level of seven middle school educators at ABC School?” For the purposes of this study, a series of PD workshops on cultural awareness and CRP was defined as a 6-week seminar in which seven educators were led in interactive discussions and simulations designed to increase their awareness of particular aspects of African American culture and develop their ability to provide instructional experiences for students reflecting an improved awareness.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to examine the impact of PD workshops on CRP and its impact on the pedagogical awareness level of seven middle school educators at ABC School. Essentially, I examined the impact that a 6-week series of PD workshops focused on cultural awareness and CRP had on seven educators at a lower-secondary school in South Carolina. More specifically, I wished to explore educators’ perspectives related to adopting an appropriate mindset for CRP, understanding the impact of discriminatory systems in society, increasing each educator’s level of cultural awareness, increasing each educator’s understanding of autobiographical pedagogy, and facilitating educators’ actualization of CRP into their planning and professional practice.

By examining the progress made and other participant feedback each week as indicated in the various forms of data collection methods, I was able to develop the experiences during each session based on the participants’ needs and levels of reception of the workshops. Moreover, evaluating the progression of the participant-learners as a whole facilitated the design of a comprehensive 6-week learning platform that addressed their adaptive needs toward improving the educators’ level of cultural awareness and their subsequent provision of culturally relevant educational experiences.

I sought to determine how the facilitative workshop sessions would impact the educator-participants’ attitudes and understanding as it related to their students’ culture and how they best learned. By the end of the workshop series and with multiple opportunities for reflection, conversation, and analysis and processing of information, I anticipated that educator-participants’ discussions during sessions, reflective journal responses, and self-ratings on the pre and post attitudinal/knowledge-based questionnaire
would show that their understanding and approach to providing CRP to students had improved.

As the workshops progressed, I made a note of the resources and activities that seemed to have the greatest impact on the educator-participants’ development of the desired mindset and approach. Throughout this study, I also identified the qualities and characteristics within the educator-participants that contributed to their growth toward the desired outcome. For example, participants who could interpret the information and express their understanding through conversation and reflective writing through a lens of focusing on the needs of students rather than based on their political affiliation or identity demonstrated greater growth toward the development of cultural awareness and CRP.

**Action Research Design**

The action research design incorporates a mixed-methods action research approach of gathering data related to the impact of the professional learning provided to educators on the basis of cultural awareness and CRP. Although some traditional researchers have discredited action research as not following the standards set for determining comprehensive validity, this research approach does take scientific measures to generate knowledge and attempts to apply the knowledge learned to an actual problem setting. Knowledge for the sake of knowledge is only good to the curious mind, but when knowledge is used to create effective change, the world grows in a positive direction. Additionally, action research requires one “to continually refine the methods, the data collection, and their interpretation based on the knowledge gained in earlier cycles” (Ivankova, 2015, p. 45). This continual process of refining can help ensure that the significant issues in education, such as equity gaps and educator professional growth, are
analyzed closely and systematically. In fact, the problems facing public education concerning inequity are stark. Action research offers an opportunity for positive change to happen now, not decades after the knowledge has been studied, validated, analyzed, and further validated.

Additionally, action research allows for flexibility within the research. For example, “the evolutionary nature of action research means there are multiple, ongoing decisions to be made, and faculty need to make their peace with both allowing the research to unfold while continuing to monitor and guide it” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 84). This flexibility is essential when designing and facilitating a study that addresses professional growth as manifested by educators’ attitudes toward adjusting some of their most basic ideological beliefs and, consequently, their pedagogical practices. In this study, educator-participants’ perceptions of race and attitudes toward providing CRP to students in the school were measured initially and then after each of the six (total) sessions facilitated by the researcher. Following participatory action research methodology, the educator-participants guided the subsequent sessions by providing their post-session reflections that included open-ended questions relative to the discussion and information provided in the session.

**Setting and Time Frame of Study**

The study was conducted during the Fall 2020 semester at a lower secondary school, with an annual enrollment of approximately 550 students, in the southeastern United States. The school was located near the city-center of a mid-sized suburban town and provided education for seventh- and eighth-grade students. The workshops occurred in the training room of the school building on days indicated as weekly PD days that were
built into the school’s calendar. Thus, the six sessions were provided over 7 consecutive weeks with a 1-week break after the third session. The environment selected for the workshops was secluded from all other parts of the school building, ensuring that the participants could fully engage in the sessions without disruption or outside interference. Initially, all faculty and staff members were offered the opportunity to submit their interest applications for participation in the study and received an explanation of the purpose and extent of the 6-week workshop series. Fourteen applications were submitted, but only seven participants were selected for the study to maintain the intimate setting required for the rich discussion needed during the sessions. Pseudonyms were used throughout the study to protect the identity of the participants and setting. Participants signed a consent form before engaging in the workshops (see Appendix A). All ethical research standards were communicated and followed throughout the study. The process and findings have been and will continue to be shared openly.

Over a period of 7 weeks (six workshop sessions and 1 week for interviews), I gathered qualitative data relevant to the study. Prior to the initial session, all participants indicated their attitudes toward the topic by completing the pre-questionnaire. The data-gathering process occurred during each workshop session in the form of field notes collected by the researcher and journal entries that the participants submitted after the sessions. Each workshop session occurred on Friday, mid-morning, which was a day and time designated for educator professional learning while students were not present at the school. Week 5 of the workshop series was devoted to data collection via informal interviews with participants in which the questions were based on the specific data collected to that point and individualized for each participant. After the completion of the

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7 weeks and six workshops, the pre-workshop data gathered initially and all other data collected along the way were then compared to the post-workshop data collected when the participants indicated their attitudes in the formal post-workshop interview questionnaire.

**Participants**

The volunteer participants for the study were educators from a lower-secondary school in the southeastern United States. All faculty members from the school received information about the purpose of the study and the opportunity for professional growth. All were encouraged to apply as participants in the PD series. The application included questions to measure the educators’ interest in engaging in the study, experience with receiving similar PD, their opinion of their own teaching practices and whether they had structured/restructured their classrooms to become more culturally relevant, and their overall attitude toward doing so. The questions were designed using scale-rating indicators. Therefore, I analyzed the data from this application process and chose the participants based on the results of this analysis. From the initial self-evaluation of experiences with similar professional learning and their own current level of awareness and provision of CRP, seven participants were chosen to represent experience levels ranging from very limited experiences and professional practice to a moderate degree of experiences and professional practice. The following descriptions of each participant reveal how they initially perceived themselves as measured by this scale, along with other relevant information, including demographics, years of experience, and educator certification.
• **Mr. Maine** is a White male social studies teacher. He has 14 years of teaching experience. Teaching is his second career, as he was formerly a military officer. On the research application, he indicated that his level of interest in learning about CRP is high (5 out of 5 stars). His level of experience in receiving similar training or PD (e.g., cultural competency) is 3 out of 5 stars. When asked to rate the degree to which the participant already provided CRP in the educational services he provided to students, he selected 3 out of 5 stars.

• **Ms. Easterly** is a physical education teacher and coach with 15 years of experience. She is a Black female. The participant also serves as the school’s athletic director. On the research application, when asked to rate her level of interest in learning about CRP, she indicated a high level of interest, with 5 out of 5 stars selected. Her level of experience in receiving similar training or PD (e.g., cultural competency) was 3 out of 5 stars. When asked to rate the degree to which the participant already provided CRP in the educational services she provided to students, she selected 3 out of 5 stars.

• **Mr. Cash** is a White male science teacher. He has 3 years of teaching experience, and teaching is his second career. He formerly worked in manufacturing. On the research application, he indicated that his level of interest in learning about CRP is high (5 out of 5 stars). His level of experience in receiving similar training or PD (e.g., cultural competency) is 2 out of 5 stars. When asked to rate the degree to which the participant already provided CRP in the educational services he provided to students, he selected 1 out of 5 stars.
• Ms. Day is a White female who had 3 years of experience as an educator. She is an international teacher of the German language and originally from South Africa. On the research application, she indicated that her level of interest in learning about CRP is high (5 out of 5 stars). Her level of experience in receiving similar training or PD (e.g., cultural competency) is 5 out of 5 stars. When asked to rate the degree to which the participant already provided CRP in the educational services she provided to students, she selected 3 out of 5 stars.

• Ms. Ezekiel is a Black female social studies teacher who has 15 years of experience. On the research application, she indicated that her level of interest in learning about CRP is high (5 out of 5 stars). Her level of experience in receiving similar training or PD (e.g., cultural competency) is 3 out of 5 stars. When asked to rate the degree to which the participant already provided CRP in the educational services she provided to students, she selected 3 out of 5 stars.

• Mr. Bob is a Black male science teacher who had 14 years of experience. He is an international teacher from Jamaica who had been living and working in the United States for years. On the research application, he indicated that his level of interest in learning is about CRP 4 out of 5 stars. His level of experience in receiving similar training or PD (e.g., cultural competency) is 4 out of 5 stars. When asked to rate the degree to which the participant already provided CRP in the educational services he provided to students, he selected 3 out of 5 stars.

• Ms. Teeter is a Black female secretary who has 16 years of experience in the field. On the research application, she indicated that her level of interest in learning about CRP is high (5 out of 5 stars). Her level of experience in receiving
similar training or PD (e.g., cultural competency) is 5 out of 5 stars. When asked to rate the degree to which the participant already provided CRP in the educational services she provided to students, she selected 5 out of 5 stars.

**Research Methods**

Likert scale scores were collected from participants’ responses to the initial questionnaire. These scores provided the initial frame of the participants’ attitudes, knowledge, and depth of understanding related to the problem of practice. Participants were asked to rate their levels using a 10-point scale on nine specific items, all related to the problem of practice. The final question allowed participants an open-ended opportunity to provide information to the researcher regarding their ideas, thoughts, and attitudes toward the problem of practice. This initial information provided me with key information in designing the workshop series materials, strategies, sequence, and timing. These initial self-reported data points also gave me an understanding of each participant’s initial level concerning the specific indicators embedded in the questionnaire items. This same self-rating questionnaire was administered at the completion of the research to allow comparison of participants’ self-ratings before and after the facilitation of the workshop series in order to measure the impact of the workshop series.

The workshops offered ample opportunities for me to gather qualitative data from the participants. Each workshop presented content such as videos, assigned readings, music, and historical records. The participants interacted with the content and each other, responding to provocative discussion prompts that led to rich discussion. Thus, I was able to gather qualitative data in the form of field notes taken while observing (taking part in) the workshop discussions. Each participant was asked to provide responses to certain
prompts, and participants were also encouraged to respond to each other. Qualitative data from post-workshop journal prompts and one-to-one interviews also helped me understand the participants’ progress toward their goal of developing their ability to provide CRP.

The data collection instruments used for this action research study contributed to my understanding of the impact of the workshops. The study employed four qualitative data collection methods to present a comprehensive view of the action research study.

**Data collection and instruments.** The following discussion lists and explains the instruments used, including the reasons for using each data collection instrument and how it relates to the study.

*Pre/Post questionnaire (see Appendix B).* Seven educators at ABC Middle School participated in an initial (pre-intervention) questionnaire to measure their perceptions and attitudes toward race and culture, their understanding of cultural awareness, and their knowledge and attitudes toward the incorporation of culturally-relevant pedagogical practices. The questionnaire required participants to answer questions related to their beliefs about culture and race by choosing a rating based on a 10-point Likert-type scale. This questionnaire also used a Likert scale rating system to measure participants’ attitude towards engaging in specific steps to improve their cultural awareness and provision of CRP. The purpose of the initial questionnaire was two-fold: (a) to gather data for comparison and analysis to their post professional learning interview and (b) to guide the professional learning experience based on the interview data. The post interview questionnaire used the same questions and Likert scale
indicators as the pre-intervention interview questionnaire for the purpose of measuring the impact of the workshop series.

**Post-Workshop journal reflections.** Throughout the workshop series, participants completed five post-workshop journal reflection assignments. These assignments were discussed during each workshop and then completed by the participant after the conclusion of the weekly workshop and before the next week’s workshop. The participants provided their responses by inputting them into a Microsoft Form prompt. Each journal prompt required participants to apply what they had learned from the workshop discussion and presentation of materials to their own thought processes and professional practices. Ultimately, this formative data was pertinent since the data concerned the development, attitude, and growth of the participants and provided a guide for each successive session. The order of the six workshop sessions was designed to allow the experiences and consequent participant journal reflections to build upon each other. For example, the initial session allowed participants to develop an appropriate mindset by analyzing individual bias. Next, the second session facilitated each participant’s development of mindset by understanding discriminatory systems. The post-workshop journal reflection assignments consisted of the following:

- Reflection on Personal Bias (see Appendix C.1)—This assignment consisted of two writing prompts that required participants to introspect about their own bias toward individuals or situations. Specifically, participants were asked to recall a specific situation where they demonstrated unconscious/implicit bias and to explain the situation. Then participants were tasked with describing their feelings when they realized their bias and how they considered making changes to correct
their judgment regarding the particular situation. Finally, participants were asked to describe the steps they would take to further correct their own bias in future situations.

- **Reflection on Recognition of Systemic Discrimination (see Appendix C.2)**—This assignment consisted of two writing prompts that required participants to evaluate current statutes, structures, policies, and practices within their educational institution through the lens of critical race. Then participants were tasked with providing a reflection of what actions they could take from their position and purview toward addressing the systemic problems.

- **Reflection on Cultural Awareness (see Appendix C.3)**—This assignment required participants to plan and experience a “cultural plunge” in which they engaged in an event or situation that was unusual to their normal ways of living and that was customary to the children they taught who represented a different ethnicity from theirs. Participants were then tasked with reflecting on the cultural experience—the impact of being out of their comfort zone and how the experience differed from their usual cultural setting or events. Additionally, the participants were prompted to reflect on their assumptions before the cultural plunge experience and how their views and understanding might have changed after going through the experience.

- **Reflection on Pedagogy and Autobiographical Curriculum (see Appendix C.4)**—This assignment required the participants to reflect on their understanding of the meaning of pedagogy and how pedagogical approaches impact learners. Participants were also tasked with demonstrating their understanding of how the
curriculum and pedagogy that teachers provide is autobiographical in nature. Lastly, participants were asked to reflect on actions they could take to adjust their curriculum and pedagogy to better fit the needs of their students.

- Reflection on CRP (see Appendix C.5)—This assignment required the participants to reflect on how they might improve their educational impact through the lenses of the three components of CRP as coined by Gloria Ladson-Billings. Specifically, participants were asked to reflect on their improvement in these areas:
  - student learning / academic achievement
  - cultural competence
  - sociopolitical consciousness

Field notes/Researcher’s notes (see Appendix D). Field notes from each session were gathered and noted via analysis of the audio/video recordings taken during each of the six sessions. I was able to obtain and document valuable qualitative data gathered from the anecdotal records of the experiences and discussions held during each session. The field notes gathered were used as data pertinent to the analysis of the impact of the study and guided the next steps of each portion of the study.

Interviews (see Appendix E). Each of the educators also participated in an interview to gather further qualitative data relevant to the participants’ progress toward improvement in cultural awareness and their provision of CRP. The interviews were held individually between the researcher and the participant during the 5th week of the research study and after the completion of the first four workshop sessions. Specifically, the interview questions focused on their attitude towards incorporating CRP into their
lesson planning and facilitation of learning. The ethnographic data gathered from interviews is considered valid for directing the study and for adding value to the trustworthiness of the study. The interview questions asked the educators to reflect on their former and revised practices to demonstrate an indication of the inclusion of CRP. Additional questions were individualized for the participant based on data collected as of the 5th week of the research.

**Procedure**

I structured the intervention and data collection into a platform of six participant workshops spread over 7 weeks. Each workshop provided participants with opportunities to engage in significant dialogue about matters of race, culture, racism, and the provision of equitable learning opportunities and CRP. Table 3.1 displays the session objectives and sequence.

Table 3.1 CRP Workshops: Objectives and Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calendar</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>I. Develop an appropriate mindset for CRP</td>
<td>I. Develop an appropriate mindset for CRP</td>
<td>II. Increase cultural awareness</td>
<td>III. Understand pedagogy</td>
<td>IV. Understand CRP</td>
<td>V. Analyze and Situate CRP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All six of the workshops followed a similar format—short videos to introduce the topic(s), specific discussions among all participants based on particular prompts framed by the researcher, reviews of relevant articles followed by discussions related to the information in the article, closing with a post-workshop journal reflection. For example, Workshop 1 focused on developing an appropriate mindset for CRP by initially viewing short-segmented videos pertaining to implicit or unconscious bias and then openly discussing the content of the videos within the group as driven by the video discussion prompts. After the video presentations and group discussions, the seven participants were divided into two groups. Within their groups, the participants read an article related to mindset and implicit bias, and then each group presented the main ideas of the article to the other group. The participants were encouraged to ask questions about the information presented and take a position reflecting whether they agreed with the arguments presented in the articles. Finally, all participants were asked to complete a journal entry after the session; each participant reflected on their own bias from a particular situation in their past. Each successive workshop plan is also provided in Tables 3.2 to 3.6 below.
Table 3.2 Workshop One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Develop an appropriate mindset for culturally responsive/relevant</td>
<td>pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub Objectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify and understand one's own individual bias</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reflect upon and explain how your bias impacts your approach to</td>
<td>education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pre-session activity - Pre-survey (attitudinal)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Introduction to Workshop Series</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intro to Session 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Instructions for Lunch Conversation - play 3 initial videos with</td>
<td>discussion prompt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Father-Son Activity &amp; discussion prompt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Article Review - Two groups –</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Read article</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Pull main argument &amp; significant details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Present to whole groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Whole group discussion about article</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Post Session Activity - OneNote Journal –</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Offer a specific description of a situation in which you</td>
<td>demonstrated bias.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. When you realized it, how did it make you feel?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. What changes did you make to correct your judgement and resultant</td>
<td>actions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. What steps will you take to further correct your bias?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Videos – 3 introductory videos – Bias</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>our-bias.html?playlistId=video/who-me-biased</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Articles – 2 articles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Unconscious Bias Training that Actually Makes Sense</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Science Against Bias Training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.3 Workshop Two

**Objective**
- Develop an appropriate mindset for culturally responsive/relevant pedagogy

**Sub Objectives**
- Identify systemic racism in education - policies, practices, procedures
- Explain how systemically discriminatory practices impact students and families of color

**Process**
- Intro to Session 2
- Instructions for Lunch Conversation - play initial videos with discussion prompt after each video
  - Before 2nd video read - Black Teachers Improve Outcomes for Black students
    1. Prompt - The data presented here is compelling. What specifically do you think is responsible for these outcomes? (the success of Black students who had Black teachers?) What are the implications of this
- Article Review - Two groups –
  a. Read article
  b. Pull main argument & significant details and respond to specific prompts
  c. Present to whole groups
  d. Whole group discussion about article
- Post Session Activity – Microsoft Forms Journal –
  a. What systemically racist practices or policies do you recognize as such within our state? Our district? Our School?
    - Why/how do these systems exist?
    - What must be done to remove or change these practices?
  b. How can you change your curriculum so that it reflects the cultural heritage, cultural norms, and cultural relevance of your students?
    - Why is it imperative for you to do so?

**Resources**
- Lunch Conversation Videos
  o Systemic Racism Explained – 4 min. 23 sec
    [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YrHIQIO_bdQ&vl=en](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YrHIQIO_bdQ&vl=en)
    - Prompt – Did you know about “redlining”? How about school funding practices? What other systems are in place that lead to inequity in schools? In Aiken schools?
  o The Failure Cycle Causing a Shortage of Black Male Teachers
    - [https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/failure-cycle-causing-shortage-black-male-teachers](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/failure-cycle-causing-shortage-black-male-teachers)
    - Prompt – why do black male teachers leave the profession?
1. What could structurally/systematically change to prevent this?
2. What are the implications for white teachers based upon this?
   - AntiRacist / Abolitionist Teaching
   - Articles – 2 articles
     - Beyond Institutional…
     - Rethinking the Eurocentric Curriculum

Table 3.4 Workshop Three

**Objective**
- Increase cultural awareness

**Sub Objectives**
- Demonstrate understanding of the importance of increasing one's cultural awareness
- Explore resources and strategies for increasing cultural awareness
- Commit to two strategies for increasing cultural awareness
  - Schedule them onto your calendar

**Process**
- 1st - Connect all the dots of the whole process
- 2nd - Explain and emphasize the importance of cultural awareness
- 3rd – View Hip hop, grit, and academic success – Bettina Love
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkZqPMzgvzg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkZqPMzgvzg)
  - Prompt – What is hip hop?
    - Hip hop in the classroom? Why? How? **How is Hip hop deeply rooted in academic success?**
- 4th – Brainstorm - Create list of ways to increase cultural awareness, schedule dates for the experiences
- 5th – Read / Review “How to Increase Cultural Awareness
- 6th – “I’m Not Racist” Music Video – Joyner Lucas
  - Prompt – Imagine the tough inner work, reflection, and willingness of the artist to gain these perspectives. Are you willing to step outside of your comfort zone? What will it take for you to do so?

**Post Session Journal Reflection**
- Reflect on your cultural experience.
  - Did you purposefully place yourself out of your comfort zone?
b. How is the experience different from your usual cultural setting or event?

c. How did this experience contribute to your overall awareness and understanding?

d. What assumptions did you have about the experience prior to your attendance? How has your view changed based upon your actual experience?

Resources
- Lunch Conversation Video
  Hip hop, grit, and academic success – Bettina Love
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkZqPMzgvzg
- How To Increase Cultural Awareness, document
- Hip-Hop: A Culture of Vision and Voice
  https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/resources-for-educators/classroom-resources/media-and-interactives/media/hip-hop/hip-hop-a-culture-of-vision-and-voice/

Table 3.5 Workshop Four

Objective
- Develop an understanding of pedagogy and its roots

Sub Objectives
- Demonstrate an appreciation for how one’s fundamental ideological beliefs about learning theory impact one’s approach to pedagogy
- Exhibit an awareness of the comprehensive value associated with non-traditional pedagogy

Process
- Prelude – Hip Hop Selection
- 1st - Learning Objectives
- 2nd – Connect all the dots of the whole process
- 3rd – Activator - View “Anyone, anyone” teacher from Ferris Bueller’s Day Off, 1 minute 15 seconds
  o Prompt – Have you experienced this as a student? As a teacher? Why does this happen?
- 4th – View - “What Makes Teachers Special? – Pedagogical Content Knowledge, 3 minutes 40 seconds
  o Prompt – PCK is “greater than the sum of its parts” – what does this mean? What are the parts? Which part is most important to learning? Why?
- 5th – View “What is Pedagogy?, 4 Essential Learning Theories”
- Prompt – Which of the 4 learning theories presented do you think most matches your current pedagogical practices? Which theory would you most like to digest so that it significantly contributes to your pedagogical practice?

- 6th – Read – “Is teaching an art or a science?
  - Debate – based upon your knowledge and understanding of pedagogy as well as your understanding based upon your knowledge and experiences of teaching as an art or teaching as a science.
    - Three participants will choose or be assigned – Teaching Is An Art
    - Three participants will choose or be assigned – Teaching Is A Science
    - The two groups will debate using an active listening structure

**Post Session Journal Reflection**

- Now that you have an understanding of pedagogy – what it is, how learning theories drive pedagogy, how your beliefs drive your pedagogy, what can you change about your pedagogy in order to provide more equitable learning opportunities for your students? What do you need to do to create this shift in pedagogy?

**Resources**

- “Anyone, anyone” teacher from Ferris Bueller’s Day Off, 1 minute 15 seconds
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=75&v=uhjCfWeQfA&feature=emb_title
- “What Makes Teachers Special? – Pedagogical Content Knowledge, 3 minutes 40 seconds
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTM9rzc-pq8
- What is Pedagogy? 4 Essential Learning Theories, Satchel
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcpwEoW1uY8
- The Origins of Authentic Pedagogy, 12 minutes (provides history of pedagogical theorists)
  https://www.coursera.org/lecture/newlearning/the-origins-of-authentic-pedagogy-WvNXy
- Article – Is Teaching an Art or Science?
- Article – What is Pedagogy? How Educators Can Benefit From it?
Table 3.6 Workshop Five

**Objective**
- Develop an understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy.

**Sub Objectives**
- Demonstrate an appreciation for each of the components of CRP as equally impactful upon the improvement in student success.
- Apply one’s understanding and appreciation of the CRP components by initiating plans for embedding the components into one’s lesson planning and pedagogical delivery of instruction.

**Process**
- Prelude – Hip Hop Selection
- 1st – Present Learning Objectives & Connect all the dots of the whole process
- 3rd – Activator - Present the CRP Triangle
  - Prompt – What do these three components mean? Which of them have we focused on so far in our quest for developing CRP?
- 4th – View “CRP by Gloria Ladson Billings” (13 min video)
  - Pause and Prompt – Student Learning
    - “To think, not about rote memorization or parroting what the teacher says. To integrate basic skills and knowledge while making the learning meaningful. Teaching for understanding, not to a test, textbooks are instructional supplements not the determiner of the curriculum, teachers function as decision-makers and curriculum planners and implementers, highly interactive lessons, students contribute to the production of knowledge.”
      - Prompt – What impedes this type of student learning? What will you do to prevent such impediments? What needs to occur for this type of learning to occur all the time in your classroom?
  - Pause and Prompt – Cultural Competence
    - “True cultural competence is the ability to help students grow in the knowledge and understanding of their own culture while acquiring skills in at least one other culture. Typically, the one other culture for students of color is the mainstream culture that we expect them to navigate to benefit from post-secondary education and to become socially, politically, and economically viable. Note that nothing about cultural competence speaks to eradicating, replacing, or denigrating student’s home culture.” “Embracing student’s language and using it as a vehicle for teaching American edited English.” “translating their language, rather than correcting it”
• Prompt – Are you prepared / do you have the ability to help students grow in the knowledge and understanding of their own culture (step 1)? If not, why not? If yes, how can you bridge this understanding into an appreciation and development of mainstream culture?
  o Pause and Prompt – Socio-Political Consciousness
    ▪ What is it? – “For students, it’s the ‘so what’ factor – a way of understanding how their learning in a democracy benefits them and the greater community and public good. …used literacy, math, social studies and science skills for a larger social purpose. They were learning that their school learning had significance beyond the four walls of their classrooms and the narrow constraints of a standardized test.”
    ▪ Prompt – You teach math. You teach science. You teach ELA. You teach PE. You teach German. Why is it important to equally embed and implant into your pedagogical practice, socio-political consciousness? You have standards to teach, how can you feasibly do this?

• 5th – Explain the Post Session Journal Reflection Prompt
• 6th - Play – John F. Kennedy – Address on Civil Rights

Post Session Journal Reflection
• Now that you have an understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy and it’s three equal parts, Brainstorm an idea for each of the parts. Based upon your initial ideas from your brainstorm, you will further develop your ideas in our workshop next week. Bring the resources necessary to plan, develop, and situate your plan for providing CRP at Schofield.
  a. What is one specific but broad stroke you can apply to your pedagogy to improve student learning from the perspective of CRP?
  b. What steps will you take to build your cultural competence so that you can help students grow in the knowledge and understanding of their own culture while acquiring skills in at least one other culture?
  c. How will you adjust your planning, lessons, curriculum so as to embed socio-political consciousness?

Resources
• CRP Triangle – handout given to participants
• Culturally Relevant Pedagogy – Gloria Ladson Billings
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4HR8NEPK7l0
John F. Kennedy – Address on Civil Rights
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rS4Qw4Ilckg&feature=emb_title
Table 3.7 Workshop Six

**Objective**
- Situate and apply one’s understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy into professional practice.

**Sub Objectives**
- Based upon your understanding of CRP Component A - student learning (academic achievement), expound upon an idea that you have regarding how to elicit student “thinking” as opposed to rote regurgitation of content, students as “producers of knowledge”, and/or ensuring you as the teacher are the curriculum-planner and decision-maker.
- Based upon your understanding of CRP Component B – Cultural Competence and your knowledge of your students’ cultural ways of being, develop a strategy or approach for ensuring student growth in understanding their own culture. OR
  - Based upon your understanding of CRP Component B – Cultural Competence and your knowledge of your students’ cultural ways of being, develop a strategy or approach for ensuring student growth in understanding their own culture and then student development of understanding and practice of manifestations of mainstream culture.
- Based upon your understanding of CRP Component C – Socio-Political Consciousness, design an instructional episode or unit of instruction that incorporates student learning for the “greater good” and that extends beyond the four walls of the classroom.

**Process**
- Prelude – Hip Hop Selection
- 1st – Present Learning Objectives & Connect all the dots of the whole process
- 2nd – Collaborative work with colleagues – situate CRP
- 3rd – Present CRP to colleagues, colleagues critique
- 4th – Take post-intervention survey
- 5th – Present Certificates and Gifts

**Resources**
- Post-intervention survey
- [https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=LTBu-BNw9EGZhxwTXOQTKeIDoeHEMI5Bip8G5-3XdVRUNFhEMkFPNTMvN0RMNkdHRkJS1ZOTzM5Ry4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=LTBu-BNw9EGZhxwTXOQTKeIDoeHEMI5Bip8G5-3XdVRUNFhEMkFPNTMvN0RMNkdHRkJS1ZOTzM5Ry4u)

As the researcher in this intervention, I facilitated the workshop process and participated in the open-forum discussion. After each workshop, I scripted the field notes.
based on listening/viewing the dialogue recorded during each session. Based on the collected anecdotal data along with the data embedded in the journal reflections, I modified or added to the upcoming session to provide the participants with feedback, clarity, or additional opportunities to engage in particular learning.

**Data Analysis**

I used various instruments to triangulate the data. The initial interview questionnaires provided data for planning and guiding the workshops. The workshop sessions were designed and implemented to encourage participants to develop their knowledge base and perspectives successively each week so that the consecutive workshop experiences built upon the previous sessions. I designed five learning objectives, beginning with the most foundational learning and ending with the application of the 6 weeks of learning. The initial questionnaire data also provided comparative data to participants’ post-workshop journal reflections and field notes from the workshops, which allowed me to measure any differences in participants’ knowledge or attitude toward their development of CRP over the course of the intervention.

I used various instruments to triangulate the qualitative data. The research study included pre and post formal interviews, informal interviews, field notes collected by the researcher, participant journals, and participant pre and post attitudes toward the topic. Each data set collected was analyzed intermittently throughout the design for two purposes. First, planned data analysis sessions were scheduled as “pause points” in the research, providing almost-immediate and thorough analysis after data collection while the data was “fresh.” Second, this study and the research methods were designed to allow the data collection strategies to build upon each other. For example, the data from the
initial participation application, which was open to all educators at the school, were collected and analyzed to facilitate choosing the study participants based on the aim to include a variety of experiences with professional learning and self-perceived levels of awareness and provision of professional practice. The questions were phrased in terms of scaled choices, simplifying the analysis process.

In contrast, analysis of the pre-intervention and post-intervention questionnaire results from the educator-participants employed a much more regimented strategy. First, the questions of the pre- and post-intervention surveys were aligned to facilitate the comparison of participants’ responses. Next, the positive and negative differences between the responses were calculated for each participant. Subsequently, an overall growth score was calculated for each question-combination. Finally, the question-combinations were placed into major coding categories based on the purpose of the research and research questions, as follows:

- educator understanding of student culture/not race impact
- educator willingness to change based on cultural needs of students
- educator understanding of CRP instructional practices
- educator willingness to embed CRP into instruction
- educator willingness to embed CRP into management

These coding categories guided further research, methods, data collection, and analysis.

The inductive analysis process for the qualitative data involved organizing, coding, and arranging each piece of data according to associated themes. I initially categorized the data, which included initial participant pre and post self-ratings, post-workshop journal reflections, informal interviews, and field notes gathered throughout
the workshop series. Next, through careful analysis, I evaluated the evidence compared to the major steps in the research as framed by each workshop and then coded and tallied the data. Data coding involved searching for repeating terms and or phrases by participants. These recurring phrases and terminology were separated by themes or categories. I used coding to interpret the data by participant and as an overall group analysis. Synthesized data and participants’ responses are provided as narrative text in Chapter 4. Finally, I analyzed the evidence to evaluate the impact of the evidence in answering the major research question or addressing the problem of practice.

An additional assurance of validity is my thorough explanation of reflexivity. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), “Investigators need to explain their biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the research to be undertaken” (p. 249). Again, as the sole researcher, I have the responsibility to make specific insider positionalities clear to the reader. It is imperative that the researcher thoroughly outline the connection to the research through explanations of “personal beliefs, values, and biases that may shape” the researcher’s inquiry (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 126). I am a White male who is the principal of a lower secondary school. As an insider to the research in many regards—school principal, husband of African American woman, father of two biracial sons—I am keenly aware of how my opinions and positions can impact the research and possibly skew the data. More specifically, I have and have sought an intense passion for improving the education of Black students and has sought to provide insight into a solution in this area by evaluating the intervention used in this study. The hope is for this research to provide impactful results that can be further analyzed and then replicated in
other educational settings to improve the educational experience and outcomes of Black students.

**Plan for Reflecting with Participants on Data**

Given the sociopolitical nature of the research, the research setting (southeastern United States), and the timeliness of the study (civil unrest), sharing the research data with the seven participants and other educational professionals was particularly imperative. Sharing this data with the participants and structuring their reflection of the data can further encourage the educator research participants to grow their ability to provide CRP. Of equal importance is sharing the research data and process with other educational professionals and, in particular, with educational leaders for the purpose of providing a framework for systemic change toward equitable learning opportunities for all students. As Herr and Anderson (2005) stated, “A major goal—among others—of action research is to generate local knowledge that is transferable to other settings and written up in such a way that others can see its application to their settings” (p. xiii).

Upon completion of the study, I shared the findings with participants. While the workshop series occurred during the fall semester of the school year, I allowed ample time for the participants to apply and reflect on instructional planning and pedagogical structures learned from the workshop series before sharing the findings of the study. I met with the educator-participants during the school’s spring semester to present the data, explain the data-collection process and analysis, and present the study findings. Privacy and anonymity of the data were ensured by removing names and specific identifiers from the data. I also encouraged the participants to reflect on the findings and consider their teaching practices after completing the workshop series. Together, the participants and I
discussed particular experiences from the study and our thoughts on the findings. The participants shared their thoughts on the study’s applicability in terms of the growth of other educators within the school building and for educational professionals beyond their school. During the discussions, the I made anecdotal notes that could benefit future studies and support the implementation of similar workshops aimed at improving educators’ CRP. Chapter 5 presents a further discussion of these observations and conclusions.

**Plan for Devising an Action Plan**

I plan to use the findings from the study to guide further implementation of workshops for educators to develop CRP. As the school’s principal, I will present the details of the study and the findings to the entire faculty. I will also offer another opportunity to participate in the workshop series to all faculty members who did not participate in the initial study (seven educators) during the Fall 2021 semester. Additionally, the researcher plans to use the findings from the study as a platform for presenting to educators across the nation as a strategy for building CRP in educators. These platform presentations will be specifically designed for educational leaders with the goal of encouraging principals and superintendents to develop similar plans for engaging educators within their schools/districts in the development of CRP.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this research study was to examine the impact of a series of PD workshops on cultural awareness and CRP in terms of the culturally relevant pedagogical awareness level of educators. This intervention was done while also carefully ensuring collaboration and essential discussion among the researcher and participants for the
purpose of growing and improving professional practice throughout the course of the study. I was able to identify specific patterns in growth by triangulating the qualitative data used in the research study. Trends were noticed and analyzed from an individual and holistic perspective. The data was also examined through the lenses of CRP – student learning, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. The next chapter discusses the results of analysis of the gathered data, revealing the participants’ specific areas of development toward increased cultural awareness and knowledge, growth toward a positive attitude, and development of professional practices relating to the provision of CRP.
CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS FROM THE DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This study examined the impact of a series of PD workshops on cultural awareness and the development of CRP concerning the views, approaches, and strategies employed by the educator-participants included in the intervention study. A small group of educator-participants \((N = 7)\) voluntarily participated in the study, which consisted of six workshops aimed at improving the participants’ understanding of CRP. Learning activities and data collection took place in the context of a workshop setting, reflection journals, formal and informal interviews, and field notes. The study data were collected over a 7-week period during the Fall 2020 semester at a lower secondary school in the southeastern United States.

As the researcher, I was curious about the degree to which the participating educators provided culturally relevant pedagogical experiences for their students. Accordingly, the action research design allowed me to explore the impact of the provided training while improving the professional practice of the participants in their provision of CRP. This chapter presents the findings from the data analysis.

Research Question

The study aimed to answer the following research question: What impact will PD workshops on CRP have on the pedagogical awareness level of seven middle school educators at ABC School?
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to examine the impact of PD workshops on CRP and its impact on the pedagogical awareness level of seven middle school educators at ABC School.

Findings of the Study

After completion all workshops, the data collected from the study were organized using Microsoft Excel and Microsoft OneNote. These programs allowed me to view all data sets/sources from a holistic perspective to find commonalities in the data by conceptual trends and by participant trends. However, prior to this organization, data gathered from audio/video recordings of workshop sessions and interview sessions were transcribed onto Microsoft Excel spreadsheets as field notes and interview-log data sources. In combination with the participants’ journal responses and pre/post survey data, I began to read the data from all four sources in search of key terms, important patterns, and trends.

Initially, I noticed strong connections between the data gathered from the participants’ journals and the field notes I had collected. For example, the post-workshop journal prompts required the participants to reflect on the learning and the discourse facilitated during the workshop. Thus, specific data collected from workshop participants’ dialogue in response to topics or prompts introduced early in the workshop session provided an interesting comparison to the data collected from the participants in their post-workshop journaling. Specifically, certain knowledge introduced in the presentation of content or learning that occurred from discussions with other participants seemed to contribute to participants’ reconceptualization of topics. Some of this
knowledge even transformed the participants’ perceptions of phenomena, notable when their post-workshop journal reflections were compared to earlier observations. Simply put, I noticed growth in participants’ expressions of knowledge and understanding when I compared field notes and journal reflections. This growth was seen when comparing field notes and reflection journals about the same workshop as well as when compared to subsequent journal reflections in which participants noted previously learned concepts or understandings from prior workshops.

The comparison of data across workshops was equally insightful. Although each workshop design followed a unique learning objective and set of learning tasks, the participants made connections to previous learning and previous discussions, as evident in the field notes. When I considered the circumstances in which participants made these cross-workshop connections, I was able to analyze the data as a continuum of growth for the participant. For example, participants who initially expressed counter-opinions to the content provided or misunderstandings in earlier workshops demonstrated a change in their conceptualization through conversation and relevant discourse in later workshops.

Reflecting the careful collection of data from pre and post questionnaires, post-workshop reflection assignments, research field notes, and informal interviews, themes emerged in the research analysis. The first theme evident in the data collection was educator-participants’ willingness to engage in the work. This willingness to fully engross oneself in the steps necessary to improve as a provider of CRP became evident to me as I reviewed the data collected from participant discussions within the workshops, participant journal reflections, and post-intervention interview questionnaire data. The second major theme that emerged from the data was educator-participants’ knowledge
base, as demonstrated by their ability to express their analysis of the impact of culture, race, and racism on teaching and learning. The participants also adopted new understandings of sociocultural phenomena related to providing equitable learning opportunities for all students.

**Theme 1: Willingness to engage.** At the beginning of the study, I realized that participants’ growth in the desired outcome would be highly dependent on their attitude towards engaging completely in the process. By establishing well-defined workshop norms and expectations for participation, mutual respect, and professionalism, I was able to ensure that participants were able to recognize the workshop setting and other data collection opportunities as “safe places” for them to express their thoughts and vulnerabilities. From the intensive, hard-hitting conversations to the inner-reflection work needed to openly and honestly respond to the journal prompts, participants’ willingness to unreservedly engage in the learning emerged as an essential and major theme in the research.

For example, several of the questions and responses included in the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires (Appendix B) required participants to rate their level of willingness to engage in such activities as tough conversations, work to build their level of Black cultural awareness, and willingness to make changes to their management and instructional strategies. Also noted as an additional measurement of willingness to engage was the actual level of participation in dialogue among all participants during the workshop sessions as collected by field notes (Appendix D). The quantity and quality of their involvement in discourse with other participants served as a measure of the participants’ willingness to engage. While participants seemed somewhat apprehensive
initially about providing their opinions on such a touchy subject, as the quantity and quality of workshop discourse in earlier workshops implied, their level of comfort with speaking, listening, asking questions, actively reflecting, and processing information increased significantly along the way.

Equally compelling was the comparison of data collected from reflection journal entries in arriving at an understanding of participants’ growth in terms of willingness to engage in this needed work. Moreover, the participants’ adjustment in their judgments or mindsets, reflected in post-workshop journal reflections (Appendix C) compared to pre-

![Pre/Post Comparison - Willingness to Engage](image)

*Figure 4.1 Pre/Post comparison of questionnaire responses indicating participants’ willingness to engage in terms of self-perceived bias, cultural awareness, and changing their approach to CRP.

workshop attitudinal data and qualitative data from the earlier workshops in the sequence, provided substantial insight into participants’ increased willingness to engage.
Before beginning the workshop series, I administered a pre-questionnaire (Appendix B) to gauge the educator-participants’ prior knowledge, attitude, and approach toward the integral steps needed for providing CRP to students. The same questionnaire was administered to participants at the conclusion of the workshop series. Figure 4.1 provides a comparison of pre and post data from these questionnaires. Following the chart is an explanation of highlighted evidence from the questionnaire data.

The participants’ responses to one of the items particularly resounded with me. The item required the educator-participants to rate their level of self-perceived bias (explicit or unconscious) as it related to race, culture, or skin color using a 10-point scale (10 = very biased and 1 = almost no bias). This question was also administered to the educator-participants on the post-intervention questionnaire after the conclusion of the final workshop in the series. A comparison of pre and post scores individually and as overall averages of the group revealed a significant reduction in self-perceived bias. The overall average scores for this item were as follows: Pre-intervention average of self-perceived bias = 3.71 and Post-intervention average of self-perceived bias = 2.28. Individually, a reduction in self-perceived bias as a comparison of pre- and post-intervention data indicated that 5 of the 7 participants experienced a reduction in bias. Two of the participants indicated no change in their self-rating of their own bias.

Another significant item pulled from a comparison of pre and post questionnaire data was related to participants’ willingness to engage. The item required the educator-participants to rate their willingness to take specific steps to become more culturally aware of Black/African American people’s way of life (10 stars = absolutely willing, 1 star = not willing at all). A comparison of overall averages of the group showed that the
average score for the group of participants on this aspect of willingness to engage in steps to become more culturally aware was 4.42 on the pre-intervention questionnaire item. The group demonstrated a post-intervention average in this area of 9.85. This change represents an increase in willingness for the group by an average of 5.43 points. Moreover, an individual comparison of pre and post scores related to this question revealed that 6 of the 7 educator-participants yielded a post-intervention score of 10. The score of the single participant who responded with a post score of 9 represented an increase of 5 points from the pre-intervention score.

Lastly, I noted a significant result from comparing pre- and post-intervention questionnaire data related to participants’ willingness to engage. The question required participants to rate their level of agreement with the following statement: “Outcomes for Black/African American students I teach would improve if I adjust my approach, planning, and execution to better fit their needs with CRP” (10 stars = completely agree, 1 star = completely disagree). In a comparison of pre and post scores individually and as overall averages of the group, significant growth was found in participants’ levels of agreement regarding the improvement of outcomes for Black students if the participants were to improve their ability to provide CRP. The overall average scores for this item were as follows: Pre-intervention average of agreement in improvement of outcomes due to CRP = 5.28, while post-intervention average of outcomes due to CRP = 9.14. Individually, a reduction in self-perceived bias as a comparison of pre- and post-intervention data indicated that all seven participants agreed that outcomes for their Black students would improve if they adjusted their approach, planning, and execution to better fit the needs of their Black students.
The pre and post score comparisons provide evidence supporting a solid foundation of understanding the impact of the workshop series as it relates to participants’ willingness to engage in the work. Equally demonstrative of this willingness to engage is qualitative data gathered from Item 10 of the pre and post questionnaires, which allowed participants to respond freely to indicate the impact of the intervention on their mindset. For example, Mr. Bob noted, “I will now conduct more instances of action research to increase my level of CRP. My goal is to turn students into ambassadors for the good of their own communities” (personal communication, October 23rd, 2020; Appendix B). Mr. Bob’s statement substantiates the willingness to engage in the work and consistently reflect and evaluate his ability to provide CRP and indicates his willingness to embed opportunities to develop students’ sociopolitical consciousness.

Another noteworthy comment from the open-ended prompt included in the post-intervention questionnaire came from Ms. East, who wrote,

I just recognize that there is a need to be more knowledgeable about this topic so that I can better aid the population that we serve. Just because I am an African American does not necessarily mean that I know all there is to know about how to better help our students! (personal communication, October 23rd, 2020; Appendix B)

This statement offers the reader an understanding of the willingness to engage from the perspective of an “insider” to the research as well. Although Ms. East was African American and might have had a better understanding of the needs of African American students because of her life experiences, she still recognized the need to improve in her CRP and indicated her willingness to engage in efforts toward improvement. Lastly, in
response to this open-ended question on the post-intervention questionnaire, Mr. Maine stated, “It is vital that those teachers whose do not understand the culture of their students begin to learn and understand them. Without a grounding, those students will be without a true guide on their quest to learn” (personal communication, October 23rd, 2020; Appendix B).

In the analysis of my field notes, examining individual responses from participants in terms of how their culminating anecdotes differed from the comments and reflections from earlier workshop sessions yielded interesting comparative data. For example, the field notes showed that when providing his opinion and reflection regarding a video presented during Workshop 2 in which a former Black teacher rapped about systemic racism embedded in educational institutions, Mr. Cash stated, “He rapped through the message. I’m from a totally different culture, but I didn’t understand the majority of what he was saying. How much rap music can I actually use that doesn’t have cuss words” (personal communication, September, 18th, 2020). However, an analysis of interview notes with Mr. Cash as well as field notes from the final session revealed a significant change in his willingness to engage as related to this topic. Specifically, in our final session, with tears in his eyes, Mr. Cash presented to the group his specific growth process in developing his CRP. The content of his message was significant, but the realization of his own transformation in mindset as expressed through his visible emotional expressions signified the powerful impact the workshop series had on him. The other group participants not only noted this movement by applauding his presentation but furthermore recognized the tough inner work he had done that manifested in his show of emotions. In particular, Mr. Cash stated:
It starts with knowing and understanding who the students are and what stimulates how they learn. For instance, as their teacher, I need to know their backgrounds and their culture. For my students are very different from me in so many ways, so it requires a deep dive into researching the Hip Hop culture. Now that I have seen, listened, and explored, I can use this knowledge to relate to my students in a much greater way. (personal communication, October 23rd, 2020)

Another significant change emerged in a comparison of data from early field notes and interview notes to later field notes and post-workshop questionnaire data related to Ms. Day’s willingness to engage in the work. Initially, she seemed reluctant to address the issue of implicit bias and systemic racism, saying that it was an issue she should not have to address in her classroom. In the interview, she stated:

I have never been aware of racism at the school level. I don’t think I am aware of it, and I don’t want to be aware of it. I think that with me teaching German, racism should not even come up in my school. I don’t want it to take over my lesson. I don’t feel like racism is an issue that I should address in my classroom.

(personal communication, October 14th, 2020)

However, a comparison of data taken from the pre and post questionnaire related to the participants’ agreement that outcomes for Black students would improve if the educator-participant adjusts her approach to one that provides CRP showed a significant change in willingness. For example, Ms. Day indicated her initial attitude toward providing CRP as a score of 1 out of 10 on the pre-intervention questionnaire. However, her post-intervention questionnaire response was 8 out 10 (see Figure 2). With sociopolitical consciousness of teachers’ students being one of the three integral pillars in teachers’
provision of CRP, this final data point demonstrates a stark contrast to Ms. Day’s earlier willingness to discuss issues of race and equity.

![Chart showing Mrs. Day's Willingness to Improve CRP](chart.png)

Figure 4.2 Pre and Post Workshop Growth of Mrs. Day’s Willingness to Improve CRP.

Another participant, Mr. Maine, described his willingness to confront these issues in a post-workshop journal reflection (Appendix C.1) as follows:

I am willing to continue to have hard conversations with people who are different than me culturally and who may not look like me. I understand that everyone has a different perspective due to their experiences and background. I want to respect those differences. (personal communication, September, 11th, 2020)

**Theme 2: Knowledge-base development.** A wise educator once said, “In order to reach/teach me, you have to know me.” This simple yet profound statement can be applied to many different situations and circumstances, but for the sake of this research, it applies to the critical knowledge base that the participants exhibited in their development of CRP. This theme of knowledge-base development emerged as a major indicator of progress as I gathered and organized the data from the multiple data instruments. From
the initial formal interview questionnaire to the field notes gathered from the lively discussions within the workshops, strikingly clear evidence of a progression of the participants’ developing knowledge base became apparent throughout the successive workshops.

Several of the questions and responses included in the pre- and post-intervention formal interview questionnaires (Appendix B) required the participants to rate their level of agreement with statements related to the knowledge base and understanding needed to effectively provide CRP. Also noted as an additional measurement of the needed knowledge base and understanding was the substance of the discourse and dialogue among all participants during the workshop sessions as collected through field notes (Appendix D). Equally compelling were the participants’ adjustment in knowledge and understanding that resulted from the workshop learning as reflected in post-workshop journal reflections (Appendix C) and informal interviews (Appendix E) compared to pre-workshop questionnaire data and qualitative data from earlier workshops in the sequence.

As previously mentioned, before beginning the workshop series, I administered a pre-questionnaire (Appendix B) to gauge the educator-participants’ prior knowledge, attitude, and approach toward the integral steps needed for providing CRP to students. Four of the questions and responses particularly resounded with me, especially in their application to the development of the educator-participants’ knowledge base needed for developing CRP. Figure 3 provides a comparison of pre and post data from these questionnaires. An explanation of highlighted evidence from the questionnaire data follows the figure.
Figure 4.3 Pre and Post Workshop Growth of CRP Knowledge-Base.

One item required the educator-participants to rate their level of agreement with the following statement: “Racism is systemically embedded in our American society” (10 stars = completely agree, 1 star = adamantly disagree). This question was also administered to the educator-participants in the post-intervention questionnaire after the conclusion of the final workshop in the series. A comparison of pre and post scores individually and as overall averages of the group showed a significant increase in belief in this statement. The overall average scores for this item were as follows: Pre-intervention average of belief in the presence of systemic racism in America = 6.14, while post-intervention average of belief in the existence of systemic racism in America = 8.71. Individually, an increase in belief regarding the existence of systemic racism in America according to the pre- and post-intervention data indicated that 4 of the 7 participants demonstrated an increase in this belief. Three of the participants indicated no change in their self-rating of their belief in systemic racism in America.
Another significant item pulled from a comparison of pre and post questionnaire data required the educator-participants to rate their level of agreement with the following statement: “American public education is not equitable. Black students are discriminated against due to racist systems, policies and practices” (10 stars = completely agree, 1 star = adamantly disagree). On this pre-intervention questionnaire item, the group of participants demonstrated an average score of 6.0 regarding their beliefs based on their knowledge base. In comparison, the post-intervention average of the group’s belief in an inequitable American public education system and belief in discrimination against Black students was 8.42. This outcome represents an increase in knowledge concerning this belief by 2.42 points. Specifically, an examination that compared individual responses in pre and post scores related to this question showed that 5 of the 7 educator-participants demonstrated an increase in this belief. Two of the participants showed no change in agreement with the belief.

The third significant measure noted in comparing pre- and post-intervention data measured the participants’ self-perceived level of cultural awareness of Black/African American people (10 stars = completely aware, 1 star = very little awareness). The average of the group’s pre-intervention scores was 7.28, compared to a group average of 8.57 after completing the workshops. Individually, five of the participants increased in this comparison of pre and post data related to their knowledge base of cultural awareness. One participant’s score remained the same, and one decreased by 2 points.

The final comparative measure of pre- and post-intervention scores related to participants’ self-rating of their ability to provide CRP to their students. The specific question prompted participants to rate their level of agreement with the following
statement: “I am confident in my ability to communicate, plan, and execute lessons based upon the needs of my Black students in order to improve their educational outcomes to outcomes that are congruent of white students” (10 stars = completely agree, 1 star = completely disagree). The pre-intervention average of the scores was 7.28, in contrast to the post-intervention average of 8.85. Individually, every participant increased in their self-assessment of their ability to provide CRP when comparing pre- and post-intervention questionnaire data.

I was also able to obtain relevant qualitative data indicating the participants’ growth in the knowledge-basis need for providing CRP to students. Each source of data (post survey open-ended prompts, field notes, journal reflections, interview data) was analyzed and revealed data that clearly linked to the development of the knowledge-base theme. For example, Question 10 of the post-intervention survey provided the participants with an open-ended opportunity to reflect on their experience and their growth. Ms. Day wrote, “I feel I have a much better understanding of where my African-American students are coming from and what day-to-day situations they deal with. I also comprehend the importance of designing the lessons with a cultural relevance in mind” (personal communication, October 23rd, 2020; Appendix B). Regarding the growth of his knowledge base, Mr. Bob noted, “I have experienced personal and professional growth during my time learning in this course. My teaching methodologies and attitudes towards my students have been altered to be more creative and socially relevant” (personal communication, October, 23rd, 2020; Appendix B). Finally, Ms. East provided an all-encapsulating response indicating her growth and the development of a culturally
relevant knowledge base. In the post-intervention open-ended prompt (Appendix B), she wrote:

I do feel that it is our duty as educators to provide meaningful, culturally relevant pedagogy, and guide them towards becoming more culturally aware of their communities, environment, and society as a whole (nation). This would in turn help the students recognize when they are victims of explicit or unconscious biases, racism, and discrimination from others whether it be in individualized or group instance. (personal communication, October 23rd, 2020)

The findings from field notes, post-workshop reflection journals, and formal interviews equally revealed data specific to the participants’ development in the knowledge base needed for providing CRP. For example, Workshop 2 seemed to shock many of the participants by providing information related to historical and current practices and policies that could be considered systemically discriminatory in nature. More specifically, in a discussion about the inequitable funding of schools and the structures used to determine and allocate funding, Mr. Bob (personal communication, September 18th, 2020, Appendix D) commented on the “cognitive dissonance of persons who make the decisions who claim to be democratic representatives and Christians” but could not justify their decisions resulting in inequity. Also, a review of the redlining and home-financing policies and practices used by local municipalities as well as the application of lending guidelines in recent history helped participants gain knowledge related to other systemically discriminatory practices; Mr. Cash was very surprised in learning this new knowledge. He asked for clarification, saying, “Are you saying that ‘Blacks’ were not approved for loans due to their race?” (Mr. Cash, personal
communication, September, 18th, 2020) Notably, Mr. Cash asked this expressive question not only for his own knowledge development but for other participants who had no knowledge of such discriminatory practices leading to inequity in other realms.

Further analysis of field notes revealed other support of the growing knowledge of the participants. For example, analysis of field notes revealed substantial evidence supporting the need for knowledge of cultural awareness. In a discourse with other participants, Ms. East stated,

Be intentional about your experiences so that you can be intentional about your teaching, planning and curriculum. If you seek cultural experiences from people that are different from you, you will grow. Then you can translate your experiences into relevant pedagogy. (personal communication, September, 25th, 2020, Appendix D)

Ms. East, who is a Black educator, went on to explain to the group, “By becoming more culturally aware of your students and using this awareness in interactions with them, you achieve a ‘level of clearance’ with them” (personal communication, September 25th, 2020). She explained further, “When providing students with a disciplinary conversation, I can say the same thing as another teacher, but because the students see me as an advocate, because they trust me, the disciplinary conversation works” (Ms. East, personal communication, September, 25th, 2020).

Participants’ reflective journal writing also provided interesting findings related to the development of the knowledge base needed for providing CRP. For example, after Workshop 2 (systemic racism), Ms. East wrote:
Biased lending practices, biased assessments in education, biased hiring practices, curriculum that are majority driven—these systems exist because the laws and practices are controlled by the majority so they continue to create these practices that hurt the minority. We must start to give all individuals the equal opportunity to those positions higher up on the totem pole and in the rooms where these types of decisions are being made! (personal communication, September 18th, 2020)

Mr. Maine also reflected on systemic discrimination:

By implementing things that are relevant to those students, they should hopefully more engage in the lesson and in learning in general. This would of course benefit the student but also those who do not have a shared experience with that group. One-size-fits-all format of school built around the majority of students (White) in our state is set up to be advantageous for the majority White students. These exist because most of those in power see themselves and not all of their constituents when making educational decisions. (personal communication, September 18th, 2020)

Lastly, concerning Black students, their performance on assessments, and the placement of students into advanced coursework, Mr. Bob commented:

I think academically gifted tests may have high levels of exclusionary practices or modeled in such a fashion that tends to filter non-Caucasian or other ethnicities. I do not have any empirical data to support this notion. However, the level of representation and the vivid achievement gap. I am tempted to believe that the instrument that is being utilized has a level of rigor that may be fine-tuned for a classical learning style & not adapted for multiple intelligence theory. There is a
wealth of evidence that suggests that socioeconomic status directly influences how students will learn and demonstrate mastery. I fear that the state tests need more parameters to accurately identify giftedness. An overhaul would be needed to ensure that a leveled instrument is created that conducts holistic testing and identification. In my own experience, I have realized that when challenged, some African American and Hispanic students excel, thrive, and overachieve in a GT classroom. (personal communication, September 18th, 2020)

Analysis of the reflective journal writing after each workshop also provided an opportunity to evaluate the participants’ growth compared to their previous journal responses and previous data from the field notes. Specifically, analysis of reflective journal responses after participating in the cultural plunge exercise proved beneficial for participants’ knowledge-base development. Participants were encouraged to choose an experience unfamiliar and perhaps uncomfortable that is unique to the cultural experiences of the students they serve. A few participants chose to attend a church service at a predominantly African American church. Mr. Cash chose to delve further into hip hop music by researching artists and listening to the music. For example, notable growth in understanding the importance of becoming more culturally aware was noted in the case of Mr. Cash. After Workshop 3 (cultural awareness), Mr. Cash wrote,

More importantly, however, is how I now can discuss the topic with my students on a deeper level because I have been exposed to the music they listen to. I know more of the artists’ names and the songs they produce, and I know that there are subcultures within Hip Hop. It gives us a common ground from which I can build a relationship with my students. (personal communication, September 25th, 2020)
The field notes taken at the beginning of Workshop 3 indicated Mr. Cash’s resistance to growing in terms of Black cultural awareness and, in particular, making an effort to understand hip-hop culture and music. For example, in response to a video of former teacher (Black) rapping about why he quit teaching (due to an inflexible system that did not accept his pedagogy), Mr. Cash said, “I’m from a totally different culture, but I didn’t understand the majority of what he was saying. How much rap music can I actually use that doesn’t have cuss words?” (personal communication, September 25th, 2020).

Data collected from reflective journaling after Workshops 4 (pedagogy) and 5 (CRP Triangle) provided further evidence of the participants’ development of the knowledge base needed for providing CRP. For example, Ms. Teeter wrote, “I have learned that children are just as interested in current events as adults. By our instructional discussions, socio-political consciousness can easily be embedded within curriculum providing instruction beyond the four walls of the classroom” (personal communication, October 16th, 2020, Appendix C). Also related to the sociopolitical consciousness tenet of CRP, Mr. Bob wrote:

I would like to use more Problem/Project Based Learning activities as a tool to initiate meaningful academic change or progress. The students will then be equipped to utilize their [research/analysis] skills to make a significant impact in their communities. The aim will be to empower students to be self-aware of their purpose and the role they serve in their own communities. They will evidently be able to become change agents in their own space. (personal communication, October 16th, 2020, Appendix C)
Interpretation of Results

The study results indicate that the workshop series had a positive impact on the development of CRP among the educator-participants engaged in the study. The participants recognized the positive impact of the workshops in terms of their shift in willingness to develop a perspective or mindset related to their understanding of their personal biases and the biases of others. Additionally, participants acknowledged their change to a willing mindset from learning about systemically racist statutes, policies, and practices embedded in governing and, specifically, in public education. The participants also recognized the effect that strategies aimed at improving their cultural awareness had on their mindset and willingness to further guide their perspective based on additional cultural learning. Moreover, the participants documented their development of new knowledge related to the learning targets of each workshop session. Sociological understandings of race, bias, culture, and systemic discrimination, as well as specific examples provided during workshops, fueled participants’ documented understandings of these concepts as new knowledge. Lastly, the participants equally acknowledged the impact of information and discourse concerning the details of pedagogy and the components of CRP on their growth in their knowledge base.

Conclusion

Significant gaps in the achievement levels and educational opportunities between White and Black students in schools have pervaded the United States since the inception of measuring these trends. These trends have been exacerbated at the research site, a lower secondary school in South Carolina. Most U.S. educators are White middle-class teachers, and the research site school reflects the national demographic. Therefore, the
study sought to measure the impact of a series of workshops aimed at improving the practices of seven educators at the school in their provision of pedagogy that would better match the needs of their students: CRP. Though the sample size of the study was small ($N = 7$), the participants represented a variety of demographic traits and experiences; thus, the sample can be considered representative of the research site. Seventh- and eighth-grade teachers in the areas of social studies, science, world language, and physical education were selected as participants, along with a school secretary. This sample group also consisted of three Black females, two White males, 1 White female, and 1 Black male with a wide array of years of experience in the profession and encounters with similar cultural training.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The study results indicate that the participants developed as providers of CRP and that the strategies and resources used throughout the workshop series seemed to foster this development. The study findings revealed two themes pertaining to the participant’s developmental level of CRP: participants’ willingness to engage in the steps needed to grow their CRP and the knowledge base needed to develop as a provider of CRP. These themes suggest that the workshop series exerted a positive impact on the participants’ understanding and application to their craft of CRP that stemmed from workshop discussions, journal reflection assignments, and analyses of field experiences.

Through the findings of this study, I determined a basis for effectively developing educators’ ability to understand, appreciate, and provide CRP while also noting suggestions for additional workshop design and future studies.

This study may benefit school and school district leaders who are seeking to improve equitable learning opportunities for all students. Educational leaders will be able to examine the processes and strategies used during the workshop series that led to the development of CRP within the educator-participants.
Research Question

The study sought to answer the following research question: What impact will PD workshops on CRP have on the pedagogical awareness level of seven middle school educators at ABC School?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to examine the impact of a series of PD workshops on CRP and its impact on the pedagogical awareness level of seven educators at a lower secondary school in the southeastern United States.

Overview and Summary of the Study

The study involved seven educators at a lower secondary school in the southeastern United States, providing them a series of PD workshops on CRP. Educators were led in interactive discussions, and they received appropriate content designed to increase their awareness of concepts related to CRP. The participants were also guided through exercises that encouraged them to reflect on their current pedagogical and instructional practices as well as their personal biases and the biases of others. Furthermore, the participants learned about systemically discriminatory practices and policies and the potential impact of this discrimination on adults and students. The participants were also led in a process aimed at developing their cultural awareness of the students they taught, and then they learned about the nuances and foundations of pedagogy. Lastly, the participants learned about the basic tenets of CRP and were exposed to samples of culturally relevant pedagogical instructional, structural, and managerial practices. Workshop discussions and reflections encouraged all participants to provide examples of how they could implement similar aspects of the provided examples.
In the final workshop session, each participant provided a culmination of their learning in which they presented to the group their “situation” of CRP and explained how they planned to incorporate aspects of CRP into their jobs as educators.

In addition to the participants’ observations in their final presentations, several other implications can be derived from this study:

1. Through the practice of facilitating courageous conversations pertaining to race, systemic racism, discrimination, and bias, educator-participants are able to express and gain the perspective from each other that is necessary for developing the needed mindset for CRP.

2. When presented with factual/statistical information related to systemically discriminatory educational policies and practices, educators have an opportunity to adjust their perspective toward the equity mindset needed for providing CRP.

3. Through critical self-reflection exercises, educators may learn about their own biases, the biases of others, how to recognize one’s own cultural biases, and how to respond upon identification. This recognition of biases is imperative to developing the needed mindset for providing CRP.

4. By making a committed effort to understand and become more aware of Black and Brown students’ culture, educators can gain the needed perspective for developing an appropriate mindset for providing CRP.

5. Educators who understand how their experiences and values drive their pedagogical approach are more apt to reflect on and adjust their pedagogy.

6. When presented with the three components of CRP—student learning, cultural awareness, and sociopolitical consciousness—in a manner that allows for
educators to process, reflect on, and evaluate the components through the lenses of examples as well as their own application of the components, educators can transform their pedagogical practices to those that better incorporate CRP.

Educators and social scientists believe that one of the best opportunities to ameliorate aversive forms of racism is through constructive dialogues that bridge racial and ethnic divides (Franlkin et al., 1998). The workshop series structure, environment, and reflective style can provide educators with the opportunity they need to engage in productive conversations about race. This perception of courageous conversations was shown to be accurate, as the participants shared their honest opinions related to provocative topics regarding discrimination in their world, biases within themselves, and systemically racist practices in public education. Participants also equally and actively listened to each other. In their discussions and written reflections, the participants acknowledged that they had gained new perspectives on racial issues that they once thought were concretely solidified in terms of their understanding of the world.

The participants were also able to show an understanding of how they could provide more equitable learning opportunities for their students with adjustments to their approach and teaching strategies. Through the connections made from one level to the next in the successive learning as structured in the workshops, participants were able to demonstrate through their conversations and written reflections nuances regarding changes in their classroom management, attitudes toward relationships, and even curriculum decisions.
Suggestions for Future Research

This study focused on developing the needed mindset to enable educators to develop as providers of CRP. The workshops were organized in a cumulative fashion to achieve the mindset. The last two workshops in the series provided the foundation for participants to gain knowledge and understanding of the nuances of pedagogy and grasp the essential details of CRP. Although participants received some examples of CRP instructional strategies and curriculum resources, this content constituted only a minor part of the workshop sessions. Thus, a follow-up study, perhaps even using the same participants, could explore the impact of PD aimed at developing participants’ CRP “bank” of instructional strategies, relationship and management techniques, and curriculum resources. Examples of this CRP “bank” could manifest as instructional routines that proactively allow the incorporation of multiple cultural perspectives by gathering student voice and opinions into the learning process. Curriculum choices such as the literature that teachers provide to students for developing skills and conceptual understandings can also provide students with a more culturally relevant learning experience especially when multiple options are available for students to choose and the choices include resources that are personally relevant or relevant to their lives from a society, cultural, or communal perspective. Foundational classroom routines, procedures, and behavioral expectations can be designed so that they provide a structure that is representative of multiculturalism. For example, classroom norms could be mutually developed between the teacher and the students so that the students gain ownership of the foundational classroom structures and so that their perspectives are considered and
included. The researcher, to determine the impact of the PD, could analyze qualitative data in the form of artifacts created by educator-participants.

Another suggestion for future research related to PD centered around educators’ ability to provide CRP is to focus on the impact on student outcomes. In practical terms, educators’ primary focus and purpose concern student academic outcomes. Affording educators opportunities for development that will make them better suited for providing educational experiences that meet student needs based on the latter’s cultural ways of being can lead to improved student outcomes for historically marginalized students. Because this research study did not measure student outcomes, future research that connects PD concerning educators’ development of CRP to the attendance, behaviors, and academic performance of students is still needed. The presence of a study that shows the impact of CRP-focused PD on student outcomes could provide further justification for designing and employing comprehensive school and district plans for developing educators who practice CRP. Even though the current research provides solid justification in terms of educator development, educational institutions are primed to focus their human and fiscal resources based on strategies that most directly benefit student outcomes.

**Action Plan**

The results of this action research study showed that the implementation of a 6-session workshop series had a positive impact on the educator-participants’ development of CRP. More specifically, the findings demonstrated a positive impact on educator-participants’ willingness to engage in collaborative and discussion-based developmental
work as well as their growth in specific knowledge and understanding pertaining to CRP.

In initially contemplating this action plan, I considered the following questions:

1. If the study’s workshop design and implementation strategy effectively increases educators’ CRP in planning and practice, what components of the workshop could be duplicated to produce the same positive results in a different educational setting?

2. How can I prepare leaders to effectively provide a workshop experience for educators to meet the learning objectives of the workshop experiences?

The action plan for further impact on educators includes several possible avenues of influence. First, I would like to share the results of this research with several stakeholder groups seeking to motivate teachers and educational leaders to pursue similar workshop structures aimed at growing educators’ proficiency at providing CRP. Second, I see it as pertinent to offer the original workshop series to seven different educators within the school building during the Fall 2021 semester. Lastly, I would like to continue the work with these same educator-participants (from the original research) with a second round of workshop experiences aimed at further developing their ability to provide CRP with a focus on CRP design within their classrooms.

Thus, in order to continue the research, I will develop and provide a comprehensive presentation of the research findings to several stakeholder groups: (a) the entire faculty at the school, (b) the district leadership team, and (c) various stakeholders who attend educational conferences. The presentation will cover the purpose of the study, its process, and the findings. Handouts for the audience will include graphic representations along with narratives of the findings. In a follow-up meeting with the
seven participants from the study, the participants shared feedback and suggestions for improving the impact of the workshop series as well as ideas for furthering their own development of CRP and, on a related note, the research. This valuable information was subsequently included in presentations of the research findings to other stakeholder groups (school-wide faculty, district leadership, and educator conference attendees).

The next action step is to further spread the influence of CRP development by offering the same workshop series experiences to a new set of educators within the school. After the presentation of the research findings to the school faculty, I will provide the interest survey to all faculty members. I will then follow the same process used originally for selecting participants, which ensured a diverse group of participants by demographic measures, grade levels, and content areas. The workshop series will be provided to these participants during the Fall semester of the 2021–2021 school term and will include the recommendations made by the original participants regarding improving the impact of developing educators as providers of CRP.

The third phase of the action plan for continuing the research is to design and provide a “next-level” workshop series for the original participants. A possible research question for the future research study is as follows: What impact will a workshop series aimed at developing specific CRP classroom structures have on educator-participants’ provision of CRP to their students? CRP Workshop Series 2.0 will build upon participants’ strengths as developed from the first workshop series by focusing more on specific design components—classroom management plans, instructional delivery and strategies, and a focus on incorporating curriculum resources. The first workshop will review their learning targets from the original series—development of mindset by
understanding and recognizing bias, development of mindset via gaining knowledge and understanding systemic discrimination, growth in one’s own cultural awareness, knowledge development and understanding of pedagogy and its roots, and the components of CRP—academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. Then, the succeeding workshops will provide examples and directions for evaluating and then redesigning the aforementioned specific design components to be used within their classroom settings.

This third phase of the action plan was inspired by the feedback from the follow-up meeting with the original participants. Overwhelmingly, the participants provided positive reflections regarding the impact on their pedagogy. However, a common theme from the feedback was that they desired to continue their growth by gaining support for developing their knowledge and capacity in specific management and instructional design components through the focus of CRP. For example, several participants shared that they wished the final phase of the first workshop series could have been extended into more sessions. For instance, Ms. Ezekiel wrote in her final journal reflection,

All educators, no matter race or ethnicity should be required to have this training. The “talk” needs to happen. After training, it would be great to incorporate another PLC group that could offer a different perspective toward teaching our standards using culturally relative pedagogy. This opportunity was awesome!

(personal communication, October 23rd, 2020, Appendix C)

The final phase required participants to “situate” their CRP; each participant presented to the group how they planned to use what they had learned to improve their provision of
CRP. Specifically, participants desired to learn how to develop specific strategies for classroom management and instructional design that incorporated aspects of CRP.

Lastly, in order to more efficiently and effectively spread the influence of the aforementioned action steps so that a multicultural mindset, a pedagogical awareness level, and culturally relevant practices occur in every classroom and in each nook and cranny of the school building, I will design a teacher-leadership structure in the form of cultural ambassadorships. The educators who demonstrate the most growth from the workshop series experiences will be appointed as cultural ambassadors of our Professional Learning Community (PLC) teacher-teams. The aforementioned workshop series training will prepare the ambassadors to serve in this role. The cultural ambassador will provide this specified leadership during every meeting and team-level decision process with the goal of ensuring that the team maintains an equity-focused mindset when making decisions. More specifically, when the common-content PLCs meet, the cultural ambassador will ensure facilitation, discussion and perspectives of the tenets of CRP when engaging in collaborative lesson or unit planning.

I have created this action plan based on my lifelong pursuit as an educational leader of providing equitable opportunities for traditionally marginalized students. The process for furthering the action research will be cyclical in nature. Future research will provide enhancement to the original study. The action plan will be continually examined through the action research process to facilitate reflection on the impact and make adjustments as needed. While this initial plan is centered on the impact provided by my own facilitation of workshops and presentation of research findings, my hope is to inspire
other educators and educational leaders to join the pursuit to develop educators as providers of CRP through their own action research design.

**Conclusion**

This study examined the impact of the implementation of a 6-week workshop series aimed at improving the provision of CRP by seven educator-participants. CRP has continued as a significant topic among educational professionals, particularly in the realm of educator improvement or PD. However, due to several factors, including the controversial nature of the topic, the current sociopolitical climate of the United States, and the resistance to change often embedded in the attitudes and mindsets of educators, meaningful progress and specific action plans for developing CRP within educators are hard to find. Despite the noted benefits of educators providing culturally relevant pedagogical experiences for children, the means and processes for developing abilities within educators have not been clearly defined. However, as this study demonstrated, providing opportunities for shifts in mindset through purposeful dialogue and knowledge development related to the CRP can significantly improve educators’ willingness and understanding of how to provide CRP.

Continued fostering of CRP PD opportunities through the workshop series model for veteran and novice teachers can make it possible to research the future impact on not only the growth in teachers’ professional capacity but also student outcomes. This study has provided examples of what those results may indicate as well as offered suggestions for future studies to explore the impact of CRP educator training programs. Several implications discussed in this chapter should be considered among teacher educators, educational leaders, and others who are invested in improving educational opportunities
for traditionally marginalized students. The cultivation of CRP within educators should continue in order to extensively evaluate its positive impact on educator and student growth.
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MTAyO


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This agreement relates to your participation in a study led by Scott Floyd to better understand educator’s approach and provision of culturally relevant pedagogy. Please read it carefully and ask any questions you have before signing.

- **You are not required to participate and may opt out at any time.** If at any point you no longer wish to participate, please inform the study moderator.
- **You will not receive payment or compensation for your participation.** You agree to perform all duties associated with your participation in this study during the period of September 9th, 2020 to October 17th, 2020 gratuitously and without expectation of payment or any other form of compensation from the United States Government. You freely and voluntarily agree to waive any right, claim, or other recourse against the United States federal Government relating to compensation for your participation in this study. Additionally, you agree to grant the United States Government with unlimited and unrestricted rights to use and reproduce all materials associated with your participation in this study.
- **You agree to be recorded by Scott Floyd may record this study.** Scott Floyd may make video, audio, photographic, and written recordings of this study. These records will be stored by Scott Floyd and shared only with persons with a valid need to know for necessary, official purposes.
- **Scott Floyd will take appropriate precautions to protect your privacy.** Scott Floyd takes steps to minimize and remove any unnecessary sensitive personally identifiable information captured during this research.

Printed Name ______________________________

Signature ________________________________

Date ___________________________
APPENDIX B

PRE-/POST-QUESTIONNAIRE

The pre-questionnaire measured perceptions and attitudes toward race and culture, participants’ understanding of cultural awareness, and their knowledge and attitudes toward the incorporation of culturally-relevant pedagogical practices. The questionnaire required participants to answer questions related to their beliefs about culture and race by choosing a rating based on a 10-point scale. This same questionnaire used the Likert scale rating system to measure participants’ willingness to engage in specific steps to improve their cultural awareness and provision of culturally relevant pedagogy. The post interview questionnaire used the same questions and Likert scale indicators as the pre-intervention interview questionnaire for the purpose of measuring the impact of the workshop series.

1. What is your name? Please know that any information shared will be kept completely confidential. No data from this survey will be attached or reported to any entity with any personally identifiable information attached to the data.

2. Please rate your self-perceived level of bias (explicit or unconscious) as it relates to race, culture, or skin color (10 stars = very biased, 1 star = almost no bias).

3. Please rate your willingness to engage in tough conversations, critical self-reflection, and conscious changes to correct your unconscious or explicit bias (10 stars = very willing, 1 star = not willing).
4. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement, “Racism is systemically embedded in our American society” (10 stars = completely agree, 1 star = adamantly disagree).

5. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement, “American public education is not equitable. Black students are discriminated against due to racist systems, policies and practices” (10 stars = completely agree, 1 star = adamantly disagree).

6. Please rate your level of cultural awareness of Black people (10 stars = completely aware, 1 star = very little awareness).

7. Please rate your willingness to take specific steps to become more culturally aware of Black peoples’ way of life (10 stars = absolutely willing, 1 star = not willing at all).

8. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement, “Outcomes for Black students would improve if strict rules of discipline were implemented” (10 stars = completely agree, 1 star = completely disagree).

9. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement, “Outcomes for Black students I teach would improve if I adjust my approach, planning, and execution to better fit their needs” (10 stars = completely agree, 1 star = completely disagree).

10. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement, “I am confident in my ability to plan, and execute lessons based upon the needs of my Black students in order to improve their educational outcomes that are congruent of white students (10 stars = completely agree, 1 star = completely disagree).
APPENDIX C

POST-WORKSHOP JOURNAL REFLECTION PROMPTS

Post-Workshop Journal Reflection Prompt: Bias

1. What is your name?

2. Offer a specific description of a situation in which you demonstrated bias. When you realized it, how did it make you feel? What changes did you make to correct your judgement and resultant actions?

3. What steps will you take to further correct your bias?

Post-Workshop Journal Reflection Prompt: Systemic Racism

1. What is your name?

2. How can you change your curriculum / contribute to curriculum change so that if reflects the cultural heritage, cultural norms, and cultural relevance of your students? Why is it so imperative to do so?

3. What systematically racist practices or policies do you recognize as such within our state? Our district? Our school? Why / how do these systems exist? What must be done to remove or change these practices?

Post-Workshop Journal Reflection Prompt: Cultural Plunge

1. What is your name?

2. Reflect on your cultural experience.
   a. Did you purposefully place yourself out of your comfort zone?
   b. How is the experience different from your usual cultural setting or event?
c. How did this experience contribute to your overall awareness and understanding?

d. What assumptions did you have about the experience prior to your attendance? How has your view changed based upon your actual experience?

**Post-Workshop Journal Reflection Prompt: Pedagogy**

1. What is your name?

2. Now that you have an understanding of pedagogy – what it is, how learning theories drive pedagogy, how your beliefs drive your pedagogy, what can you change about your pedagogy in order to provide more equitable learning opportunities for your students?
   
a. What do you need to do to create this shift in pedagogy?

**Post-Workshop Journal Reflection Prompt: CRP**

1. What is your name?

2. CRP Component #1 – Student Learning – What is on specific but broad stroke you can apply to your pedagogy to improve student learning from the perspective of CRP?

3. CRP Component #2 – Cultural Competence – What steps will you take to build your cultural competence so that you can help students grow in the knowledge and understanding of their own culture while acquiring skills in at least one other culture?

4. CRP Component #3 – Socio-Political Consciousness – How will you adjust your planning, lessons, and curriculum so as to embed socio-political consciousness
Table D.1 Example of the Field Notes Observation Record Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation # and Date/Time</th>
<th>Observations/Verbal Comments from Participants</th>
<th>Observer’s Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW

Table E.1 Participant Interview Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Name</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
<th>Participant Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Based upon your understanding of this workshop series and our ultimate goal of improving your provision of culturally relevant pedagogy, what do I need to know about you that you’ve not been able to divulge thus far?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What aspect of your upbringing, life, approach, being do I need to understand in order to be able to measure your growth toward becoming a better practitioner of culturally relevant pedagogy?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>