

TELLING STORIES OF TEACHER-TO-TEACHER TRUST IN
CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHING
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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TELLING STORIES OF TEACHER-TO-TEACHER TRUST IN
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ABSTRACT

This study examined White female teachers' storied experiences of teacher-to-teacher trust as they navigated culturally relevant teaching practices presented through professional learning, using the qualitative research methods of narrative inquiry and heuristic research. The study was conducted in an urban public high school within a Midwestern state. Purposeful sampling with maximum variation were used for participant selection. The participants for this study included seven, self-identified White, female, high-school teachers employed at the specific high school, who participated in culturally relevant teaching professional learning. Qualitative data collection generated from the participants' responses during semi-structured interviews, documents and artifacts gathered. Data collection took place alongside the six phases of heuristic inquiry. Co-researchers' narratives inspired six themes including (a) "Inequity;" (b) "Application;" (c)

“Barriers to Trust;” (d) “Silence;” (e) “Trusted Teachers;” and (f) “Trusted Teachers Talk.” The stories of trust may have implications for educators who are working to build trust relationships in their schools, those who wish to revive positive school culture or reform initiatives, or those who wish to identify best practices for helping teachers use culturally relevant teaching to address student equity.

APPROVAL PAGE

The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the School of Education, have examined a dissertation titled “Telling Stories of Teacher-To-Teacher Trust in Culturally Relevant Teaching Professional Development,” presented by Chaurice Mae Wright Jacobson, candidate for the Doctor of Education degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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Dedication:

For my mom.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Why do some schools improve dramatically while similar schools fail?

Anthony Bryk

It is not our differences that divide us.

It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.

Audre Lorde

A few years ago, I was invited to attend a professional development session described as, “making sense of that big survey we all took.” As a then-teacher, I was excited to be included in the group of building administrators. We arrived at a beautiful building and were ushered into a learning common. There were building principals and curriculum specialists from each building in my district. We sat at tables by school, and the facilitators passed out copies of the survey data. The front cover had a five-piece puzzle, and each piece was colored red. In bold letters, the packet stated, “Jordan Jewell: Not Yet Organized.” I read the first of 50 pages and was appalled; we were weak in every area the survey deemed important for a successful school. I was shocked to see this data as so well collected and disaggregated. According to this data we were not effective, and we were not ready to improve.

When we took our first break, I walked slowly past the tables of my district-colleagues. Their puzzle pieces were green and yellow! I made a U-turn and returned to my seat to examine the packet. This was not an indictment of my district. The document was

focused on my school. Because my high school shares a name with the school district, I assumed results were holistic. I was crushed, but the facilitators of the event exonerated my feelings when they clarified that we were there to examine the data and make important changes to improve our effectiveness. Our benefactors paid for the survey titled the 5Essentials, the data analysis, and professional development (PD) for leaders because of the powerful link to urban school reform initiatives that succeed. They explained that we would all meet the following year to examine new survey results. Little did I know that urban school reform initiatives usually fail if school culture is not addressed (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Fullan 2015, 2016b; Payne, 2008; Peck & Reitzug, 2014; Rose, 2015).

The following school year, my building leaders put new procedures in place. A small group of teachers began meeting for voluntary collaborations and leadership disseminated student test data and scores at most meetings. We discovered an achievement gap between our Latinx students and our White students, and there were racial inequities in our discipline data. According to Ladson-Billings (1995a), an achievement gap is evidence of inequities in schools. A few teachers and I signed up for urban literacy professional development in hopes of addressing the disparities between white and brown students. However, we never dared discuss race directly; I was too worried about upsetting White friends, and they seemed content not addressing the elephant in the room. I knew then that discussing race was challenging for me. I did not know that discussing race usually requires clear intentions, procedures and a wealth of other related theories including Critical Race Theory background knowledge (Howard, 2016; Muhammad, 2018; Hawley & Nieto, 2009; Singleton, 2015).

Our school leadership asked teachers to communicate with every student's parent at least twice in the school year (we already were asked to contact parents when students earned Ds or Fs). We began a holistic three-tiered program for improving students' academic skills, social skills and behavior. My principal told me, "We can only improve!" Despite his future-focused positivity, the 5Essentials report showed that my principal was not viewed as an instructional leader, one of the most effective leadership styles for change (Fullan 2015, 2016a; Knight, 2011; Marzano et al., 2005; Seashore-Louis & Whalstrom, 2011).

When the 5Essentials data workshop was mentioned the following spring, I requested to attend. I was excited to see how much we had grown after all the new programs and interventions. We had not grown. In fact, we performed worse than the year before. Some of our lowest scores came from the survey section related to teacher-to-teacher trust. Besides not offering ambitious instruction in a supportive environment, we did not collaborate with families, or trust our leaders. Teachers did not even like each other. Data showed that teachers refused to collaborate with each other, did not trust each other, and did not respect each other. I had been raised to believe trust and respect were synonyms. Could we ever improve if we teachers did not trust each other? This question was asked by many before me (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Leithwood et al., 2013; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998), and unbeknownst to me, their research shaped the 5Essentials workshops.

As I stood stewing at the back of the room, a facilitator approached me. He asked if I was upset. I responded with a roll of my eyes. His firm but unworried demeanor told me he had seen this many times before. Some teachers in Midwestern, troubled, urban, high schools

do not trust each other enough to implement professional development that may improve their practice. He said, “Look into the research. Renewal is possible.”

The purpose of this study was to examine White female teachers’ storied experiences of teacher-to-teacher trust as they navigated culturally relevant teaching practices presented through professional learning, using the qualitative research methods of narrative inquiry and heuristic research. As the opening scenario highlights, even school leaders and teachers who desire an effective school are unsure about how to navigate negative school cultures, lack of trust in their colleagues, and use professional learning to address inequities in student performance. While in the guided examination of 5Essentials data and professional learning, the administrators and I were entrenched in the very real trappings of a negative school culture, and we were unable to identify the taboo components of the problems, like students’ races and cultures. We all remained largely silent, missing opportunities to approach unfettered territory.

Identifying components of a problem is key to creating a plan to rectify the problem. Avoiding conflict is a natural human response, however White females are typically socialized to avoid conflict and offending others; thus, discussion of topics like race and culture are met with silence (Muhammad, 2018; Sue, 2015). When faculties are predominately White and do not match the racial or cultural diversity in student clientele, when school cultures are negative and teachers feel mired in the quicksand of the status quo or are isolated by unspoken norms, learning how to collaborate with colleagues and implement culturally relevant pedagogy is imperative to countering the learned silence that

permeates White female educators (Matias & Grosland, 2016; Singleton, 2015; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011).

Unfortunately, Milner and Laughter (2014) found that despite educators' good intentions and hopes to provide equitable education for students, unless there is a clear procedure for discussing the very taboo topics of race and culture and how they affect instruction, nothing improves. If trust is in short supply, teachers avoid and actively work to thwart expectations to collaborate with other teachers (Matias & Grosland, 2016). Romero and Mitchell (2018) dove into Adams and Miskell's (2016) research on trust to argue that trust is a multifactor construct, and understanding this helps educators make better choices to address problems, and "develop, maintain, or repair trust in schools" (p. 153).

Problem Statement

Some teachers in Midwestern, troubled, urban, high schools do not trust each other enough to implement professional development that may improve their practice. Not directly addressing issues like achievement gaps and social inequities reinforces toxic school cultural norms that are often pervasive, but unspoken (Muhammad, 2018). Educators trapped in these unchallenged toxic cultures "create policies and procedures and adopt practices that support their belief in the impossibility of universal achievement" (Muhammad, 2018, p. 21). These adopted policies and procedures fester to reinforce systemic discrimination, racism, and indoctrinate students to ideas of White privilege superiority. Educators must work to dismantle toxic cultures. They can do this by building trusting relationships.

Effective schools are composed of five criteria: effective leaders, collaborative teachers, involved families, supportive environments, and ambitious instruction (Bryk &

Schneider, 2002; UChicago Impact, 2018). These criteria developed from an evidence-based survey from the Consortium on Chicago School Research in 1990. This 15-year longitudinal study gathered and analyzed survey data delivered to parents, students, and teachers from hundreds of elementary schools in Chicago, and it was designed to interrogate the idea of improvement in urban schools (Bryk, 2010). The report, known as the 5Essentials was built upon research by the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research's twenty plus years of national data (UChicago Impact, 2018). Results of Bryk and Schneider's (2002) research did more than connect trust to effective schools – trust was meshed within, supporting all, linking every, and surrounding all components of an effective school.

Obviously, if a school scores weak in one area, concentrated effort should be given to address the identified issue while maintaining successful practices in the other four areas. When schools score weak in three or more of the five essentials, schools are not considered ready for improvement. Literature has shown that when schools have many issues they cannot rectify the problem (Johnson et al., 2017; Payne, 2008). Andy Hargreaves (2002) interviewed 50 Canadian teachers about the effects of betrayal (the opposite of trust) in their elementary and secondary schools. Findings suggested teachers intentionally avoided interaction and collaboration with each other if they feared controversy or disagreement might take place. Hargreaves (2002) rationalized that teachers actively evaded opportunities to learn, discuss student learning or grow professionally due to this fear. For true school improvement to take place, trust, “the emotional catalyst” must be fostered to prevent the “corrosive effects of betrayal” (p. 405).

Beginning to address trust issues first is imperative. “Teacher trust is critical to the success of schools,” (Leithwood et al., 2013, p. 262). Influencing enough people to try a new instructional focus implies that many people trust each other. A leader hoping to create excellent, equitable learning opportunities and results for all students needs to ensure trust exists within the critical mass of teachers and also between those in leadership and the teachers. In short, leaders should work to create trusting relationships through collaboration and instructional leadership through professional development to foster positive change in schools (Leithwood et al., 2013).

Like many Midwestern school districts, Jordan Jewell has experienced increasing demographic diversity in the last decade. Diem, Welton, Frankenberg and Holme (2016) described the demographic shifts in suburban US schools as “dramatic,” “rapid,” and “tremendous” (p. 732). The changes reflect greater diversity in students’ income, class, race, ethnicity, nationality, first language, and overall culture. For generations, the makeup of the student population in Jordan Jewell district held steady at 80% white, 10% Hispanic and other, and 10% Black (State Report Card, 2020). In the last decade, the Hispanic population has grown to 42% while the white student population has decreased to 40%. The African American population has stayed constant at 10%.

Jordan Jewell is not a unique district. Despite this shift in student demographics, 92% of teachers remain White. According to The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) 83.5% of all US teachers are white, non-Hispanic (2018). NCES predicts that White students will represent 46 percent of public-school students by 2024, a statistic that is steadily declining. Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and African American student populations are

projected to increase. The racial and cultural gaps between teachers and students matter, because they affect trust. Van Maele and Van Houtte (2011) used multilevel analysis on data from over 2,000 Flanders, Belgium teachers to determine that trust between teachers that leads to collaboration and improved student achievement may be easier to obtain among homogeneous cultures, where teachers share a common culture with students.

Jordan Jewell's assessment scores are consistently low. Students of color perform ten to twenty percent lower than White students. Students in poverty also perform below state averages (State Department of Education, 2017). The NCES (2018) reported that the Black-White and Hispanic-White achievement gaps have been slowly closing over the last 30 years. Unfortunately, national statistics still illustrate a significant gap. Most school districts' performance gaps range .9 to 1.5 standard deviations. There is also a national disconnect and tension built into a system where so many in power are White, and so many without power are not White (Howard, 2016).

Precisely because teachers feel ill prepared to teach students who differ from themselves, principals should implement culturally relevant professional development (Hawley & Nieto, 2010; Hodgins, 2014; Muhammad, 2018). However, when teachers in troubled schools are asked to implement new initiatives, many cannot. "Admitting that improvement is possible is an invitation to self-critique" (Payne, 2008, p. 196). In their article "Another Inconvenient Truth: Race and Ethnicity Matter," Hawley and Nieto (2010) agreed that collaborative practices and professional development (PD) can be used to repair toxic school cultures if respect and trust are shared. Without trust, PD is simply an opportunity for teachers to stare at the "elephants in the room" (Johnson, et al., 2017, p.

99). The elephants, race, language, poverty, sexual orientation and gender are social taboos (Johnson et al., 2017). Race is especially awkward for White people to discuss (Howard, 2016; Matias et al., 2016).

Jean-Marie, Normore and Brooks (2009) conducted a study to examine how race affects school leaders. The study's participants were 11 female high school principals who all worked in a southwestern state. Using a phenomenological approach, data were collected, organized by theme, and coded from a series of open-ended and structured interviews. The researchers' study found that all principals worked to grow faculty collaboration, desired to lead through service, and identified the importance of a leader's responsibility to social justice and equity issues for students.

In 2013, Jean-Marie partnered with Katherine Cumings Mansfield to conduct a qualitative secondary analysis (QSA) of both Jean-Marie's (2009) study, and Mansfield's (2011) dissertation. Mansfield's (2011) study took place in a single-sex public-school, in a major US city. Mansfield suggested that principals should consider the intersectionality of "race, socioeconomic status, gender, sexuality, and other contextual factors" when maneuvering "between historical, political, and socio-cultural contexts" to improve student achievement (p. x). Jean-Marie and Mansfield's (2013) joint study examined school leaders' work with stakeholders to address educational inequities, mainly by applying Singleton and Linton's (2007) framework for Courageous Conversations to reexamine participants' responses with a new focus. Because QSA relies on analyzing an established study's data, the participants, and interview methods were not changed. This reexamination with a new focus generated new interpretations and implications from their inquiry. Mainly,

“becoming more consciously aware may lead to places of discomfort but it also gives them [stakeholders] an opportunity to understand the intricacies of racial discrimination, biases, inequities, etc.” when attempting to address gaps in student achievement (Mansfield & Jean-Marie, 2013, p. 835).

Schools’ trust levels mirror their achievement levels. Studies show that student success is undermined without trust; this phenomenon persists even when researchers have accounted for poverty, race and gender inequities (Leithwood et al., 2013). Schools with low trust have low student performance. High trust equals high performance. In schools with high levels of trust, teachers rely on each other and their principals to solve problems with a clear sense of purpose in mind (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Instead of only the opposite being true in schools with low trust, consequences and impacts are much worse. Teachers become incapable of collaboration, problem-solving, deciding on and reaching student-centered goals, trusting new initiatives or new and seasoned leaders, and even teaching well in their own classrooms (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Morale suffers, turnover is high, and teachers that remain often feel isolated and angry (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2012).

When teachers do not trust each other enough to implement best practices, schools bounce between one initiative to another, never implementing any with enough fidelity to improve (Payne, 2008). John Hattie’s (2012) visible learning meta-analyses examined over 80,000 studies to determine teaching strategies that yield the greatest results in student achievement. Collective teacher efficacy and common and high student expectations yield 1.57 and 1.33 effect sizes, respectively. These two strategies involve on-going, structured collaboration between all faculty, and an understanding of students’ backgrounds. When

teachers do not trust each other, they cannot implement either of these proven-effective strategies (Fullan, 2010; Payne, 2008).

In their 2009 study, Goddard, Salloum and Berebitsky chose to examine the role of teachers' trust in relation to taboo topics like race, poverty and academic achievement. Schools in one Midwestern state were "randomly selected and stratified by location, prior achievement, SES, and size to represent all traditional public elementary schools" within the state (p. 293). Teachers were given surveys on trust within their schools. Path analysis was conducted to account for model variation and the percentage of students who passed state assessments. Researchers concluded that race and poverty did not significantly affect achievement if teacher-to-teacher trust was high.

Broken trust is pervasive in toxic school cultures and affects students' and teachers' performances, alike (Muhammad, 2018). If teachers hold problematic or negative cultural beliefs about student achievement, distrust of colleagues and/or students will reinforce those beliefs, and spiraling negative self-fulfilling prophecies become the norm. When teachers hold the same high expectations and beliefs in their students' abilities, trust is strong. This is easily accomplished if the teachers are almost all the same race as the students they teach (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). However, this is not the case in an increasing number of American, urban, public schools (NCES, 2018).

Data on White teachers interacting with students of color and from differing socioeconomic backgrounds are plentiful. Many teachers hold unintentional biases; brushes with Whiteness or White privilege are stressful and often go unspoken (Acosta & Ackerman-Barger, 2017; Castagno, 2008; Howard, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Matias, 2013; Matias

& Grosland, 2016; Shultz & Fane, 2015; Sue, 2015). If principals do not expect teachers to discuss the toughest parts of educating students, then their silence will perpetuate socially unjust practices. Milner and Laughter (2014) found that despite educators' good intentions and hopes to provide equitable education for students, unless there was a clear procedure for discussing the very taboo topics affecting instruction, nothing improved. If trust is in short supply, teachers will avoid expectations to collaborate and even refuse to privately reflect on their own thoughts and potential biases (Matias & Grosland, 2016).

Matias and Grosland (2016) examined pre-service teachers' digital-stories, an assignment part of a mandatory diversity course within an urban-teacher preparation program. The deconstruction of the teachers' stories through Critical Race Theory and whiteness theory allowed the researchers to determine how white, teacher candidates managed their own whiteness. Matias and Grosland (2016) suggested that pre-service teachers create autobiographical stories to analyze their own biases and privilege. When forced to discuss race, white teachers frequently became emotional, and they acted to block, thwart or even shame trainers (Matais, et al., 2016). This study aimed to attack racial bias within individual teachers. Most professional learning takes place in groups, and changing a whole school is only successful when there is a critical mass of teachers with the same values (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012; Payne, 2008). Avoiding conflict is a natural human response (Muhammad, 2018). Derald Wing Sue (2015) clarified how society shaped how White people are taught to discuss taboo topics like race. In short, White people are taught to not discuss race for fear of offending others.

Unfortunately, and often unbeknownst to them, silence around race only perpetuates social stratification and deficit ways of thinking of students (Howard, 2016). However, when educators are taught how to address wayward colleagues, their behaviors form a “positive peer pressure” that “forces a peer to engage at a high moral level” (Muhammad, 2018, p. 53). Holding colleagues accountable works to repair trust as well as challenges biases and “sends a strong signal about the centrality of trust, positive relationships, and supportive cultures as a prerequisite of improved and, ultimately, exceptional performance” (Leithwood et al., 2013, p. 260).

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this heuristic narratological study was to understand the role of teacher-to-teacher trust for secondary teachers in a Midwestern school who have undergone culturally relevant teaching professional development. Teacher-to-teacher trust was defined as the reciprocal desire and ability to be radically open with another, and the belief that the other person will greet the openness with reoccurring openness, thoughtfulness, and kindness (Baier, 1986). The Unit of Analysis was narrowed to the teachers’ perceptions of and stories about teacher-to-teacher trust surrounding the shared experience of culturally relevant teaching professional development. In-depth interviews, documents and artifacts were examined.

Examining teachers’ individual stories centered around a shared experience requires narrative inquiry. Patton (2015) defined narrative inquiry as a method to examine “human lives through the lens of a narrative, honoring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding” (p. 128). Narratology requires a human connection between

researcher and participants, more than a superficial understanding of the context, and the studied phenomenon (Patton, 2015). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that narrative research is a method of “valorizing” individual’s experiences while providing a deeper look into the “social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within” each shared story (p. 68). Teachers deserve a safe place to learn about, discuss and examine their beliefs and practices of culturally relevant pedagogy. Many teachers do not have a trusted colleague or colleagues who fit this description. Asking teachers to share their stories through in-depth interviews and other documents (like written reflections from the PD sessions) will provide opportunities for this deep analysis, while giving voice and validity to the participants’ unique experiences.

Because my own experiences and thoughts shaped so much of this inquiry, and because I was also a participant in the culturally relevant teaching professional development sessions, I chose to use a heuristic approach to examine the phenomenon of trust. Sharing the intense experience of trust-making through culturally relevant professional development allowed me to examine my own experiences while also examining others’ (Moustakas, 1990).

I would be neglectful and untruthful if I did not mention that the idea of being vulnerably open to the heuristic experience itself terrified me. Patton (2015) clarified that with heuristic inquiry, “discovery comes from being wide open to the thing itself, a recognition that one must relinquish control and be tumbled about with the newness and drama of a searching focus, asking questions about phenomena that disturb and challenge” (p. 119). “When entering a heuristic inquiry with a question, problem, or concern, the

researcher can be sure that the process will yield information that leads to applications to self, others, and life” (Bach, 2002, p. 100). Trust, along with Whiteness and race are all real and socially constructed; these elements are linked to personal experiences that connect to the historical and sociocultural context of the larger society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Nieto, 2013; Nieto & Bode, 2018). Due to my and other participants’ reactions to trainings, and the acutely sensitive and emotionally charged nature of examining race and culture to look at trust, the intensity of the shared experiences epitomizes heuristic research (Patton, 2015).

Becoming aware of one’s biases and privilege is emotionally challenging work (Singleton, 2015). Often, teachers receive PD in large groups, and this too works to depersonalize learning and undermine teacher-to-teacher trust (Nugent, 2007; Tschannen-Moran, 2014, 2015). Schools with low teacher-to-teacher trust have negatively cultured buildings, and faculties operate in a catch-22 of resisting improvement and wanting improvement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Payne, 2008). Completing work in this way is and was a challenge, however many educational leaders who implement Critical Conversations, culturally sensitive practices, or critical race PD for their faculties will be interested in understanding the experiences of teachers. Much general knowledge is known about teachers’ experiences in these challenging environments, but “thick, rich” storied experiences from teachers invested in building culture reform are needed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

One overarching question guided this study: What are the stories teachers tell of teacher-to-teacher trust when asked to participate in culturally relevant teaching professional development? This question was explored through three sub questions:

1. How do teachers feel about their colleagues in the professional development cohort?
2. How do teachers navigate teacher-to-teacher trust relationships when there is a school history of failed reform initiatives?
3. To what extent do teachers apply strategies learned through the culturally relevant teaching professional development to teacher-to-teacher relationships?

To begin this chapter, I introduced my topic, and the questions I have about it. In the next section, I will introduce the theoretical concepts that inform this study. Maxwell (2013) wrote that the theoretical framework is the “key part of your design” that works as an “idea context for the study” and helps illustrate relationships between ideas and data (p. 39).

Theoretical Framework

Shosh Leshem and Vernon Trafford (2007) specified the purpose of a theoretical framework as two-fold; first, the theoretical framework clarifies what a researcher intends to study, and second, it allows the researcher to specify what and how the research will be achieved. This framework supports the study’s design, questions, goals and methods. A theoretical framework also allows a weaving together of ideas and beliefs in ways that inform a study’s analysis and interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My study has four areas that comprise the framework, each one visible within the opening tale above, which provided a rationale for their inclusion as theoretical underpinnings of my inquiry: trust, culturally relevant teaching, school culture, and instructional leadership.

My proposed study flat out scared me. When I use the word faculty, I am not just describing a group of teachers. I am describing my friends, colleagues, mentors and even a

few teachers I loudly opposed. Building leaders are my bosses. Diving into a probing and potentially problematic PD topic like culturally relevant teaching requires determination and openness from not only me, but all participants. We were surrounded by our negative school culture, a history of failed initiatives, and I already knew most teachers thought of the PD as just another hoop to jump through. When we take a challenging task in a challenging environment and couple that with taboo topics like race, and culture and their social inequities, and then we ask participants to tell stories about their experiences trusting or distrusting colleagues, I assumed that this process could have lasting effects for the participants and me. I wish I believed the future experiences would all be positive. I did truly believe the knowledge gained from participants' stories was worth the discomfort and possible strained relationships. I assumed some teachers would balk at the process, and some could refuse to answer questions honestly (in hopes of preserving their images). I believed some would even lie and tell what Connelly and Clandinin (1990a) called cover stories.

Even as an instructional leader in my building, a seasoned teacher, and a woman of color, it is very difficult to have conversations about race, or other cultural markers and their place in our school. This difficulty is more than a worry that my colleagues and friends will think I am "playing the race card" (Q&A Courageous Conversations, 2014). As a brown-skinned, biracial woman, Black and White, I was raised with my White mother. My closest relationships have almost always been with White women. My best friends, my wife, and the majority of my mentors in education are White. I am very used to ignoring microaggressions and even blatant instances of prejudice and racism to keep the peaceful status-quo. I am

constantly reminded that even the most well-intentioned, kind and loving White women in my life sometimes do not know how their behaviors and words hurt me. However awkward, I was curious about what happens to trust between teachers when everything previously tried has gone wrong. Based on my personal assumptions and the previous discussion, I identified the following topics for the theoretical framework, introduced here and expanded in the literature review: trust, culturally relevant teaching, school culture, and instructional leadership. First, I explain a language choice I made throughout the study.

Race in Language

By now you may have noticed that I capitalize White and Black when referring to race. This is intentional and should be briefly explained before continuing. The decision to capitalize, or not capitalize the “B” in Black has been a signifier of long-standing racial inequity. The majority of White-owned news organizations that follow the Associated Press style do not capitalize the “B.” However, Black news organizations “like ESSENCE and Ebony magazines” capitalize the “B” in Black (Nguyen & Pendleton, 2020). The decision to capitalize Black intentionally uses this small grammatical change to reclaim “Black humanity,” similar to the way Nikole Hannah-Jones used the word “enslaved” instead of “slaves” in her *1619 Project* (Hannah-Jones, 2020).

White is capitalized to force attention to the way it works as a race. Often White people are presented as the norm, and the race (along with the privileges and powers that accompany it) are invisible to society. This normalization of Whiteness creates not only countless “others” (who are not White), but it allows White people to abstain from understanding how their race participates in society’s constructions of inequity (Caruthers &

Friend, 2016; DiAngelo, 2018; Howard, 2016). The effort to make Whiteness visible forces conversation and responsibility when discussing how Whiteness stratifies throughout society. Not capitalizing the “W” in White “as a race, is in fact, an anti-Black act;” therefore, choosing to capitalize the “W” reaffirms Blackness (Nguyen & Pendleton, 2020).

Trust

Trust relationships are the backbone of all relationships. Trust is defined as the reciprocal desire and ability to be radically open with another, and it is the belief that the other person will greet the openness with reoccurring openness, thoughtfulness, and kindness. “Teacher trust is critical to the success of schools,” (Leithwood et al., 2013, p. 262). Megan Tschannen-Moran (2017) defined trust as “a willingness to make oneself vulnerable to another based on a belief in that person’s benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability, and competence” (p. 4) There are five components of trust: benevolence, honest, openness, reliability and competence (Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Studies show that student success is undermined without trust; this phenomenon persists even when researchers have accounted for poverty, race and gender inequities (Leithwood et al., 2013). When teachers work together closely, they build and find comfort in each other’s company if they share mutual trust, respect, and common interests (Hargreaves, 2001). These close professional relationships build into close personal friendships, and even better, they improve teaching (Hargreaves, 2001). Tschannen-Moran, Parish and DiPaola (2006) link these ideas of teacher-to-teacher closeness and trust back to improved student achievement. Their study found a triangulation of evidence; teacher-to-teacher trust, positive school climate and student success support each other.

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998) completed an earlier empirical study on trust among colleagues and trust in the principal. Post-observation interviews with two dozen randomly selected teachers in three “high trust” and three “low trust” schools found that faculty trust was crucial to a positive school culture and to a school’s effectiveness. Results also found that there were different methods for building trust with the principal and colleagues. Almost two decades later, Tschannen-Moran (2015) defined teacher-to-teacher trust as the glue that holds school cultures together, and the stuff that keeps teachers following leaders.

Obviously, Jordan Jewell High School’s data qualifies it as a low-trust school. The data on teacher-to-teacher trust provided a panoramic snapshot of the eroding foundation; our school culture is crumbling. Teachers refuse to work together because they do not trust each other. Five years of 5Essentials report data displayed this issue.

According to Muhammad (2018), broken trust is pervasive in toxic school cultures, and it affects students and teachers’ performances, alike. Trust can be broken when people break promises, lie, disclose private information, blame others for mistakes, spread gossip, and focus on their wishes over another’s (Tschannen-Moran, 2015). Understanding broken trust is just as important as understanding the components of trust; this awareness allows educators to “make more nuanced judgements, diagnose problems, and prescribe interventions needed to develop, maintain, and repair trust in schools” (Romero & Mitchell, 2018). Thankfully, it is possible to repair trust with intentional steps (Tschannen-Moran, 2015).

Trust can be repaired through structured collaboration where critical conversations take place. Structured collaboration creates real opportunity to trust-build with components like honesty, openness, benevolence, and when generated solutions are turned into actions, faith in another's competence and reliability are reinforced (Romero & Mitchell, 2018). Critical conversations are those where teachers work to address issues around how taboo topics like race, ethnicity, language, immigration status, socio-economic status and gender identity impact student success (Johnson et al., 2017; Leithwood et al., 2013; Milner & Laughter, 2014). Obviously, these structured conversations do not pop up like dandelions in the spring; when schools have negative cultures and teachers do not trust each other, the principal must be the one who cultivates the opportunities for renewal.

Culturally Relevant Instruction

Because Jordan Jewell looks like many suburban and urban Midwestern high schools, demographically, some of our professional learning must rest on creating equitable opportunities for all students to succeed (NCES, 2018). When teachers hold the same high expectations and beliefs in their students' abilities, trust (between students, teachers, parents, and leadership) is strong. This is easily accomplished if the teachers are almost all the same race as the students they teach (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). However, as stated previously, this is not the case at Jordan Jewell, nor is it the case in the majority of US urban schools.

In "An Inconvenient Truth" (2010), Hawley and Nieto identified that the first step in addressing equitable education for diverse students was for teachers to truly understand "the influence of race and ethnicity on behavior and on attitudes about racial and ethnic

differences” (para. 6). For this to happen, teachers must be willing to discuss race, ethnicity, culture and “challenge unproductive beliefs” (Hawley & Nieto, 2010, para. 10). Hawley and Nieto (2010) frankly stated that teachers do not understand how to communicate with their colleagues about their multicultural classrooms and students.

Conducting this heuristic, narrative study on teacher-to-teacher trust that occurs during Culturally Relevant Teaching professional development was personally challenging. Milner and Laughter (2014) recounted how good intentions (wanting to discuss and address race, poverty, and other challenging social constructions in education) are not enough to meet the academic and social needs of students of color. This means that good intentions are not enough to get teachers (and I) to delve into these uncomfortable yet critical conversations that run contrary to the way most middle class, white lady teachers have been raised (Milner & Laughter, 2014; Picower, 2012).

Discussing race is especially challenging for White, female teachers (Picower, 2012). This was the conclusion to Picower’s study of eight White, female, pre-service teachers as they worked through a multicultural education course. Picower (2012) used grounded theory methods to analyze the interview data around the phenomenon of building cultural awareness. Some of the challenge originates from White people’s inability to recognize their Whiteness and its position of power in society at large (Howard, 2016). When met with these often-unnerving revelations, White teachers respond emotionally in an attempt to divert the conversation, or block the learning (DiAngelo, 2018; Matias et al., 2016). At Jordan Jewell, 90% of the faculty is White. The student population is 60% students of color (State Report Card, 2020).

Precisely because of the importance the role of students' races and teachers' cultural awareness play in predicting students of color's academic success, principals must take the time to address this phenomenon in the classroom (Mahatmya et al., 2016; Muhammad, 2018). This is a challenging undertaking in any school. This area for growth requires intentionally structured PD, and it requires principals to use their best instructional practices to build trust-based, collaborative spaces for teachers (Riley & Stoic, 2017). Culturally relevant teaching professional development must be offered to help educators confront the inequities that exist between the diverse cultural and racial student populations we serve (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1994, 1995a; Nieto, 1999, 2013).

Decades ago, Sandra Lawrence and Beverly Daniel Tatum (1997) examined the effect of antiracist PD on 84 suburban, White teachers. After analyzing their participant's writing-sample data, they found that 57% of the teachers had positive changes in their racial-identity development as well as increased anti-racist behaviors in the classroom. Providing professional learning on culturally relevant pedagogy is a statistically significant method for improving teachers' practices, yet it is not happening. In 2007, Evans examined the words and actions of school leaders in schools with increasing demographic diversity. She concluded that the leaders' own sensemaking of the demographic changes and how to address them had to do with their own personal values, and their school community's status quo (or culture) around race and change.

Nine years later, Diem, Welton and Holme (2016) examined suburban schools that also underwent significant demographic changes, and how their leadership responded to the changes. The researchers interviewed many district administrators, principals and teachers in

the three sample schools and determined that all districts operated with a colorblind lens, instead of a culturally proficient lens. Schools should put systems in place to support development of faculty's cultural proficiency, and culturally relevant teaching practices (Delpit, 2006; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Terrell & Lindsey, 2009).

School Culture

Deal and Peterson (1998) defined school culture as “the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that has built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges” (p. 28). School culture envelopes all and is exuded by the actions of all (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). School culture runs the continuum between positive and toxic. A collaborative school culture is one where students, teachers, parents and community work together to meet students' learning needs. School systems, norms, and groups reflect the overall goals for student achievement. Collaborative practices exist between all stakeholders in the school. Muhammad (2018) elucidated, “when a school has a healthy culture, the professionals within it will seek the tools that they need to accomplish their goal of universal student achievement; they will give a school new life by overcoming the staff division that halts transformation” (p. 25).

A toxic school culture is one where stakeholders focus on the most negative components of the school; pessimism is used to justify poor performance of students, teachers, parents, and community. Teachers become apathetic and their lack of trust in each other renders them incapable of solving even the most cursory problems. Problems ooze into other problems, until no one can tell where one begins and another ends (Gomez et al., 2016;

Muhammed, 2018; Payne, 2008). Toxic school cultures discharge negativity and ineffectiveness festers.

Tichnor-Wagner, Harrison and Cohen-Vogel (2016) conducted a comparative case study of two effective high schools and two less effective high schools in the same US urban city, to determine which elements of school culture promote higher academic performance. A value-added achievement model was used to identify the performance of all the high schools in Florida. Once schools were assessed, each high-performing and low-performing school was chosen from the same school district to control for school accountability systems, student characteristics and differences in student demographic populations. To investigate their question, the researchers conducted 135 interviews and focus groups comprised of students, teachers and administrators from the four schools. Findings exposed that the effective schools had structures and systems to support formal collaboration between all stakeholders, as well as structures that and leaders who promoted high expectations for all. The study findings suggested school-wide reform to address negative school cultures, with specific attention to school leaders who could take an active role in shaping the culture of the school.

Urban school reform is an elusive accomplishment. Schools with high dropout percentages, poor performance on state assessments, and weak leadership are ready for reform (Blasé, 1987). Like Jordan Jewell, many schools undergo reform initiatives in an attempt to become effective schools. Finding schools for reform has never been a problem. Peck and Reitzug (2014) called school reform a fever. The problem, again like Jordan Jewell is that the vast majority of school reform initiatives fail (Fullan 2015, 2016a, 2016b; Payne,

2008; Peck & Reitzug, 2014; Rose, 2015). Stuit (2010) determined that it is easier to close down an entire school than it is to reform it.

In 2017, Stich and Cipollone conducted a longitudinal ethnographic study of four low-performing, urban secondary schools in Buffalo, New York. They used purposeful sampling to narrow the sample of students down to 12, three from each of the four schools. These students were all in the upper 20% of their class and excelled in STEM programs. Stich and Cipollone (2017) completed three years of observations at the schools and of the identified students, conducted extensive interviews with parents, students, counselors, teachers, administrators that were followed by in-depth interviews and surveys with 12 of the students. Their research examined the way stabilizations and destabilizations in school culture ebbed and flowed to reinforce a constant desire to improve followed by a mellowing out of initiatives, then abandonment of initiatives, and back to another desire to improve. They deemed this cycle of ineffectiveness the “churn of school reform” (p. 1). Their study demonstrated that reform failure is cyclical.

Reform is this endless loop that ineffective schools are trapped in that promotes failure. Jordan Jewell had only begun this rhythm of reform. We initiated no fewer than five massive change initiatives after receiving the 5Essentials data that deemed us Not Yet Organized. What I did not realize was that Not Yet Organized meant Not Yet Ready for Any of the Changes to Take Hold. Thankfully, our facilitators understood that some schools are not ready for reform. The research the facilitator referenced originated from Bryk and Schneider’s (2002) school improvement initiatives through the development of an evidence-

based survey delivered to parents, students, and teachers; designed to focus on improvement in Chicago public schools. The 5Essentials as it is known now, found:

Schools strong on at least three of the five essentials for school improvement were 10 times more likely to show substantial gains in student learning than schools weak in three or more of the five essentials. A low score in even just one of the core measures of the five essentials reduced the likelihood of improvement to less than 10%. (UChicago Impact, 2018)

When schools score poorly in three to five of the essential areas for effectiveness they are deemed “Not Yet Organized” for improvement. Bryk and Schneider (2002) knew in the 1990s that reform was fruitless when schools are failing. Failing schools are not failing for a simple reason, or a set of reasons that a handful of new initiatives can fix (Fullan, 2016a).

“Wicked problems” are those that cannot be solved with the usual procedures and regrouping of teachers (Gomez et al., 2016, p. 9). Problems that become multifaceted affect a school’s culture and the productivity of its teachers. Even great teachers are overwhelmed by one initiative after another and frustrating school culture issues; it is not long before they become paralyzed and ineffective. Often the failure of teacher collaboration can be traced to ineffectiveness. Hargreaves (2001) characterized isolated teachers as “mediocre loners” (p. 504). Instead of working together to wrestle with wicked problems, teachers “toil alone in the classroom...isolated” (Gomez et al., 2016). This is the exact opposite of what they should be doing.

Much literature exists around school renewal (Caruthers & Friend, 2016; Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015; Khalifa, 2012), and how essential creating a democratic school culture is to improvement (Apple, 2008; Apple & Beane, 2007; Brooks et al., 2007; DeMink-Carthew, 2018; Gray et al., 2016; Mitchell et al., 2011). Yet, when teachers are surrounded by wicked

problems in a culture of failed initiatives, they avoid colleagues, conflict, and tough conversations about improvement (Muhammad, 2018). Then why did the facilitator implore me to examine the research? He knew that “the most powerful relationships found in our data are associated with relational trust and how it operates as both a lubricant for organizational change and a moral resource for sustaining the hard work of local school improvement” (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Instructional Leadership

A leader hoping to create excellent, equitable learning opportunities and results for all students needs to ensure trust exists within the critical mass of teachers and also between those in leadership and the teachers (Seashore-Louis & Whalstrom, 2011). In short, leaders should work to create trusting relationships through collaboration and instructional leadership to foster positive change in schools (Leithwood et al., 2013).

Jordan Jewell has tried to implement common curriculum maps, common benchmark assignments, common assessments, co-teaching, and some teachers even have common plan. We have Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) where teachers are expected to discuss data and make data-informed decisions within a community of professionals. Forcing teachers into new or different social structures with new rules is a go-to, yet ineffective step many school leaders take (Tschannen-Moran, 2015). Rules are not trusting relationships. Just because teachers are sitting in the same room with each other does not mean they are actually working together (Hargreaves, 2001).

Mangrum (2010) determined that the simplest act to restore trust is to ask teachers to have open discussions about frustrations and issues in their classrooms, and then to use those

conversations to establish fellowship to put collective problem-solving plans into action. The act of structured collaboration creates real opportunity to trust-build with components like honesty, openness, benevolence, and when generated solutions are turned into actions, faith in another's competence and reliability are reinforced.

Zimmerman and May (2003) conducted a study to investigate the most effective professional development strategies principals can put into place. They mailed 450 elementary, middle and high school principals from Ohio public schools a survey about professional development practices. The study blended qualitative and quantitative data to determine best practices. Zimmerman and May (2003) found that principals understand the importance of leading learning, and that PD needs to be collaborative, school-based, differentiated, long-term, and tied to district goals.

Summarily, leaders must foster comradeship and deep collaboration in their schools for change to take hold (Leithwood et al., 2013). Bates and Morgan (2018) painted a picture of meetings that appear collaborative but are really only cursory, where members complain about challenges, but no one moves to incite change. This concocted collaboration occurs at Jordan Jewell, in most meetings, and in most departments. Teachers complain about everything from student behavior, to colleagues' behavior, to administration's inability to support teachers. True collaboration rarely takes place.

Hord and Rutherford (1987) found that for Professional Learning Committees (PLCs) to function effectively principals must create collaborative opportunities to first model best practices and then collaborate with their faculties. This deep, intentional collaboration repairs and reaffirms trust. When principals dictate that teachers work together in PLCs, they must

take the time to ensure there is an effective, democratic trust-based structure in place. Without a clear structure, principals and teachers do not move beyond their comfort zones to places of vulnerability and trust building (Riley & Stoic, 2017). Without a clear structure for democratic collaboration, principals and teachers are doomed to repeat the status quo.

Finally, principals must also be committed to culturally relevant leadership by embracing and valuing equity for all their stakeholders but especially for all students. Leaders will have to take stock of their own beliefs and values, understand how diverse cultural groups and identities affect society and school, identify their personal cultural identities and work to ensure the school and its teachers can work from positions of cultural competence. Operating with these varied lenses offers principals a chance to make systemic and cultural changes within the school, while simultaneously building trust with and between teachers (Khalifa et al., 2016; Singleton, 2015; Terrell & Lindsey, 2009).

The preceding four topics, trust, culturally relevant teaching, school culture, and instructional leadership offer an introduction to the existing literature that informs the study. Each topic will be expanded upon in Chapter Two: The Literature Review. The following section will provide an overview of the study's design and methods.

Design and Methods Overview

The “fruit of qualitative methods” comes from collecting, analyzing and synthesizing stories (Patton, 2015, p. 3). Researchers prepare to examine *how* things work, not just *if* they work. Qualitative research requires that researchers examine stories within the context of their subjects' lives. Each context shapes the system as a whole, and researchers as well as readers of the research must take the time to understand the many factors at work (Patton,

2015). Creswell (2013) clarified that qualitative research is needed when researchers need “a complex, detailed understanding of the issue” (p. 48). This depth of understanding can be gained when the researcher delves into the participant’s story, “unencumbered by what we expect to find, or what we have read in literature” (Creswell, 2013, p. 48).

This study used heuristic, qualitative research methods and narrative inquiry to examine the phenomenon of teacher-to-teacher trust for secondary teachers in a Midwestern school who have undergone culturally relevant teaching professional development. The phenomenon of teacher-to-teacher trust does not operate inside a tidy vacuum. Trust is waxing and waning in relation to the participants’ lived experiences and individual realities within our negatively cultured school, as we plan to undergo issues like Critical Race Theory, Whiteness, cultural proficiency, and inequity for students while learning about culturally relevant teaching. (Throughout this study I use participants and co-researchers interchangeably.) This study had the potential to get messy. Rossman and Rallis (2017) elucidated, that research that is “recursive, iterative, messy, tedious, challenging, full of ambiguity, and exciting” requires qualitative methodology (p. 3). This research study requires heuristic qualitative inquiry because I participated with the teachers as we underwent the culturally relevant teaching professional development.

I have long been passionate about issues of voice and power and how telling stories solidifies one’s place in society. Nothing is more powerful than another’s story. Narrative inquiry gives voice to secondary teachers who work through the challenging task of undergoing tough conversations about race with their colleagues. Often, in education, critical race research focuses on teachers’ silence or seclusion (Matias et al., 2016). We as educators

(myself included) were curious about how some teachers work through toxic cultures, low-trust relationships and begin to break their silence with the implementation of Culturally Relevant pedagogy.

Narrative inquiry allowed the researcher to collect participants' experiences as they were "defined interpersonally and intersubjectively by people interacting in a network of relationships" (Patton, 2015, p. 121). Therefore, participants' individual stories and varied realities around a specific phenomenon could be understood by more than just the researcher (Patton, 2015). This story collection was "a more difficult, time-consuming, intensive, and yet, more profound method" of learning (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 478). In addition, the teachers' stories offered a wealth of insight into a pervasive problem within education.

Selection of Site and Participants

The site for the study is Jordan Jewell, a Midwestern public school, where I currently work as an instructional coach. I have worked in this suburban school district for 16 years, beginning as a Paraprofessional, then substitute teacher, English 9 teacher, and librarian. These varied positions have provided many opportunities for relationship building across the district. I also live in-district, and I send my daughters to neighborhood schools. These factors provide additional layers of entrenchment, and many professional relationships have become personal. I hoped these relationships would provide opportunities for genuine, sincere and frank narratives and interview responses.

The co-researchers for this study were seven, high school teachers who all underwent culturally relevant teaching PD at Jordan Jewell. Purposeful sampling with maximum variation was used for participant selection. Purposeful sampling, according

to Tongco (2007), allowed the researcher to set specific criteria that is representative of the whole culture being studied with methods based on the assumption that the researcher needs to uncover answers to questions from a specific group. Maximum variation allowed those criterions to be as different as the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The variation criteria will be the number of years the teachers have taught. I included two novice teachers (between 0-5 years teaching), four intermediate teachers (5-15 years of experience teaching), and a veteran teacher (15 plus years of teaching). Of the four intermediate teachers, two taught in multiple different schools, and two had only worked at Jordan Jewell High School. This small number of participants allowed for a much deeper analysis; instead of broad knowledge, I evaluated and described conclusions with what Lincoln and Guba (1985) called “rich, thick” detail. This type of description made known the cultural and social relationships and patterns within the context of the study’s setting.

This study’s goal was to gather stories around teacher-to-teacher trust as the educators underwent culturally relevant teaching professional development. The teachers’ voices provided a wealth of information into, if, and how trust was built within challenging conditions like a school history of failed reform initiatives, shifting demographics, and weak collegial relationships.

Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative data collection came from the co-researchers’ responses during semi-structured interviews, documents and artifacts gathered from participants. Data collection took place alongside the six phases of Moustakas’ (1990) heuristic inquiry. I adhered to the following steps: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and

culmination of the research in a creative synthesis as I worked to gather and analyze the teachers' testimonies. These steps will be further elucidated in Chapter Three: The Methodology with data analysis taking place in the illumination and explication phases of heuristic inquiry. Clandinin and Connelly designated the first steps of narrative inquiry as requiring analysis, one where "collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" works together to form a three-dimensional view (2000, p. 20).

The process of data analysis (identifying codes, themes, patterns and categories) does not force each participant's story into a predictable pattern, and it should not be forced into common notions of understanding for ease (Kim, 2015). Kim (2015) dubbed the process of narrative data analysis, "flirtation:" the researcher works to stay engaged, curious, surprised, makes time for new or uncommon ideas and "plays with new ideas without letting those ideas be influenced by our wishes" (Kim, 2015, p. 187). The codes give way to themes that can give way to rich thick descriptions that again, work to provide the crystallized, data-filled story (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data was analyzed and organized to unfurl each teacher's story: with careful attention to "the chronology of unfolding events and turning points or epiphanies" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.198). These varied data points became the multi-faceted face of the "crystallization" process. Crystallization is the process of setting aside examination of the data to critically think about and illuminate patterns or reoccurring themes in data (Borkan, 1999). Each aspect from immersion allowed for a deep and complex interpretation that was nuanced yet cohesive.

Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Questions about reliability and validity exist in all qualitative studies. Patton (1999) narrowed down issues surrounding credibility to three categories: attention to rigorous crystallization methods for gathering and analyzing data, credibility of the researcher, and the researcher's philosophical beliefs in qualitative inquiry's value. Maxwell (2005) explained that by identifying possible threats to reliability and validity, researchers build strategies to safeguard against these errors. This study used many techniques to establish and maintain trustworthiness. Crystallization of data, thick rich description, peer debriefing, member checks, and bracketing are methods that helped manage reliability concerns. Each will be fully discussed in Chapter Three: Methodology.

In preparation for this study, I learned about the unethical conditions that required the Belmont Report, took and passed the CITI exam, and worked to minimize the risks to all participants (Sims, 2010). Additionally, at the University of Missouri: Kansas City, I sought approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB approves and oversees all researchers conducting studies with human subjects to ensure ethical dilemmas do not arise. I followed all rules and regulations for ethical practices. Of course, I planned to seek advice from my study's chair if unforeseen ethical issues arose. By the time I sought IRB approval, the COVID-19 pandemic was affecting the world. The stay-at-home order created the necessity of examining ethical practices regarding virtual and digital data collection. Using my chair's and the IRBs recommendations, I worked quickly and diligently to seek ongoing advice to ensure ethical conditions.

Significance of Study

The intended audience for this study is educators who are working to build trust relationships in their schools to revive positive school culture or reform initiatives, and who wish to identify best practices for helping teachers use culturally relevant teaching to address student equity. Due to the prevalence of negatively cultured schools, failed reform movements, and the need for principals to create truly collaborative practices and lead teachers through culturally responsive professional development, I predict great interest in the study's findings. In the last few years, a number of books have been published to help teachers and White people in general discuss race's prevalence and powerful position within our lives. Books for educators like, *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools* by Howard (2016), *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom* by Lisa Delpit (2006), and my favorite for its colloquial title, Emdin's (2017) *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood... and the Rest of Y'all, Too* all work to address the problem of a predominately white teaching force and a very racially, culturally, and ethnically mixed student population (NCES, 2018).

The general public's recent interest in Whiteness and culturally relevant practices may lead to an unintended audience. DiAngelo's 2018 text, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* premiered at number eight on the New York Times' best seller's list (Paperback nonfiction, 2018). The New Yorker, hailed as high-brow magazine featured a review of Spike Lee's *BlacKkKlansman* movie, as a film that captures the racial tensions of the era it was set in, as well as the current day's "drunk, craziness" of

race making and racial consequences (Lane, 2018). Examining race's place within our society has become popular.

The objective of this study was to explore trust making through the challenging experience of culturally relevant teaching professional development. This exploration provided insight to best practices for educators wanting to develop their own culturally relevant teaching, and for educational leaders at the building or district level who desire to make informed decisions for policy and whole-district practices. As a result of the emotional appeal, the tangible way that stories grab a reader's heart and help the reader embody another's experiences, this study also aimed to share teachers' stories surrounding the essence of trust (Patton, 2015). Perhaps this will lead to changes in individual reader's own social constructions of culture, race, trust, silence and effect their personal, daily lives.

Literature and studies are plentiful on the topic of teachers' implementation of culturally sensitive teaching and its link to improved student achievement (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Mahatmya et al., 2015; Milner & Laughter, 2014; Hawley & Nieto, 2010). Studies demonstrate that White people have a very difficult time discussing race, overall (Matias et al., 2016; Matias & Grosland, 2016). Additional studies link urban school reform failures and school ineffectiveness to lack of trust (Bryk, 2010; Evans, 2001; Fullan 2010, 2014, 2016a; Johnson et al., 2017; Leithwood, 1994; Payne, 2008; Tschannen-Moran, 2014, 2015). Literature specifies how building trust must be intentional, communal, and even which styles of leadership create the best factors for trust to exist (Cain & Jolliff, 1998; Jung & Avolio, 2000; Mason, 2010). This study leaned on the findings of this wealth of research as a way of understanding the context and established best practices enveloping culturally relevant

teaching and trust. However, instead of recapitulating research, the study examined what happens to the phenomena of trust between teachers, when they underwent culturally relevant trainings.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the narrative inquiry that examines the storied experiences of trust from teachers who have participated in culturally relevant teaching professional development. I began with the inciting incident that sparked my curiosity and determination to explore why some schools improve and others do not, despite educators' desires. I outlined my research questions followed by the four theoretical strands that will help unravel the research: trust, culturally relevant instruction, school culture, and instructional leadership. Finally, a brief rationale for qualitative research, the study's proposed methodology, limitations and ethical considerations were discussed.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

When educators work in schools with negative cultures, leadership's attempts to create collaborative practices are not enough to challenge toxic, and inequitable school norms (Muhammad, 2018). Research demonstrates teachers cannot break through the miasma of systemic inequity, low expectations, White-privilege superiority and silence without developing strong trusting relationships (Bryk, 2010; Eppinga et al., 2018; Forsyth & Adams, 2013; Goddard et al., 2009; Hoy & Hoy, 2006; Johnson et al., 2017; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Currently there is a gap in research about what happens to teachers' trust relationships when they are not only in a negatively cultured school, but also when they are asked to participate in culturally relevant teaching professional development.

In this chapter I expand upon the four components of the theoretical framework mentioned in Chapter One. The topics are Trust, Culturally Relevant Instruction, School Culture, and Instructional Leadership. These topics were chosen to allow both a broad and deep wealth of background knowledge to build, disentangle and support the study. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) wrote that when a researcher works from an insider's vantage, she must take the time to gather research from outsider's perspectives, as well. Understanding both the history of these topics as well as recent insights assisted me as I worked to analyze the multiple facets of my participants' stories. Taking the time to thoroughly delve into the

multiple (and sometimes conflicting) theories, studies and literature composing each topic assisted me in mediating the often-narrow insider's perspective. Chapter Two's literature review was designed to help both me and the reader situate the guiding research question: What are the stories teachers tell of teacher-to-teacher trust when asked to participate in culturally relevant teaching professional development?

Trust

Beginning to address trust issues first is imperative. "Teacher trust is critical to the success of schools," and nurturing trusting relationships is a key element in improving student learning (Leithwood et al., 2013, p. 262). Influencing enough teachers to try a new instructional focus implies that many people trust each other. A leader hoping to create excellent, equitable learning opportunities and results for all students needs to ensure trust exists between the critical mass of teachers and also between those in leadership and the teachers. In short, leaders must work to create trusting relationships through collaboration and instructional leadership to foster positive change in schools (Leithwood et al., 2013).

Trust Building for Improving School Culture

Trust is the single most important component of an effective school. Trust is the backbone of all relationships. If trust does not exist, or if it exists in short supply, then schools falter (Adams & Forsyth, 2019; Bryk, 2010; Seashore-Louis & Murphy, 2016; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Reform initiatives fail, and the entire school community struggles to be effective (Bryk, 2010). Without trust, school cultures become

dysfunctional, and teacher efficacy, teacher satisfaction and overall morale plummet (Leithwood et al., 2013).

Defining Trust

Over the last 70 years, definitions for various types of trust have developed and varied depending on academic domain or context (Adams & Wiswell, 2010). The first empirical studies of trust occurred in the 1950s as a desire to overcome Cold War tensions (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998). Studies shifted to the behavioral components of trust during the late 1960s and again shifted to examinations of trust in organizations (and not people or relationships) during the late 1980s and 1990s (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998).

Adams and Forsyth (2013) defined collective trust as the normative property of school groups which is built from relational trust, or the interconnecting relationships developed through repeated social interactions over time (Bryk and Schneider, 2010). Organizational trust's definition folds in the structures of imbalanced power between superiors and subordinates. In Culbert and McDonough's (1986) study organizational trust rested upon a subordinates' beliefs that the organization will benefit or empower them personally and professionally as opposed to only benefiting those in power. This belief mitigates the subordinate's vulnerability when it comes to trying new ideas, accepting change, working with others and working to forward systemic goals above personal goals.

For the purpose of this study, trust refers to a blend of collective, relational and organizational trust definitions. Trust is defined as the reciprocal desire and ability to be radically open with another, and it is the belief that the other person will greet the openness with reoccurring openness, thoughtfulness, and kindness. Additionally, trust consist of

intense moral judgement, a statement of one's personal values when it is given or destroyed (Baier, 1986). There are five components of trust: benevolence, honest, openness, reliability and competence (Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Benevolence. Benevolence is the ability to care for another. Taking care of a student or teacher implies what many in education may attribute to a lack of professionalism. Teachers and principals are still accused of being "only" caretakers, babysitters, and the desire for legitimacy of profession has forced many to distance themselves from caring for their students, colleagues, and those they lead. Perhaps instead of thinking of benevolence as caretaking, it should be defined as a person's desire and ability to look out for another's best interest by insuring respect and fairness, always (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). When teachers and students trust that their best interests are taken to heart, they are willing to work beyond comfort levels toward maximum capacity (Cranston, 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Honesty. Honesty is a character trait that affects one's integrity, virtue and moral decisions. When individuals do not do what they say or put values into action, trust may be broken in ways that cannot be easily repaired. Many broken promises, whether implicit or explicit, lead to broken trust relationships. Once a person does not believe another is honest, efforts to repair trust often will not work (Kutsyruba & Walker, 2016). Even if one is authentic (accountable, real and sincere), the amount of time it takes to reestablish trust is usually not worth the effort (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, 2017); teachers and principals would do better to find a new job where they can begin anew.

Openness. Openness, like benevolence is a component of trust that implies a level of unprofessionalism or boundary-crossing, and it is defined as vulnerability through sharing feelings, thoughts and intentions (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Education creates an atmosphere that requires privacy, and because educators are expected to be moral leaders in the community, openness is carefully guarded. Teachers are plainly told not to be open with students; principals are not to be open with teachers; sharing one's political affiliations, beliefs and personal life tidbits can be a one-way invite to finding a new job. Many educators fear being accused of crossing a line of appropriateness and ending up on the nightly news. Openness, however, does not have to mean telling everyone everything. Leaders can operate with transparency, so students and teachers do not wonder about intentions, worry about possibly being manipulated, or fear that they are not trusted to be capable of understanding information (Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Reliability. Reliability demands a predictable sense of competence in another's abilities. Simply put, persons must follow through on their intentions, doing what they say they will do. Teachers have greater beliefs in the reliability of leaders if their competencies are tested over time and they rarely drop the ball (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Watching one establish and maintain a pattern of positive actions help teachers expect that same pattern of success in all the leader does.

Competence. Competence is the ability to complete a task as expected and requires more than talking a good game and having good intentions. The ability to complete tasks and receive forgiveness relies on the belief that the other is competent. People set expectations based not only on another's failures and successes, but rather or not they believe

the person is capable of meeting reasonable expectations (Leithwood et al., 2013; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Leaders can display competence when they handle difficult parents and make challenging decisions about resources, curricula, and behavior plans. Helping teachers work through personal challenges like classroom management and disagreements with coworkers advertises to all involved that the leader is capable of managing sticky situations with competence, fairness and discretion. Rumors of competence travel swiftly, and they help build trust between the leader and others (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Trust requires all five components, and all five are interdependent. When principals must mediate between two faculty members, they should operate benevolently with true care and respect for all parties involved, be open to teachers' ideas, and openly share truthful solutions and possible consequences. Handling situations fairly prove individuals as reliable while maintaining competence. Bryk and Schneider (2010), Tschannen-Moran (2014), and Leithwood et al. (2013) all determined that although trust is multifaceted, the way to build trust is to address the individual components intentionally and consistently.

Schools' Trust Levels Mirror Achievement Levels

Lee and Seashore-Louis (2019) completed a quantitative study with the goal of identifying the components of a strong school culture and their link to school improvement. Their study surveyed 3,983 teachers from 133 schools, across 9 states. The components of a strong school culture (organizational learning, shared responsibility for student success, academic press, deprivatized practices, academic press, low negativity (or high optimism),

reflective and collaborative practices, student support and finally, trust and respect between all stakeholders) were distinct, and statistically significant factors that worked in tandem to improve student achievement. Much like the 5Essentials categories for an effective school, trust is both a foundation that all other components are built upon, as well as a web that binds components together, and it is also an armor that shields the components from threats.

As a point of discussion, it is significant to this study to consider Jordan Jewell's 5Essentials data over four years within the context of trust. Table 1 includes the measures of the components of 5Essentials; however, I will only address two that must immediately be examined to renew school culture at Jordan Jewell. They are Effective Leaders and Collaborative Teachers. The topic of Effective Leadership is divided into four subcategories, and two of the four subcategories' (Instructional Leadership and Teacher Influence) are the lowest scores in the entire survey. The other two subcategories (Program Coherence and Teacher-Principal Trust) have shown losses over time. Instructional Leadership will be discussed later within this review of the literature.

Table 1*Jordan Jewell 5Essentials Survey Results Over 4 Years*

Measure Area	2016	2017	2018	2019	4 Year
Ambitious Instruction	39	24	30	31	-8
Academic Press	24	20	31	28	4
English Instruction	43	19	25	28	-15
Math Instruction	48	26	34	27	-21
Student Discussion	40	32	31	42	2
Effective Leaders	22	19	17	18	-4
Instructional Leadership	1	1	1	3	2
Program Coherence	25	17	15	14	-11
Teacher Influence	16	22	17	21	5
Teacher-Principal Trust	45	37	36	35	-10
Collaborative Teachers	14	12	15	17	3
Collaborative Practices	1	1	1	2	1
Collective Responsibility	7	9	11	26	19
Quality Professional Dev.	20	12	31	21	1
School Commitment	42	37	30	36	-6
Teacher-Teacher Trust	1	1	1	1	0
Involved Families	23	29	32	40	17
Parent Influence in School	24	29	36	44	20
Parent Involvement	20	27	27	32	12
Teacher-Parent Trust	25	32	32	45	20
Supportive Environment	38	38	34	38	0
Expectations Postsecondary	21	25	20	22	1
Safety	57	57	48	58	1
Future Orientation	24	22	23	24	0
Student-Teacher Trust	48	46	45	49	1

Note. Boldface indicates the 5Essentials categories of effective schools. Directly below each boldface heading are the components of each category.

The category of Collaborative Teachers is just as problematic as Effective Leaders. Teacher-to-Teacher Trust is the lowest score on the survey, with absolutely no growth in four years. Within this subcategory, teacher trust was measured with the following statements:

- Teachers in this school trust each other.
- It's OK in this school to discuss feelings, worries, and frustrations with other teachers.
- Teachers respect other teachers who take the lead in school improvement efforts.
- Teachers at this school respect those colleagues who are experts at their craft.
- Teachers feel respected by other teachers. (UChicagoImpact, 2020)

Jordan Jewell's teachers' Collaborative Practices results are also extremely low. Despite implementing Professional Learning Committees throughout the school and requiring teachers to create common assessments and common instructional activities, and in addition to attending grade-level and whole-department data meetings, teachers report that they do not participate in the following collaborative practices:

- Observed another teacher's classroom to offer feedback.
- Observed another teacher's classroom to get ideas for your own instruction.
- Gone over student assessment data with other teachers to make instructional decisions.
- Worked with other teachers to develop materials or activities for particular classes.
- Worked on instruction strategies with other teachers. (UChicagoImpact, 2020)

Obviously, structures are in place for teachers to collaborate, however because trust is almost nonexistent, teachers are not truly collaborative.

Studies show that student success is undermined without trust; this phenomenon persists even when researchers have accounted for poverty, race and gender inequities (Leithwood et al., 2013). Building on studies of trust in urban schools, Adams and Forsyth (2013) examined the effects trust has on urban elementary schools' student achievement (Byrk & Schneider, 2002; Forsyth et al., 2006; Goddard et al., 2009; Goddard et al., 2001; Meier, 2002; Seashore-Louis, 2007; Tschannen-Moran, 2009). Just over 1,000 teachers and 1,648 students from 56 separate urban elementary schools in the same school

district and from a Southwestern state contributed to data examined. Results of the study reaffirmed that high collective faculty trust mitigates the negative effects of poverty and previous low performance. Forsyth and Adams' (2013) research also determined that schools with high collective trust have students with fewer negative behaviors and more self-regulated learning behaviors. Collective trust contributed to a more effective school, as a whole.

The main purpose of all schools is to educate. Decades of empirical research demonstrates that collective trust in schools works to maintain high student achievement, even when diverse cultural groups exist within the school population (Goddard et al., 2009). High trust equals high performance. In schools with high levels of trust, teachers do not work in a fairytale, glittery paradise. Instead, they rely on each other and their principals to solve problems with a clear sense of purpose in mind (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Collective teacher efficacy blossoms; trust in the principal and; and, in turn trust in teachers blooms. School faculties who display high-trust relationships have “astonishing improvements in student achievement, ...dramatic increase in the passing rate for high-stakes testing, in the number of students passing their classes, and in the graduation rate” (Eppinga et al., 2018, para. 22).

When schools have healthy collective trust relationships faculties are able to work through negative beliefs and expectations with respect, and each constructive conversation reinvigorates their positive school culture (Muhammad, 2018). Jill Harrison Berg, Christine Connolly, Abda Lee, and Emmanuel Fairley (2018) wrote about the challenge of reforming their school in Boston, MA. Through intentional teacher-to-teacher trust activities and

systemic trust-building structures, they built teacher capacity and as a result leveraged whole-school effectiveness. Within a year student scores improved, and within two years teacher satisfaction and school culture improved. When collective trust exists, even students who have been disenfranchised are more willing to take risks to extend learning beyond their comfort zones (Emdin, 2017; Tschannen-Moran, 2017).

Instead of only the opposite being true in schools with low trust, consequences are much worse. Teachers become incapable of collaboration, problem-solving, deciding on and reaching student-centered goals, trusting new initiatives, trusting new and seasoned leaders, and even teaching well in their own classrooms (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). In their 2012 study of 2,091 teachers from 80 different secondary schools in Belgium, Van Maele and Van Houtte found that when trust is low, morale suffers, turnover is high, and teachers who remain often feel isolated and angry. Broken trust is pervasive in toxic school cultures, and it affects students and teachers' performances, alike (Muhammad, 2018). If teachers hold problematic or negative cultural beliefs about student achievement, distrust reinforces those beliefs, and spiraling negative self-fulfilling prophecies become the norm.

Building Trust Through Collaboration

Teachers who desire a collaborative work environment can work to create opportunities to burst through isolation and silence. Inviting fellow educators to collaborate and move beyond complaining to actual problem solving are steps in the right direction. Partnering with principals and peers to clarify and implement

instructional practices also weaves threads of trust between teachers (Harris, 2004b). Fullan (1999) wrote:

Collaborative organizations fan the passion and emotions of its members because they so value commitment and the energy required to peruse complex goals. But instead of leaving passionate teachers to sink or swim, the true value of collaborative cultures is that they simultaneously encourage passion and provide emotional support as people work through the rollercoaster of change. In this sense these organizations foment moral purpose while providing support for its pursuit. (p. 38)

Teachers are repeatedly asked to collaborate with colleagues in schools. Long-gone is the image of a single teacher working to teach only her students. Despite the continuum of collaborative practices ranging from cursory meetings to fully-engaged, interdependence, and despite the variety of names for collaboration (teacher teams, learning groups, communities, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), or simply departments) effective pedagogy and praxis requires teacher collaboration (DuFour et al., 2016; Shah, 2011; Vangrieken et al., 2015). Student achievement is high and schools are most effective when teachers collaborate (Byrk & Schneider, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Leithwood et al., 2013). True collaboration demands trust relationships (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Forsyth et al., 2006; Tschannen-Moran, 2015). If teachers do not like each other they will not trust each other.

Shah (2011) conducted a study to develop a scale to measure teacher collegiality. Using exploratory factor analysis of 118 public, secondary school teachers from six schools in Pakistan, and then confirmatory factor analysis of 364 public, secondary school teachers from 17 schools in Islamabad, Shah (2011) determined teacher collegiality is comprised of 32 items, and seven dimensions. The first dimension, “demonstrating mutual support and trust” (p. 7) for another teacher ties explicitly to teacher-to-teacher trust. The additional

dimensions (observing one another, collaborative planning, sharing ideas, teaching each other, working on curriculum together, and sharing resources) all relate to the previously defined components of trust (openness, vulnerability, competency, benevolence, etc.).

Repairing Trust

Repairing trust is possible with intentional steps. Tschannen-Moran (2015), an expert on educational trust relationships maintains that long-lasting trust can be restored. She noted that, “even in the midst of tension and conflict, trust can be fostered through the conciliatory initiatives of one party acting unilaterally, signaling the desire to establish trust without sacrificing the genuine need to protect his or her interests” (2015, p. 4). In a study that took place in a large urban elementary school in southeastern U.S., Mangrum (2010) determined that the simplest act to restore trust is to ask teachers to have open discussions about frustrations and issues in their classrooms, and then to use that to establish fellowship to put problem-solving plans into action. The act of structured collaboration creates real opportunity to trust-build with components like honesty, openness, benevolence, and when generated solutions are turned into actions, faith in another’s competence and reliability are reinforced. Instructional leaders should not set ambiguous goals to rebuild trust (as a whole) without considering trust’s nuances (Romero & Mitchell, 2018).

Repairing Trust Through Critical Conversations

When teachers hold the same high expectations and beliefs in their students’ abilities, trust is strong. This is easily accomplished if the teachers are almost all the same race as the students (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). However, this is not the case in an increasing number of American, public schools. The National Center for Education

Statistics (NCES) identifies 83.5% of all teachers as white, non-Hispanic (2018). NCES predicts that white students will represent 46 percent of public-school students by 2024, a statistic that is steadily declining. Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and African American student populations are projected to increase. Hodgins (2014) documented the pervasive trend of white educators who feel ill prepared to teach students who differ from them racially and culturally.

In their article “Another Inconvenient Truth: Race and Ethnicity Matter” (2010), Hawley and Nieto agreed that PLCs can be used to repair toxic school cultures if respect and trust are shared. Without trust, PLCs are simply opportunities for teachers to stare at the “elephants in the room” (Johnson et al., 2017, p. 99). The elephants are big and scary. Effective leaders do not “shy away from critical concerns about race, language, background, socio-economic status, gender, or other variables” (Johnson et al., 2017, p. 127). Hawley and Nieto broke down why these cultural differences need to be discussed: They suggested that race and ethnicity influence teaching and learning in two important ways: “They affect how students respond to instruction and curriculum, and they influence teachers' assumptions about how students learn and how much students are capable of learning” (2010, para. 2).

Leithwood et al. (2013) asserted that leaders must build their teachers' capacity toward belief and actions that all students (no matter their culture) learn, while simultaneously building trust. Johnson et al., (2017) referred to this as “finding and celebrating evidence that cultivates belief” (p. 95) in the possibility of high performance through shared data and instructional. Moreover, “honest and frank conversations about important issues” (p. 127) cannot take place without first establishing trust (Johnson et al., 2017).

Data on White teachers interacting with students of color and from differing socioeconomic backgrounds are plentiful. Many teachers hold unintentional biases; brushes with Whiteness or White privilege are stressful and often go unspoken (Shultz & Fane, 2015). If teachers are not expected to discuss the toughest parts of educating students, then their silence will perpetuate socially unjust practices. Milner and Laughter (2014) discovered that despite educators' good intentions and hopes to provide equitable education for students, unless there is a clear procedure for discussing taboo topics like sexuality, gender, race and poverty, nothing improves. If trust is in short supply, teachers will avoid expectations to collaborate or self-reflect on their thoughts and potential biases (Matias & Grosland, 2016).

Not addressing issues like achievement gaps and social inequities only reinforces toxic school cultural norms that are often pervasive, but unspoken (Muhammad, 2018). Student achievement is dependent upon students' willingness to listen to their teachers and do what the teachers request. Educators trapped in these unchallenged toxic cultures "create policies and procedures and adopt practices that support their belief in the impossibility of universal achievement" (Muhammad, 2018, p. 21). These adopted policies and procedures fester to reinforce systemic discrimination, racism, and indoctrinate students to ideas of White privilege superiority. It is imperative that educators work to dismantle toxic cultures. They do this by building trusting relationships.

Critical Conversations about Student Achievement and Teacher Effectiveness.

Taking a hard look at data may require difficult conversations with faculty about why achievement gaps exist for specific groups of students. Instructional leaders must be prepared

to address issues of inequity, no matter if they appear in teachers' biases, hidden messages in curricula, or unfair policies and procedures. An instructional leader must be committed to social-justice issues like equity for all students. John Dewey (2015) wrote that education should be free from political popularity; it should be both conservative and liberal. Leaders must understand that education is a social function intended to reinforce moral ideas like justice, democracy and fairness, while remaining rigorous, and able to meet the needs of a diverse population (Dewey, 2015). Bryk (1988) suggested educators examine their schools and minds for implicit socializing norms of human nature and what it means to be a good person. These messages are taught (sometimes covertly and sometimes unknowingly), and they are always "intrinsically moral" (p. 258).

According to Johnson et al., (2017) "equitable learning results" (p.9) are possible when leaders "establish a few key school characteristics" (, p. 9). These characteristics are creating a positive culture, providing students with rigorous curriculum, and offering exceptional instruction to all students. Leaders have an obligation to establish and support efforts to improve instruction for all students by ensuring teachers can work toward their highest potential by insuring a positive school culture (Johnson et al., 2017).

Using collected data from the Three-Cities Teacher Study in Iowa, with a sample size of 207 students and 202 teachers, Mahatmya et al., (2015) examined the correlation between teachers' perceptions of educational attainment compared to their students of color's own perceptions of educational attainment. Their study took into account the teachers' cultural awareness and connectedness to the school. The researchers found that if educators receive cultural awareness training, their expectations and beliefs about students of color's

achievement abilities rise. Critical conversations about student achievement require absolute belief that all students are capable of learning at high levels. This belief moves educators toward action; challenging destructive ideas takes resolve and regular open discourse with disbelievers (Muhammad, 2018). As collegial trust improves, student achievement and teacher capacity also improve. None the less, most educators would rather ignore inappropriate behaviors than confront colleagues.

Avoiding conflict is a natural human response (Muhammad, 2018). However, when educators are taught how to courageously address wayward colleagues, their behaviors form a “positive peer pressure” (p. 53) that “forces a peer to engage at a high moral level” (p. 53) (Muhammad, 2018). Holding colleagues accountable works to repair trust as well as challenges biases, and it “sends a strong signal about the centrality of trust, positive relationships, and supportive cultures as a prerequisite of improved and, ultimately, exceptional performance” (Leithwood et al., 2013, p. 260).

How Trust Affects Storytelling

This study will use Narrative Inquiry as its primary methodology. Clandinin and Connelly (1996) named three types of stories: Sacred stories, Cover stories, and Secret stories. Chapter Three: Methodology will delve into how stories are collected, examined and used as data in this study. This section of the Literature Review examines specifically the three story types and how trust may affect the type of stories co-researchers share and consequently the story the researcher hears. Connelly and Clandinin (1999) wrote, “knowledge, context and identity are linked and can be understood narratively” (p. 4). When teachers hear and tell stories they are often “more concerned to ask questions of who they are

than of what they know” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 3). Because teacher stories are intricately interwoven with teacher identity, the stories they choose to tell are also intricately reflective of who they believe they are.

Sacred Stories

Sacred stories are those that exist within a school culture that persevere over time, and often exist unchallenged. Crites (1971) eloquently coined the term Sacred Stories “not so much because gods are commonly celebrated in them, but because men's [or women's] sense of self and world is created through them” (p. 295). These sacred stories are anonymous, cultural, and lived. They lie “too deep in the consciousness of a people” to be easily told, explained or dissected (Crites, 1971, p. 295).

There is danger that comes with sacred stories in that, “schools seldom address these enduring historical and philosophical ideologies about race/ethnicity, class, and gender that are entangled in memories and stories, which guide the behaviors and actions of many educators” (Caruthers, 2006, p. 661). When sacred stories are composed of inequitable practices that go unchallenged, disputing the status quo becomes more than prescribing systemic changes. Challenging sacred stories requires a high level of trust, because teachers in this study will essentially challenge culturally accepted norms, and thus a component of their' identities. When sacred stories must compete with new stories of a school, or stories of change, teachers must “respect and trust one another,” so faculty can “value individual perspectives and feel comfortable disagreeing and arguing” about beliefs and values (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 63).

Cover Stories

Cover stories are those that educators tell when sacred stories conflict with their individual praxis, beliefs, or if the spaces between the sacred story and the educator's beliefs are too far apart (Olson & Craig, 2005). Crites (1979) resolved that when individuals have two story lines in their minds, and one is "so unacceptable ... the other image or scenario is artfully fabricated in order to suppress it" (p. 126). The cover story motivates the person's actions as an attempt to cover up or compensate for the true story (which is the person's true identity). Cover stories are essentially personal, communal, or institutional lies that educators share to conceal their lived stories (Olson & Craig, 2005).

Obviously, researchers must be cautious when examining cover stories. Not all educators are aware that they tell cover stories. Olson and Craig (2005) made plain that when teachers live cover stories they do so under tremendous personal stress. Researchers must be careful that strong trust exists between themselves and co-researchers, because sharing unacceptable stories of experience, no matter how true may have serious social and professional consequences.

Secret Stories

Secret stories are those stories of truth that come from teachers' lived experiences inside of safe places that are free from another's critical gaze, like their own classrooms or in spaces with like-minded colleagues (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Aoki (2008) definitively states, "Teachers will not tell their secret stories if they sense they will be judged against predetermined norms" (p 16). Researchers must communicate a judgement free stance so co-researchers trust that their vulnerability and openness will be received neutrally. Researchers

must also accept the co-researcher's story as is, without judgement, while recognizing the story as subjective and individual.

Spiral of Silence

Researchers must also contend with the Spiral of Silence. Because the field of education is philosophically liberal, and addressing diverse cultural inequities requires teachers to participate in school practices that lean to the political left, those educators who hold differing ideological views often participate in the spiral of silence rather than share stories. Mainly, the spiral of silence is the “belief that public opinion is a mechanism for creating consensus within social spaces. Those who break from that consensus are threatened with isolation from the group” (Journell, 2017, p. 108). Rather than face ostracism, educators remain silent and their stories are not shared. “Making informed judgements about the significance of nonoccurrences can be among the most important contributions an evaluator can make....” (Patton, 2015, p. 379). Silence, especially on a topic that is integral to a school's story or an educator's experience must be examined. Establishing an environment of trust allows educators to break free of the silence that perpetuates inequitable practices (Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Michael & Bartoli, 2014).

Reaching high performance levels should be the goal of every educational leader. Beginning to address underlying trust issues first is vital. In their text, *Leadership in America's Best Urban Schools*, Johnson, Uline and Perez (2017) wrote that “school leaders will not generate excellent and equitable learning results unless they influence a critical mass of the school community members” (p. 78). If instructional leaders truly desire to create equitable educational environments with high performance levels, then they must first build

trust and then continue to build upon relationships while addressing other systemic and cultural issues (Bryk, 2010; Fullan, 2014, 2016).

Culturally Relevant Instruction

Charles M. Payne's text *So Much Reform, So Little Change: The Persistence of Failure in Urban Schools* (2013) reprimanded educators for not effectively putting theory into practice. He boldly stated, "Admitting that improvement is possible is an invitation to self-critique" (Payne, 2013, p. 196). Payne demanded educators address education for students of color and make meaningful change happen. The focus on confronting inequity through intentional actions takes the form of culturally relevant instruction (CRI). Payne's (2013) text is one of many over decades where scholars, researchers and educators insist that teachers implement CRI to navigate and ameliorate the disconnect between educators' culture and racial backgrounds and the student populations' who they serve (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1994, 1995a; Nieto, 1999, 2018).

Gay (2002) noted, "Because culture strongly influences the attitudes, values, and behaviors that students and teachers bring to the instructional process, it has to likewise be a major determinant of how the problems of underachievement are solved" (p. 114). Gay (2002) further claimed that the problem and solution are both simple and profound. Culturally relevant teaching is a simple solution to achievement gaps and inequitable educational experiences between students, because diverse students have always wrestled with accessing the middle-class White-normed school system. The solution is profoundly complicated and challenging because the same middle-class White-normed school system has not been culturally relevant to its diverse students. Instead, Gay (2002) expounded, the

students are asked to ignore, deny or diminish their own cultures to participate in their own education. Additionally, Gay (2002) expounded, “This places [students] in double jeopardy—having to master the academic tasks while functioning under cultural conditions unnatural (and often unfamiliar) to them” (p. 114).

Culturally Relevant Instruction asks educators to examine how race, ethnicity and culture shape education, and how to achieve equitable education for diverse students. Two of the most prolific theorists in this area are Gloria Ladson-Billings and Geneva Gay. Ladson-Billings (1995b) wrote:

Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions: (a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the current status quo of the social order. (p. 160)

Gay (2002) described that Culturally Responsive Teaching as

using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly. (p. 106)

Within Gay’s (2002) definition, differences between the educators’ cultural experiences and their students’ do not translate into deficits. In other words, acknowledging and analyzing the worlds of students allow educators to support and endow education for all students. This analysis requires educators to become familiar with Critical Race Theory and its pillars to become more critical of how race interacts within the U.S. school system (Nieto & Bode, 2018).

Hollie (2019) credits Ramirez and Casteneda (1974) as creating the earliest call for culturally relevant education, however it was Ladson-Billings' (1994) work, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teaching of African American Students* that moved educators to alacrity (Dixson & Anderson, 2018). Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) pointed out that many researchers before Ladson-Billings' 1994 work did in fact recognize cultural differences and called for culturally relevant teaching practices, however, the studies took place in populations where cultural differences were visible and easily accepted. White, middle class teachers in the studies were obviously different from the largely homogenous cultures where they were teaching. Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) go on to clarify that the studies relied on culture and not race or the multicultural classroom because they were conducted in spaces where race and culture would not be attributed to student deficits (because parents and community were homogenous).

Over twenty-five years ago, Delpit (1995) shined light on the wide (and seemingly ever-widening) gap between the cultures of educators and the students they teach. Lisa Delpit (1995) illuminated the hidden shaping rules of culture like values and norms of behavior in *Other People's Children: Culture Conflict in the Classroom*. The main sources of conflict arise when an individual's cultural lenses are not known and made visible. Delpit (1995) insisted becoming aware of one's cultural lenses is hard work, but that it is essential to understanding how they and others view the world, and it is imperative to begin school reform efforts. Phuntsog (1998) conducted a review of literature between 1992 and 1997 on the topic of culturally relevant instruction. The review charted CRI's shift from providing opportunities for students to see their cultures in curriculum materials to the need

for teachers to change their instructional practices from an assimilationist model to one where the pluralistic cultural needs of students are seen as an asset and met. “The first step in culturally responsive teaching is to engage in self-reflective analysis of one's attitudes and beliefs about teaching culturally different children” (Phuntsog, 1998, p. 13).

Geneva Gay (2002) built upon these scholars' works when she divided culturally relevant pedagogy into five theoretical components: “developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity, including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum, demonstrating caring and building learning communities, communicating with ethnically diverse students, and responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction” (p. 106). Gay (2002) dubbed her call to action Culturally Responsive Instruction rather than Culturally Relevant. Despite an exhaustive search of literature, I could not find any specific text that explained why she changed the term. Components of culturally responsive education are analogous to culturally relevant practices. Although I examined both culturally relevant and culturally responsive terms for this review, I have decided to use culturally relevant because the word responsive carries reactive connotations for me. In my personal desire to be critical of inherently deficit language I would rather find ways for my pedagogy to be relevant, which implies meaningful significance for students and teachers, alike.

Marrun (2018) describes the naming practices within communities of color as intergenerational “oppositional consciousness” and resistance to white supremacy (p. 22). I like to believe choosing to use the term culturally relevant instead of culturally responsive is a part of this resistance.

Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) synthesized Ladson-Billing's (1994) culturally relevant, Gay's (2002) culturally responsive and Nieto's (1999) multicultural education into five reoccurring and corresponding principles: identity and achievement, equity and excellence, developmental appropriateness, teaching the whole child, and student-teacher relationships. As previously noted, despite these clear components, and over a quarter century of literature and research around culturally relevant teaching, there has been little progress closing the achievement gap (Khalifa et al., 2016; Nieto, 2013; Payne, 2013; Raskin et al., 2015). Raskin, Krull, and Thatcher (2015) cited the National Assessment of Educational Progress' statistics which pointedly elucidates the fact that students of color perform lower than white students. These data are described as reflecting "a 36-year trend" that is "consistent" as well as "predictable," nationally (p. 5).

The turn of the century broadened the definition of culturally relevant instruction to one that recognizes "gender, sexuality, income, and other factors" that have traditionally "led to even further marginalization" (p. 1275) of students in schools (Khalifa et al., 2016). Researchers have pushed to broaden the view of culturally relevant teaching from one tied to students of color, race, ethnicity, and language. As Paris and Alim (2018) state, the definition of culture has been oversimplified and not as fluid as it needs to be to meet the needs of an ever-shifting orientation. "To acknowledge culture's fluidity and yielding of different identities that intersect with each other in different ways depending on context," researchers began exploring the borderlands where diverse cultural markers meet (Guerrero et al., 2017, p. 7). Teachers, principals, district leaders and community stakeholders are viewed as "- intentionally or unintentionally- complicit in reproducing this

oppression” (p. 1275) and all have a “moral responsibility to counter this oppression (p. 1275)” (Khalifa et al., 2016). Every contributor in the school system must be willing to develop a personal cultural proficiency and work to provide culturally relevant practices for all students (Lawary, 2014).

Zaretta Hammond’s (2015) text, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* helped educators connect CRI to the simple fact that students’ brains are primed to learn, no matter their culture, race or ethnicity. When educators see achievement gaps between groups of students often, they believe the diverse students cannot learn on grade-level. Hammond (2018) rationalized these disparities are not about capability but rather the “result of ‘inequity by design’ — we aren’t giving them the same learning opportunities as their peers” when they are young (p. 42). Hammond (2018) recommended that educators view CRI not as a quick fix or a different way to remediate students, but instead shift the view to one where educators work with students to develop thinking routines. Hammond created the Ready for Rigor framework, which explicitly catalogues four areas educators must synthesize to allow students to become the leaders in their own learning. The four components are awareness, learning partnerships, information processing capacity, and learning communities and environments.

Emdin (2010) studied hip hop culture through rap lyrics and their intersection with urban students’ alienation in school, specifically science classes in two U.S. high schools. Emdin (2010) advocated for using hip hop to reengage and then collaborate with students. Because hip-hop has its own specific culture that speaks to many marginalized groups, a student’s passion for hip-hop “should be ignited within conventional educational

settings” (p. 3). Emdin (2016) supported the shift to CRI for helping the predominately White teaching force access their urban youth students in his book, *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood... and the Rest of Y’all, Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education*. Because students are generationally different than their teachers, Emdin (2016) argued that they have their own youth culture for educators to contend with in classrooms.

In a three-year long study of culturally responsive practices in Toronto schools, Guerrero, Shahnazarian and Brown (2017) applied queer theory to reimagine culturally relevant practices to address low-achieving students. The researchers asked, “educators to take up the messy process of unlearning rigid binaries when it comes to culture, and instead to recognize and embrace the intersectionality and complexity of their students’ cultural makeup” (p.9). For Guerrero et al., educators are responsible for developing a critical and moral stance against tokenism, stereotyping and superficial practices that preserve the dominate school structure. Once teachers develop this critical cultural lens, they must move toward transformative and socially just actions that view culture as a dynamic construct.

Aronson and Laughter (2018) advocated for CRI to also include gender nonconforming and queer students who have unique cultural needs. Hollie (2019) described culturally relevant teaching as a term that “everybody and they momma” is using with little consistency on meaning, and few direct links to positive outcomes (p. 38). In her article she advocates for understanding the many “brands” of CRI and examining their related results. She calls for a “remix” where educators identify and use the most effective components of CRI to incite lasting change.

Why is Culturally Relevant Instruction Needed?

The reasons for implementing culturally relevant teaching practices have not changed. Eighteen years after Nieto and Bode wrote the first edition of *Affirming Diversity* (2018), Hawley and Nieto titled an article, “*Another Inconvenient Truth: Race and Ethnicity Still Matter* [emphasis added] (2009). Despite years of lip service and some improvements to classrooms, educational inequity *still* exists in U.S. classrooms (Nieto, 2013). Literature demands educators delve into race to understand the beasts we are wrestling: bias, blindness, and bigotry; colorblindness and color muteness silently undermine all changes. “[I]gnoring that fact only reproduces race. ...race can interfere with the capacity to feel connected to a larger, worthy group, and one’s sense of connection can profoundly shape intellectual and social functioning” (Payne, 2013, p. 120). Meaningful professional development can help teachers work through these difficulties (Khalifa et al., 2016; Knight-Manuel et al., 2019; Lindsey & Daly, 2012; Lindsey & Lindsey, 2016).

Twenty years ago, Lawrence and Tatum (1997) studied the effects of antiracist PD on 84 suburban White teachers. Teachers took 142 separate antiracist actions in interpersonal interactions, school curricula decisions and when supporting students of color. Lawrence and Tatum (1997) determined that the teachers’ development of racial identity increased their antiracist behaviors. Love and Kruger (2005) designed a quantitative survey to measure teachers’ culturally relevant beliefs with positive student achievement scores. Teachers from six separate urban schools with predominately African American populations confirmed that teachers who have high expectations for all students and addressed students’ cultural needs correlated to higher academic achievement.

Mahatmya, Lohman, Brown and Conway-Turner (2015) explored 202 teachers and 207 students from the Three-City Teacher Study to find the probability that teachers' expectations for students of color matched student performance, and if the teachers' cultural awareness moderated the effects of students' races. According to the researchers, 64% of teachers held lower expectations for low income Black and Latinx students. Embedded within these results was another concerning factor: teachers of color held low expectations for students of color, as well. They found that as teachers' cultural awareness increased their expectations for all students increased. This study specifically asked that future researchers investigate the same questions across broader definitions of cultural groups.

As the nations' demographics become more diverse, these issues are increasingly present in suburban districts (Diem et al., 2016). In 2016, Diem, Welton, and Holme conducted a qualitative case study of three suburban schools where large demographic shifts had recently taken place. Interviews of district and building administration and teachers revealed that despite the widening of students' cultures and the need to be culturally proficient, the schools took a conscious "colorblind" stance. Diem, Welton and Holme's (2016) findings suggest schools intentionally use a framework to develop educators' cultural proficiencies.

The call for development of a personal cultural proficiency has narrowed to require White educators to understand how their Whiteness intersects with successful development of cultural proficiency, their own education and their students' educations (Howard, 2016; Juarez & Hayes, 2014; Matais, 2013; Muller, 2017; Picower, 2009) Matias writes, "Only then does culturally responsive teaching turn into a project of the self and one's relationship

to society instead of a project to merely identify effective practices of the ‘Other’” (2013, p. 78).

In 2017, Bagylos studied teachers’ and instructional leaders’ implementation of Courageous Conversations about Race (CCAR) professional learning. She found that all participants made positive progress. All teachers used CCAR practices within their classrooms, and over half transferred the skills to their personal lives. Those educators had challenging conversations with spouses, parents, and all discussed race, bias and privilege with their children. Instructional leaders must “provide school-wide professional development activities to create collective trust, collective efficacy, and an emphasis on high academic performance” for all (DiPaola & Hoy, 2014, p. 10). Bagylos (2017) invited further research on how teachers’ professional learning about racial equity influences school culture, as well as how it impacts student achievement.

Research confirms that teachers must have opportunities to develop personal cultural proficiency and professional learning must be provided to translate this proficiency into pedagogy. Borrero, Ziauddin and Ahn (2018) advocated for the idea that new teachers must collaborate with seasoned teachers to create a shared knowledge in both cultural proficiency and pedagogical arenas. The results of their qualitative case study of 13 new and in-service teachers suggested that current cultural proficiency professional development is not necessarily ineffective, but it is often incomplete for most teachers. Furthermore, teachers who have fixed mind-sets about others are more likely to hold deficit mindsets of their students and therefore set lower level goals for them (Rattan et al., 2012). Not addressing

these deficit mindsets and low expectations does nothing to narrow the achievement gaps between students (Knight-Manuel et al., 2019).

Developing Cultural Proficiency Systems

Culturally proficient change requires school leaders to work strategically with stakeholders throughout the system. Because the collaboration around opportunities and equity depends on both policy implementation as well as moral practice, implementing culturally relevant pedagogy (and building individuals' cultural proficiency) addresses the school's culture and systems (Nuri-Robins et al., 2012). The Conceptual Framework for Culturally Proficient Practices (Lindsey & Lyndsey, 2016) was developed to provide a demystified path forward for school leaders who desire equitable conditions for all students. Lindsey and Lindsey (2016) portrayed the framework as one led by teachers' personal values as evidenced by their behaviors. The framework features relationships of influence, barriers to advancement and spots of tension plainly stated, so principals can plan and prepare appropriately (2016, p. 51). There is no hidden agenda. Lindsey and Lindsey (2016) advocated for principals to make the school's mission and vision ones that align with the culturally proficient values:

- Culture is a predominant force in society.
- People are served in varying degrees by the dominant culture.
- People have individual and group identities.
- Diversity within cultures is vast and significant.
- Each cultural group has unique cultural needs.
- The best of both worlds enhances the capacity of all.
- The family, as defined by each culture, is the primary system of support in the education of children.
- School systems must recognize that marginalized populations have to be at least bicultural and that this status creates a distinct set of issues to which the system must be equipped to respond.

- Inherent in cross-cultural interactions are dynamics that must be acknowledged, adjusted to, and accepted. (p. 52)

Once leaders make these moral agreements the guiding principles of the school, educators respond along a continuum of culturally proficient morals and behaviors. Resistant educators and their behaviors are organized into the compliance-based tolerance for diversity side of the Cultural Proficiency Continuum. These three categories move from Cultural Destructiveness to Cultural Incapacity and then toward Cultural Blindness.

The Lindseys (2016) depicted the behaviors on this side of the continuum as unhealthy for all stakeholders in the school community. On the healthy-behaviors side of the continuum are Cultural Pre-competence, Cultural Competence and finally Cultural Proficiency. Brief descriptions of the behaviors along the continuum are included in Table 2.

Table 2

Cultural Proficiency Continuum and Definitions of Stages

Cultural Destructiveness	Cultural Incapacity	Cultural Blindness	Cultural Precompetence	Cultural Competence	Cultural Proficiency
Unhealthy Practices			Healthy Practices		
Compliance-Based Tolerance for Diversity			Transformation for Equity		
Seeking to eliminate references to the culture of “others” in all aspects of the school and in relationship with their communities.	Trivializing “other” communities and seeking to make them appear to be wrong.	Pretending not to see of acknowledge the status and culture of marginalized communities and choosing to ignore the experiences of such groups within the school and community.	Increasingly aware of what you and the school don’t know about working with marginalized communities. It is at this key level of development that you and the school can move in a positive constructive direction, or you can vacillate, stop, and possibly regress.	Manifesting your personal values and behaviors and the school’s policies and practices in a manner that is inclusive with marginalized cultures and communities that are new or different from you and the school.	Advocating for lifelong learning in order to be increasingly effective in serving the educational needs of the cultural groups served by the school. Holding the vision that you and the school are instruments for creating a socially just democracy.

Note. Columns move from the unhealthiest practices to the healthiest, left to right (Lindsey & Lindsey, 2016, p. 53).

The school must put into place systems to support cultural proficiency as a morally just response to a diverse world, and not as a problem to fix (Lindsey & Daly, 2012). As educators with unhealthy behaviors realize the school will not tolerate unproductive and harmful behaviors, they will either begin to move toward the healthy behavior side of the continuum or look for a job that does not value cultural proficiency (Lindsey & Lindsey,

2016). Leaders must offer professional learning to help teachers learn about cultural communities within the school and address how to best meet diverse students' needs (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). Lindsey and Daly (2012) explained that implementing culturally proficient changes should be centered on student achievement data. They advise that educators have collaborative discussions about data, interventions, and instructional practices, as well as how culture affects all of the above. If educators are not in a positive school culture, do not have trusting relationships with their colleagues, their principal's professional development and collaborative structures like PLCs will not change any part of the school.

School Culture

School Culture is a tangled web of definitions that constantly evolves. School culture is defined as “the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that has built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges” (Deal & Peterson, 1998, 28). School culture is long-lasting and pervasive due to the sheer number of stakeholders who contribute to its development and evolving nature (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015).

Often, especially in literature before 2005, school culture was considered a synonym of school climate (Deal & Peterson, 1998). Anderson conducted a review of the research around school climate in 1982. In her review of over 200 studies, she determined that school climate is “considered as an independent, intervening, or dependent variable” and that depending on the researcher's theoretical context, climate is broadly defined (p. 368). Anderson (1982) defined school climate through the lens of sociological theory, and the

resulting definition shares many features of a definition of school culture. Anderson asserted that a sociological lens

present[s] the school as a *cultural system* [emphasis added] of social relationships among family, teachers, students, and peers.... Student behavior is seen as a function of the social processes of the school: its norms, expectations, evaluations, and relationships. To the extent that schools differ in their social environments, they will differ in learning out. (p. 382)

Even four decades ago, climate and culture were closely tied. In her review, Anderson (1982) included three figures depicting school climate. In each, school culture is a component of school climate, or it is used as a synonym for school climate.

The 1990s brought about a surge of interest in school culture and climate as features of effective schools, effective leadership and school reform initiatives (Stich & Cipollone, 2017). Deal and Peterson (1998), Hargreaves (1995), Kruse and Seashore-Louis (1993) all published multiple studies and articles around the topic of school culture and its impact on student achievement, new initiatives, and teacher satisfaction. In 2001, Bulach and Berry examined teacher demographics on school culture and climate, and Balach (2001) wrote an article titled “A 4-Step Process for Identifying and Reshaping School Culture” - neither study differentiated between the two concepts.

In recent years, researchers have tried to clarify the differences between school climate and culture. Van Houtte (2005) argued that climate offers a wholistic vantage point to view a school, while school culture allows a look at often hidden cognitive structures that shape schools. After constantly tweaking their definition of culture in response to over-two-decades of work, Deal and Peterson (2016) described school culture as “the yeasty crucible of meaning somewhere between mystery and metrics. It is the glue, the hope, and the faith

that holds people together” (p. 6). School culture is what encourages school improvement, shared leadership, teacher capacity and increased student achievement. Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) wrote that school climate “is around us – culture is part of us” (p. 17); “culture defines what it means to be normal” (p. 19).

Identifying the components of school culture is slippery as well. Hinde (2004) used an anthropological tale about fish to untangle the difficulty. She wrote, “Just as water surrounds and envelopes fish shaping their perspectives and determining their courses of action, culture surrounds and envelopes teachers forming their perspectives and influencing their decisions and actions. Teachers work within a cultural context that influences every aspect of their pedagogy, yet this pervasive element of schools is elusive and difficult to define” (p. 1). In 2009, Deal and Peterson published the second edition of *Shaping School Culture: Pitfalls, Paradoxes and Promises*. The first seven chapters of their text features stories around the components of school culture: “Artifacts, Architecture, and Routines... History...Myth, Vision and Values... Stories... Rituals... Ceremonies and Traditions” (p. v). Gimbrel and Leana (2013) published *Healthy Schools: The Hidden Component of Teaching and Learning* a few years later, and although the title does not explicitly tie to school culture, each chapter claimed to focus on an integral component of a healthy school culture. Components of school culture include a clear vision in an open, trusting collaborative community, where teachers have high expectations and manage conflict, and where leaders provide meaningful professional development, create pride in the school, all while building student and teacher creativity and capacity (Gimbel & Leana, 2013).

School culture can be positive and negative. Much literature ties a school's culture to its effectiveness (Bryk and Schneider, 2010; Fullan, 2016; Muhammad, 2018; Riley and Solic, 2017). The benefits of a positive school culture are many. A positive culture is built of trust and the collaborative synergy between all members of the school community. A school's culture kindles and builds the flames of energy, motivation, commitment to others and the goals of the school, problem solving, collegiality and overall effectiveness (Deal & Peterson, 2016; DuFour, 2007; Fullan, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2004; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Waters et al., 2004). Muhammad (2018) wrote that "when a school has a healthy culture, the professionals within it will seek the tools that they need to accomplish their goal of universal student achievement; they will give a school new life by overcoming the staff division that halts transformation" (p. 25).

According to Gruenert and Whitaker (2015), there are six types of school culture, spanning the continuum from the best and most effective to the worst and most ineffective. The first type is the Collaborative Culture where students and teachers work together to learn and teach. Comfortable Collaborative Culture occurs when teachers are polite in their cooperative groups; the status quo is preserved because there is no critical reflection or move to challenge sacred school stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990a). The various types of stories teachers tell will be discussed later in this review of the literature. The Contrived Collegial Culture results when school leaders force teachers together while reducing teacher autonomy; this building culture reduces relationships to compliance, and teachers only share cover stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). A Balkanized Culture is splintered, in that teachers are pitted against one another in competition for resources, and they align

themselves in subcultures that operate as cliques within the school. The Fragmented school culture lacks any sort of professional interactions around teaching or learning. According to Payne (2013), once teachers are isolated and frustrated, they become incapable of working in students' best interests. The worst type of school culture is Toxic. In a toxic school, teachers center their actions and thoughts on the most negative flaws of the school, the students, the community and their colleagues. Teachers "even use these flaws as a justification for [their own] poor performance. ...What's more, this type of attitude does not feel particularly negative to the teacher, but ... it also functions as a bonding mechanism for teachers" (Gruenert and Whitaker, 2015, p. 59).

Negative school cultures breed ineffectiveness. Problems that become multifaceted affect a school's culture and the productivity of its teachers. Even great teachers become overwhelmed in toxic cultures; it is not long before they become paralyzed and ineffective (Gomez et al., 2016). Eden (2017) found that a school's culture is in alignment not with its number of discipline events, but the disparity between who is being disciplined and who is not. This study highlighted the importance of examining data with a critical eye on demographics and inequitable practices. Neither open discussions nor critical examinations happen when the school culture is toxic; teachers are frequently forced into telling falsified cover stories instead of their lived truths that can challenge the status quo (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990a).

Hargreaves (2001) described isolated teachers as "mediocre loners" (p. 504). Instead of working together to wrestle with problems, teachers "toil alone in the classroom...isolated" (Gomez et al., 2016). This is the exact opposite of what they should be

doing. Yet, when teachers are surrounded by school problems in a toxic culture, they avoid colleagues, conflict, and tough conversations about improvement; they become apathetic (Muhammad, 2018). Without trust, school cultures become dysfunctional, and teacher efficacy, teacher satisfaction and overall morale plummet (Leithwood et al., 2013). Schlichte, Yssel and Merbler (2005), argued that gossip and cliques work to pave a pathway of isolation to immediate burnout for new teachers. Again, the problems ooze into other problems, until no one can tell where one begins and another ends (Gomez et al., 2016; Muhammed, 2018; Payne, 2013). Negative school cultures fester until “dysfunctional relationships become structural” (Payne, 2008, p. 56). Using a metaphor of diagnosing an ill patient, Payne (2008) described toxic school cultures as a patient with “multiple diseases, and any of them can be fatal” (2008, p. 45).

School Reform

Of course, educators’ goals are to educate students. When research repeatedly links negative school cultures to school ineffectiveness, the push to reform is powerful and pervasive. Darling-Hammond (2018) reached back through student performance data sets to examine the pervasive achievement gaps from the 1940s through 2015. Although school districts attempted to reform everything from the structure of the school year, to the types of teachers they hired, to the clothes the students wore, to teachers’ and students’ access to technology, reform initiatives typically failed. Decades of national education statistics show achievement gaps between White, middle class or affluent students and students of color, students in poverty, language learners and students identified as needing special education (Darling-Hammond, 2018; NCES, 2019).

The Achievement Gap

The achievement gap between students in US schools is long-lasting and pervasive (Raskin et al., 2015). Despite decades of literature and research around culturally relevant teaching, what makes an efficacious leader, which components build an effective school, and how to reform and renew school culture, there has been little progress closing the achievement gap (Khalifa et al., 2016; Nieto, 2013; Payne, 2013). As a nation founded on democratic ideals, the US school system is a place of startling inequities between different groups of students (Apple & Beane, 2007; Gorski, 2009; Ladson-Billings et al., 2013; Matais, 2016; Sleeter & Banks, 2007). Ladson-Billings (2006) contended that instead of achievement gap talk, which has been overly analyzed, educators should view inequities through the lens of an “educational debt” as a result of historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral decisions and policies regarding students of color (p. 5).

- Historical educational inequities can be explained as the: a) lack of a universal secondary education for Black students until 1968, b) experiences of Native Americans through forced assimilation at boarding schools, and who were only welcomed in historically Black colleges, c) and the fight in the courts for an equitable and quality education for Latinx students apparent in such historical desegregation cases as *Mendez v. Westminster* and the *Lemon Grove Incident*.
- Educational funding between suburban and urban schools, points to the value placed on different groups of students. While inequities of funding can be found in the support of education for urban schools, schooling, early in the nation, was nonexistent for many communities of colors. “Whites were not prepared to invest their fiscal

resources in these ‘strange others’” (Ladson-Billings, p. 6). The cumulative effects of income disparities resemble the achievement gap. Overall, “the wealth disparity better reflects the education debt” (p. 7).

- The sociopolitical debt with the disenfranchisement of Black, Latinx, and Native communities influenced their civic engagement and legislative representation until the advent of the Voting Rights Act of 1965; thus, their efforts to fight for a quality education for their children have been stymied (Ladson-Billings, 2006). As the conditions of White women through affirmative action provided them more access to college and universities and aided the formation of the Black middle class, no policy actions were taken on the part of children of color, designed to improve their conditions (Ladson-Billings p. 7).

- Social scientists have limited understanding of the moral debt, as Ladson-Billings clarified, because they seldom think in this manner. She asserted that a moral debt “reflects the disparity between what we know is right to do and what we actually do” (p. 8) -- expressing, “Saint Thomas Aquinas saw the moral debt as what human beings owe each other in the giving of, or the failure to give, honor to each other when honor is due” (p. 8). “But how do we recognize the debt we owe to entire groups of people? How do we calculate such a debt?” (p. 8). America has been built with the labor of people of color; however, the greatest moral debt is to the indigenous people whose children continue to drop out of school more than any other groups.

Given the achievement gap and the limited understanding of inequities through the lens of an “educational debt” (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 5), understanding data is complex, especially when it comes to what Gutierrez (2008) described as “gap-gazing” (p. 357). She observed dangers in maintaining an achievement-gap focus, emphasizing

these dangers include offering little more than a static picture of inequities, supporting deficit thinking, and negative narratives about students of color and working-class students, perpetuating the myth that the problem is a technical one, and promoting a narrow definition of learning and equity. (p. 358)

Further, researchers have questioned the usefulness of large-scale assessments of student achievement that identify disparities between groups of students, including middle-class White students and Black, Latinx, First Nations, English language learners, or working-class students. Gutierrez cautioned educators of deficit thinking in teaching and learning environments for Blacks and other students of color due to gap gazing. These opportunity gaps persist despite educators’ noble desires to reform schools using such models as turnaround schools.

Turnaround Schools

Much research exists on the topic of turnaround schools. A turnaround school is defined as a school that shows “rapid and significant improvement in the achievement of persistently low-achieving” student scores (Peck & Reitzug, 2014, p. 9). No Child Left Behind (NCLB) created a fervor to improve student achievement, and schools that were threatened with not making Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) and possibly losing funding could apply for Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) grants. These funds offered reform templates and requirements to achieve turnaround status (Peck & Reitzug, 2014). Educators and the US Department of Education (DOE) understood the need to improve, and

they understood that time was of the essence when dealing with students' educations. Despite the US DOE providing funds for rapid reform grants, and templates that laid out how to turnaround a school in a year, almost no turnaround schools managed real, lasting change (Herman et al., 2008; Peck & Reitzug, 2014).

Birman, Aladjem, and Orland (2010) examined 1098 schools that implemented reform initiatives. Only 262 schools significantly improved their achievement scores after one year of reforms. Of those, only twelve could maintain their improvement into a second year. Stuit (2010), studied data from 2,025 low-performing schools for six years. He concluded that only 1.4% of the public district schools and less than half a percent of charters climbed from the bottom quartile on state achievement tests, to the fiftieth percentile, over six years. School reform almost never works. Reforming a school is so nearly impossible that Stuit (2010) wrote it is easier to close an entire school than it is to reform it. "Reforms are judged differently by different groups, with policy elites privileging effectiveness, popularity, and fidelity, and practitioners favoring adaptability and longevity" (Craig, 2010, p. 134). Reform is messy and subjective.

In their 2016 quantitative study of 3,579 teachers from 117 schools randomly chosen from nine US states, Seashore-Louis and Lee (2016) observed that as the school level increases, the capacity for organizational learning decreases. Teachers in high schools have a much tougher time collaborating effectively. Above all, as the school level increases, the professional collaborative relationships between faculty deteriorate. Seashore-Louis and Lee (2016) determined that how teachers relate to each other becomes the "backbone" of all

professional interactions, and these relationships are “inextricably intertwined with the teachers’ capacity for organizational learning” (p. 547).

Unfortunately, when you compound a stressful, isolating school climate with a large high school where “departmental structure...adds an additional barrier to interaction among teachers” and where “student behavior becomes so much more problematic” isolation and distrust “are exacerbated” (Payne, 2013, p. 57). The question becomes: how do we work around the physical barriers (separate wings for departments, a lack of time for meaningful professional development), and the emotional barriers (not knowing yourself, your colleagues, and your students) to truly make lasting change? Addressing these conditions and factors of school reform are of the utmost importance, because “the consequences of our research practices as they inform or misinform educational policy and reform efforts have perhaps even greater potential to reinforce current patterns and exacerbate educational inequalities” (Stich & Cipollone, 2017, p. 22).

Various theories exist on why school reform initiatives almost always fail to produce lasting changes. In their above-mentioned study of turnaround schools that received improvement grants from the US DOE, Peck and Reitzug (2014) generated seven paradoxes. Despite the desire to reform schools to improve student achievement, the paradoxes demonstrate the tension that exists between theory and practice. Four paradoxes focus specifically on creating a more equitable and collaborative school culture. Relationships between teachers, teachers and principals, the students and the school, the school and parents and the school and the community are all needed to create a dramatic and lasting improvement. There is a gap in the literature about how culturally responsive practices factor

into school reform (Peck & Reitzug, 2014). Khalifa (2012) wrote that to generate this type of deep change is “barely humanly possible, but it is spiritually possible” (p. 428). School renewal is viewed as one way to generate lasting and sustainable change.

School Renewal

Khalifa (2012) passionately described the principal’s role in creating a collaborative school culture, one built on mutual trust between all stakeholders that works in unison to help students achieve. He called this change a school “Re-New-AI” and not another push for reform (2012, p. 425). Caruthers and Friend (2016) also called for a renewal for schools, one that centers on giving voice and power to those who are most frequently left out of the conversations. Because of the stratification inherent in society’s construction of otherness, school systems often recapitulate social inequities (Ladson-Billings & Brown, 2008). The United States has a long history of creating “others,” where otherness is defined as the ability to mark “one’s own group as invisible at the same time ... stereotype [another’s] group and mark it out as the other” (Caruthers & Friend, 2016, p. 27). Ladson-Billings and Brown (2008) portrayed the refusal of most Americans (Whites as well as people of color) in refusing to admit that the perpetuation of otherness, and the enduring consequences and constructions of racism directly affect school choices as well as student opportunities. Creating a democratic school culture allows equitable distribution of power, and it mitigates social inequalities that become celebrated in toxic school cultures (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015; Payne, 2013).

Democratic School Culture

Dewey's (1998) and Apple's (2008) solution to the many problems with education and school reform is to create more democratic schools. Apple and Beane (1995) pointed out that the main proponents of a democratic school rest upon the ideas of preparing students to have a voice in their education, community, and to use knowledge to address social stratification issues. To create a democratic school, educators must answer what Deng and Luke (2008) called the "most basic curriculum question," essentially, "what should count as knowledge" (p. 66). This debate fuels curricula design as well as change initiatives in schools the world over. Even when people agree on a school's theoretical focus (providing opportunities to learn "that" versus learning "how"), translating ideas into practice is difficult (Deng & Luke, 2008, p. 68). Dewey's (1998) logical psychological distinction balances curricula between "specialized knowledge, learners, and society" (Deng & Luke, 2008, p. 72). This allows for a constructivist approach to education; students' experiences must be accounted for when considering school choices. Schools move student learning from what "is already experienced into a fuller and richer and also more organized form" (Dewey, 1998, p. 87). Collins, Hess and Lowrey (2019) interviewed nine, self-identified democratic public-school teachers. Their study uncovered a reoccurring theme between their participants: democratic schools and classrooms offset the rigid power-stripping standardization that comes with narrow, impersonalized curricula and standardized testing.

Historically, American schools are the battle grounds for a tug-o-war between providing students access to standardized, basic skills instruction and individualized, broad-interest curricula (Franklin & Johnson, 2008). Over time this rivalry of sorts has led to swings of the school-purpose pendulum; schools "adopt[ed] a placement policy" to

essentially track students and taught students based on alleged “life adjustment orientation” (p. 462). After World War II, the government and university scholars worked to shape curriculum, so students learned “academic disciplines in ways that were similar to how scholars in those fields of study employed them” (p. 462). The pendulum swung again as teachers refused to implement those challenging and unfamiliar practices. The 1960s brought about school curricula that attempted to address social inequities and offered more local control (Franklin & Johnson, 2008). No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the emergence of standards-based accountability hoped to combat “weak standards, limited opportunities and the soft bigotry of low expectations” that permeated education (Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President, 2001, pp. 38-39). Educators have watched the implementation of a national Common Core curriculum come and go. Accountability remains. In this current time, the charge to use assessment data to drive instructional practices that meet students’ academic, social and behavioral needs is inescapable.

However, while developing effective schools, educators must be cognizant of the myriad dynamic ways society shapes and influences our own beliefs and attitudes. National statistics highlight sweeping changes in suburban communities. Kneebone (2014) argued that the suburban poor have increased 139% in the four years between 2008 and 2012, where poverty grew 48% in the urban core. Suburban schools also have expanding racial and ethnic demographic groups (Milner, 2015). The rapidly changing suburban community and student populations do not match the teaching force’s demographics. According to The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) 83.5% of all US teachers are white, non-Hispanic (2018). Most school systems and school cultures are built upon traditional, White middle-

class behaviors, expectations, and values (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The disconnect between faculty and students is exacerbated when diverse cultural expectations and norms collide (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Many studies agree that creating a more democratic school bridges these gaps, as well as help to build a collaborative school culture (Brooks et al., 2007; DeMink-Carthew, 2018; Gray et al., 2016; Mitchell et al., 2011).

Democratic schools require a singularly-focused school vision where democratic ideals become the school's culture, through evidence in how the school operates and which systemic structures it chooses to reach its goals (Apple & Beane, 2007). Apple and Beane (2007) wrote, "Principals who work toward democratic schools understand this comprehensive approach and know that in the end, democracy usually requires reculturing the school" (p. 37). In 1995, Apple and Beane identified seven key components of democratic schools:

- The open flow of ideas, regardless of their popularity, that enables people to be as fully informed as possible.
- Faith in the individual and collective capacity of people to create possibilities for resolving problems.
- The use of critical reflection and analysis to evaluate ideas, problems, and policies.
- Concern for the welfare of others and "the common good."
- Concern for the dignity and rights of individuals and minorities.
- An understanding that democracy is not so much an "ideal" to be pursued as an "idealized" set of values that we must live and that must guide our life as a people.
- The organization of social institutions to promote and extend the democratic way of life. (p. 2)

The democratic school celebrates the omnipresent collaborative spirit of a positive school culture. Councils, committees and consultants are composed of teachers, students, parents, administrators, and community members. Apple and Beane (2007) wrote that the

holistic inclusion and respect for all voices is “a genuine attempt to honor the right of people to participate in making decisions that affect their lives” (p. 9).

A variety of studies demonstrate that democratic school cultures are effective in diverse school contexts. Recently, DeMink-Carthew (2018) conducted qualitative research involving about 1000 racially and economically diverse middle-school students from a school in the suburbs of Atlanta, GA. In the study, DeMink-Carthew worked with teachers to examine the effectiveness of a whole-school social action project that not only required democratic structures to be in place for teachers, but the democratic practices and structures allowed students to actively participate in school decisions. Additionally, they required students to reach into the community to create “critical spaces for student voices to be heard in ...the design of their learning experiences” (p. 5). Although not all the student initiatives were successful, the majority of students believed they gained a voice in their school and community. Teachers decided to intercede on students’ behalves, and teachers shifted their roles from authoritative decision-maker and power holder to a more democratic student advocate, student advisor and student-voice protector.

Normore and Gaetane (2008) conducted a study of four, female secondary principals who led in urban schools with a democratic school vision and goals. All four women were able to promote equity for all students and in turn create a more effective school (with evidence from improved assessment scores) by adhering to a democratically shared school model. These democratic relationships between principal and teacher, teacher-to-teacher and teacher and student are integral to an equitable education process; the democratic

relationships offer the practice of freedom, and all parties involved are liberated (Freire, 1971).

To create the relationships that fuel democratic education, the school culture must be one of respect for others' voices. Allowing teachers and students to offer more context and personalization in a school's story helps remove distance and further serves to impact the principal's knowledge (Patton, 2015). Applebaum and Du (1999) demonstrated that when stories were shared, sacred stories (or those stories firmly built and fixed into the foundation of a school's culture) were challenged, and more voices were respected. Creating more ways for teachers and students to truly share their stories is imperative to creating democratic schools. Sharing stories grants permission for educators to examine beliefs about "cultural differences portrayed through teaching methodologies, codes of discipline, administrative practices, and policy making" (Caruthers et al., 2004, p. 36). Storytelling also provides opportunity to "create dissatisfaction with a paradigm of sameness and begin the process" of renewing a school culture (Caruthers, 2006, p. 664).

Academic Optimism

A second key component in renewing school culture is academic optimism. A culture of academic optimism occurs when the entire faculty "shares the belief that it can make a positive difference, that all students can learn and succeed, and that high academic performance can be achieved regardless of the SES of the school and parents" (DiPaola & Hoy, 2014, p. 10). Anita Woolfolk Hoy defined academic optimism as a construct that "encompasses teachers' beliefs about themselves, their students, and their instruction" (2019, p. 9). Academic optimism requires cognitive and affective dimensions wrapped into the

behaviors of teachers. Woolfolk Hoy (2019) viewed academic optimism as one leg of a triangular system for school effectiveness. The other two legs are collective efficacy (the teachers' cognitive beliefs in themselves, their colleagues, and their students' abilities to positively impact student learning), and trust (which requires affective feelings toward all in the school community). When planted together in a school's culture, academic optimism, collective efficacy and trust grow into a positive, collaborative and effective learning environment that flourishes no matter students' SES (Hoy, 2012; Kilinc, 2013; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006).

Further defining academic optimism requires linking and illuminating a few concepts from psychology. Bandura's (1997) model of self-efficacy hypothesized that the higher one's belief in self and the ability to accomplish goals, the greater the success. Thus, if teachers and students believe they are capable of teaching and learning well, they are more successful than those who do not believe. Collective efficacy takes this belief in one's self and extends it toward other educators and students (Beard et al., 2010). Hoy (2012) examined forty years of data that repeatedly demonstrated the positive link between teacher efficacy and student achievement. Despite the power of teacher efficacy, deficit thinking will serve to undermine efficacious behaviors required for sustaining positive school culture.

Nichols (2016) explained that many studies surrounding academic optimism use quantitative methods. One of the most prominent studies on academic optimism was conducted by Wayne Hoy and colleagues. The study sampled a large group of high schools, used multiple measures of student achievement, and controlled for students' socio-economic statuses, previous student achievement, as well as demographic variables. Structural equation

modeling tested the theory of academic optimism, while hierarchical linear modeling and intraclass correlational analysis indicated the phenomenon as a collective property within the school community. Results identified the strongest evidence for creating a culture of academic optimism (Hoy et al., 2006) involves a sense of collectivism among the staff regarding expectations for student success.

Despite being proven as an effective factor in schools, creating a culture of academic optimism is challenging because it requires teachers to examine the “undiscussable” components of their own beliefs, assumptions, deficit mindsets and implicit biases surrounding student success (Caruthers et al., 2004; Engebretson, 2017; Milner, 2008). Pollock’s (2001) two-year-long ethnographic study of a high school in California where there was a “startling diversity of students of color” noted that educators often tried to simplify racial categories when discussing student achievement, and they actively suppressed and erased racial categories when the audience became more public (p. 3).

The ability to openly discuss students, their races and ethnicities, and their achievement is central to creating a culture of academic optimism. When teachers work to silence these conversations, they legitimize the inequitable norms that spring from white-middle-class power dynamics and opportunities (Castagno, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Instead of gathering to collaborate, teachers gather to stare silently at the elephants in the school (race, language, poverty, gender, sexuality), or they actively work to block discussion around the taboo topics (Caruthers, 2006; Matias et al., 2016; Pollock, 2001; Diem et al., 2016). Race is especially difficult for White people to discuss, despite it being imperative to teaching students of color

(Howard, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Matias et al., 2016; Michael & Bartoli, 2014).

If teachers work in schools with a weak or toxic culture, they cannot openly discuss these challenging topics. Haviland (2008) investigated conversations around race in two separate White-dominated classrooms. In her year-long qualitative study, Haviland interviewed and observed an eighth-grade classroom and her own student-teaching seminar. Using discourse analysis, she discovered that asking teachers to participate in equity discussions was not enough to challenge the status quo of silence. Instead, teachers' actions became silent subversions that reproduced the sacred culture of inequity.

Despite the challenges in renewing a school's culture and the pressing need to improve, Hoy, Tarter and Woolfolk Hoy (2006) recommended that educators must implement academic optimism and simultaneously work to improve faculty trust and collective efficacy. Failure to do so will result in undermining efforts to create an effective school. In their implications for future research and final discussions, Hoy (2012) discussed Bryk and Schneider's (2002) research on faculty trust's positive impact on student achievement. He wrote, "What is striking from Bryk and Schneider's school conditions that promote learning is that in large part they are remarkably similar to the elements of our latent construct of academic optimism" (p. 89).

Hoy et.al., (2006) concurred that Bryk and Schneider's (2002) study is "one of the first studies in which trust is examined in the context of other variables that measure [school] culture" (2006, p. 548). They suggested that more research is needed to consider the role that school culture plays in developing a more effective school; in other words, how trust is related to other components of school culture and organizational learning. Tschannen-

Moran and Gareis (2015) also called for more research on trust, framed with components of effective schools.

Instructional Leadership

A review of the research and literature on instructional leadership demonstrates that when principals focus their attention on instructional leadership while addressing a school's culture student achievement improves (Fullan, 2010, 2014, 2016; Johnson et al., 2017; Marzano et al., 2005; Seashore-Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2015). Repairing and establishing trusting relationships for all is essential, because without trust reform initiatives fail (Payne, 2013). Principals who lead effectively must address “elephants in the room” (Muhammad, 2018, p.52), mainly discussing how race, ethnicity, poverty, language, gender, sexuality and citizenship affect building policies, procedures and instructional practices (Singelton, 2015). If handled professionally, both school systems and school culture can be strengthened through these conversations (Acosta & Ackerman-Barger, 2017; DuFour & DuFour, 2012; Fullan, 2016; Singleton, 2015; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Specifically, because “effective leaders know that people are not their best asset; they are their only asset... the need to... strengthen relationships is at the very core of what good leaders do” (Leithwood et al., 2013, p. 261).

If leaders truly desire to create equitable educational environments with high performance levels, then building collaborative trust in all relationships must begin while addressing other instructional issues, simultaneously. In 2016, Michael Fullan examined six case studies of schools that sought to make whole system change. Two of the schools were “strong examples of how deep change can be accomplished by focusing on a few core

priorities and then building a culture over a number of years to support and sustain the changes” (p. 539). An effective leader must address both components – systems and culture - to support both teachers’ and students’ improved achievements (Fullan, 2016).

Leadership’s Impact on Achievement

Much of a school’s success depends on if the principal is an effective leader (Seashore-Louis & Whalstrom, 2011; Whalstrom & Seashore-Louis, 2008). Faculties who do not believe they have a good principal are 60% more likely to be in failing schools (Marzano et al., 2005). The inverse is true, too. If a leader is effective, statistics show that 60% of the time, the schools are effective as well. Precisely because this characteristic is strongly linked to a school’s success, educators in leadership positions should strive to understand and implement the best leadership strategies.

An effective leader can positively affect student achievement and often mitigates the negative effects of student demographics like race, and poverty on achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Knapp et al., 1995; Robinson, 2007). Hallinger (2011) examined over forty years of quantitative studies on instructional leadership and student achievement and found that leadership does have a statistically significant effect on student achievement. This effect appeared to stem from setting clear goals for teachers and maintaining high expectations for all students. Scheerens and Bosker (1997) conducted a study that determined when principals led learning for teachers it effected student achievement more in urban and low SES schools than suburban schools. Educators must work at understanding and using school data to make informed decisions. These data-driven decisions are what Bambrick-Santoyo calls “super-levers” because “without instructional

capacity ...school growth is not possible” (2012, p. 16). Principals must assess students’ learning, analyze data from multiple data points (not only state assessments), and then take action to ensure that new cultural and systemic interventions reflect improvement (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012).

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership is the most holistic and statistically relevant approach to spark, stimulate and solidify systemic and cultural growth (Fullan, 2016). Instructional leadership has the greatest impact on students’ achievement (Fullan, 2014; Marzano et al., 2005; Robinson, 2007). Where tasks centered around managing people and resources typically have an impact of .20 to .25 (Marzano et al., 2005), Fullan (2014) records principals who lead teacher professional development and learning as having an impact of .84. Like Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) stated, although managerial duties are important, “the primary responsibility of school principals is their continuous focus on improving instructional work in the classrooms” (p. 647). According to Lynch (2012), principal preparation programs have not prepared principals for this noble but challenging endeavor. Leading with an instructional focus provides opportunities to distribute leadership throughout the school (and build systems that support collaborative cultures that expand to reinforce teacher efficacy), to examine and lead rigorous learning through professional development, and to support teachers’ development of culturally relevant practices with professional learning communities, so all are able to teach with excellence in increasingly diverse school populations.

Transformational Leadership. Instructional leadership is not the same as transformational leadership. Transformational leadership aims for leaders to motivate followers through an alignment of values (Burns, 1978). Because transformational leaders strive to change their schools by attending to faculty members as individuals and by using their position to model ideal behaviors based on values, there is often a focus on providing learning opportunities for faculty (Leithwood, 1994). Deal and Peterson (1999) wrote that transformational leadership should be used when principals must drastically change the school, and despite the difficulty in making these changes, faculties usually revert to the undesired values and behaviors.

Although studies on transformational leadership practices yield significantly positive school climate and teacher satisfaction data, they do not affect student academic performance data (Robinson, 2007). In her reanalysis of 24 international studies of transformational leadership and instructional leadership's impact on student achievement, Robinson (2007) states, "two different analyses suggest that the impact of instructional leadership on student outcomes is considerably greater than that of transformational leadership" (p. 13). In some comparisons, the effect size was three times greater.

Instructional leadership can be viewed as an unfurling of transformational leadership, where leaders reach out to address student, staff and community needs by improving instruction and curricula, holistically. The very act of focusing attention on building the whole faculty toward capacity through instructional leadership promotes longer-lasting systemic and cultural changes that create a new normal and persist even when the principal has moved to another school (Hallinger, 2011). Darling-Hammond's (2000) review of

qualitative and quantitative studies from all 50 states found that instructional leaders attend to the most essential component of student academic achievement – the quality of teachers and of their teaching.

Who is an Instructional Leader and What is the Job Like?

Defining an effective instructional leader is often a nebulous and maddening process (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). For the purpose of this study, instructional leaders are not only those in positions to affect change within schools. District-level leaders, superintendents, and building principals are only a few of the educators who spur change. Within my school, instructional coaches, teacher-leaders, social workers and organized parent groups initiate whole-school change initiatives, regularly. However, because the literature most fitting for this research designates instructional leaders as principals, for the purpose of this review, it is assumed that an instructional leader is in a position of authority in a school, and she may be expected to be the head change agent (Fullan, 2014).

Complicating the desire to become an effective instructional leader is the long and shifting history of what a principal's role is. In the past, a principal was to manage the school and to be the supervisor of all teachers (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Lynch, 2012). With the reliance on federal, state and local assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of a school, principals' roles have shifted to a broad, undefined "instructional leader." In short, principals are expected to attend to not only the managerial components of a school facility but also to attend to faculty, student, parent, and community needs (Evans, 2007; Kowalski, 2011; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Lynch, 2012). Principals are accountable to an ever-widening list of stakeholders who demand that the school demonstrates academic success.

Each stakeholder's subjective and contextual demands further complicate what a leader should attend to.

Like Fullan (2010, 2014, 2016), Bryk and Schneider (2010) divided school leadership into components that reiterate the importance of instructional leadership and school culture. Bryk and Schneider's (2010) longitudinal research of Chicago Public Schools was developed into an evidence-based survey delivered to parents, students, and teachers; offered nationally, the survey was designed to focus improvement in schools. Bryk and Schneider (2010) identified five essential components of effective schools: Effective Leaders, Collaborative Teachers, Involved Families, Supportive Environment, and Ambitious Instruction (UChicago Impact, 2018). The research led to additional studies on school effectiveness conducted by the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research's twenty plus years of national data and that spurred creation of a quantitative survey called the 5Essentials (UChicago Impact, 2018). Researchers found that schools that score high on three or more of the 5Essentials are ten times more successful in growing student learning than schools that score low in three or more of the 5Essentials (UChicago Impact, 2018).

Within the 5Essentials survey, excellent leadership is marked by shared leadership, building and maintaining respectful trust relationships, setting and communicating clear, high goals, and leading professional learning for teachers (UChicago Impact, 2018). Principals are expected to create a unique, high-expectations-for-all, attainable vision with aligned goals that create a positive teaching and learning environment for all (Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Bryk & Schneider, 2003; UChicago Impact, 2018). Despite these components being intertwined and supportive of each other, principals tend to focus attention on only one component (Lynch,

2012). Leaders have long been expected to find democratic ways to influence instructional practices, so students and teachers learn productively (Dewey, 2015). The research from the studies demands that the changes and improvements a principal implements should always work to address cultures and systems; leading professional development and creating whole-school collaborative practices accomplishes both objectives.

Shared Leadership

Shared leadership (an extension of democratic leadership) is one systematic change that supports a trusting culture. Harris (2004b) reported that shared leadership requires leaders to clearly communicate a shared vision of equity, one where all students can and must learn rigorously. Harris (2004b) also posited that leadership should be distributed to teachers as well as students (so multiple perspectives are respected), leaders must provide faculty development that reinforces these values, and they must ensure time to build relationships both in school (with teachers, between teachers, between students and teachers) and with the community. This is a very challenging undertaking. Communicating a clear vision is not the same as ensuring each teacher actually adheres to these beliefs and goals (Fullan, 2016; Harris, 2004a).

This is an enormous venture for any person; DiPaola and Hoy (2014) suggested that principals use distributive leadership for systemic implementation. Distributing leadership helps “recognize the talents and expertise of others” (p. 15) and helps to ensure reform initiatives “will be sustained over time” (DiPaola & Hoy, 2014, p. 15). Distributive leadership also implies a more democratic form of leadership as defined by Woods and Gronn (2009) as a guiding principle to be worked toward at different levels of

possibility. In a democratic society educational leaders and schools have a moral necessity to plant, cultivate, and harvest democratic ideals (Apple & Beane, 2007; Dewey, 1916; Hytten, 2017). Dewey (1916) equated true education with true democracy; both are interdependent and instead of one acting as host and the other a parasite, they are “intimately and reciprocally” dependent (Hytten, 2017, p. 9). Distributive leadership’s goal is to reduce unequal power between principals and stakeholders. Instructional leaders must reach beyond themselves to incorporate more diverse voices to provide opportunity for shared leadership, because the “wider cast of individuals in both formal and informal leadership roles plays a central role in shifting school activities more directly related to instructional improvements that lead to enhanced student learning and performance” (DiPaola & Hoy, 2014, p. 15). That is, after all, our primary objective in education.

Despite Woods and Cronn’s (2009) assertion that creating democratic forms of leadership is difficult, shifting from a top-down model of leadership to a more shared system of leadership does not require impossible feats from educators. The difficulty of implementing distributive leadership lies entrenched in fully realizing democratic principles like equity and social justice. Working in today’s diverse schools forces leaders to “draw together the principles and values of the foregoing [established, undemocratic] models and attach central importance to the realization of human potential in social environments guided by the ideals of a rich conception of democracy and extensive citizen participation” (Woods & Cronn, 2009, p. 432).

In 2007 Brooks, Jean-Marie, Normore and Hodgins recognized a gap between the conceptual and empirical literature of distributed leadership and social justice. To bridge this

gap, they reviewed literature to create a conceptual framework of distributive leadership and applied it in an ethnographic study of administrators and teachers who led with a social justice focus. The study took place in an urban high school in the southeastern United States with a student population that was over 80% African American. Over the period of an academic year, the researchers conducted 55 interviews and logged 252 observation hours of the 42 teachers and administrator-participants. Leadership for social justice was determined to be practiced depending on the person, the situation, and along a sliding continuum. The school culture was a factor that leaders identified as greatly impacting the effectiveness of distributive leadership and social justice leadership. Brooks et al., (2007) concluded that further research is needed to examine distributed leadership in “diverse school and cultural contexts if we are to adequately prepare school leaders to effectively lead schools in the 21st century” (p. 404).

Principals as School Cultural Leaders

Some may be tempted to believe that shared leadership requires less from a principal. Nothing is further from the truth. Anderman, Belzer and Smith (1991) surveyed, using over a hundred Likert scales, three intertwined examinations of principals’ leadership choices, behaviors and actions throughout the United States. Results supported the idea that principals are the main culture leaders within a school. The choices a principal makes work to affect teachers’ satisfaction with, commitment to, and belief in the school’s effectiveness. Almost three decades later, Seashore-Louis and Murphy (2016) conducted another quantitative study related to principals as cultural leaders. Using regression and path analysis, like Anderman et al., (1991), Seashore-Louis and Murphy (2016) surveyed over a hundred educators. Findings

suggest that when principals build relational trust with and between teachers, they foster and improve equity and achievement for students. If a principal does not clearly establish, communicate and model equitable expectations, teachers and students will not move toward change (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012; Fullan, 2014; Johnson et al., 2017).

After conducting a study of urban students, Caruthers and Friend's (2016) findings reinforced McIntosh, Moniz, Craft, Golby and Steinwand-Deschambeault's (2014) assertion that teachers who are "culturally responsive have an understanding of how students construct their knowledge, have an awareness of their students' lives, are socio-culturally conscious, hold affirming views about diversity, use congruent instructional strategies and advocate for the rights of their students" (p. 4). In order to facilitate the growth of these characteristics, principals must be able to lead teachers to their own racial and cultural proficiency, examine educators' personal and often pervasive culturally-deficit thinking, and move faculty toward culturally relevant instruction (Caruthers & Friend, 2016).

An effective principal must focus on improving instruction (Hoy & Hoy, 2006). This is most easily accomplished by leading learning for teachers or organizing and managing clear expectations for teacher professional development. Reoccurring most frequently are the ideas that principals need to ensure and provide meaningful professional learning that is relevant to teachers, take time to observe instruction, provide meaningful, growth-minded feedback, and hold high expectations for students and teachers. Bambrick-Santoyo (2012) identified leading professional learning practices as the single most important lever in effective leadership.

Leading Professional Development. Principals cannot simply dictate that teachers assess students and make changes. When problems like academic inequities appear widespread, the principal should see to it that professional development is rigorous and relevant for the whole faculty. Fink and Resnick stated that, “professional development is the centerpiece of administering a district committed to continuous improvement in student learning” (2001, p.24). Instructional leaders do not always lead instruction, rather they attend training opportunities with teachers, they openly discuss data (with teachers’ and students’ names used), and they model how to build capacity. This practice is uncomfortable for those who rely on top-down leadership models, but a culture of unified learning is necessary to create a culture of interdependence, and vulnerability between leaders and teachers (Fink & Resnick, 2001). These systemic changes are the makings of a strong culture for trust.

Such a culture requires “high-quality human relationships [that] are strongly predicative of whether or not a school can gather itself together to get better” (Payne, 2013, p. 37). John Hattie’s (2012) visible learning meta-analyses examined over 80,000 studies to determine teaching strategies that yield the greatest results in student achievement. Collective teacher efficacy and common and high student expectations yield 1.57 and 1.33 effect sizes, respectively. These two strategies involved on-going, structured collaboration between all faculty. Building leaders must find time to address culturally relevant instruction and culture through collaboration because they are imperative to increasing student achievement.

Repeatedly, studies have demonstrated that leaders must foster comradeship and deep collaboration in their schools for change to take hold (Byrk & Schneider, 2010; DiPaola & Hoy, 2014; DuFour et al., 2016; Leithwood et al., 2013; Tschannen-Moran, 2016). Bates and

Morgan (2018) observed that meetings can appear collaborative but are really only cursory, where members complain about challenges, but no one moves to incite change. Teachers often complain about everything from student behavior, to colleagues' behavior, to administration's inability to support teachers. True collaboration rarely takes place if principals have not taken the time and energy to support the cultural shifts with changes to their systemic systems.

These systems and new ways of operating must be fostered in professional development. Without relevant resources and the time for teachers to truly reflect, practice, receive feedback and implement again, Payne (2013) declared that any reform is doomed to failure. According to Nieto (2013), a teacher needs 50-100 hours of professional development to master a concept. Payne wrote, "Put underprepared people in a highly stressful, under-resourced, stigmatized environment where no one typically has the authority to invoke effective sanctions, where class and racial tensions are ever-present, and you create an environment where dysfunctional relationships become structural" (2013, p. 56).

Unfortunately, when educators mix a stressful, isolating school climate with a large high school where "departmental structure...adds an additional barrier to interaction among teachers" isolation and distrust "are exacerbated" (Payne, 2013, p. 57). The question becomes: how do principals work around the physical barriers and the emotional barriers to help teachers learn how to teach well in their diverse schools? Nieto (2013; 2018) recommended using teachers' and students' voices to not only demonstrate that culturally relevant education is possible, but also to illustrate how teachers affect positive change in their buildings. Payne (2004) argued restructuring inequitable systems, laws and

policies will never be enough to create deep change. Principals must establish “high-quality human relationships” centered on trust and professional collaboration (Payne, 2013, p. 37).

Payne (2013) did not provide a structure for leaders to follow but delineated the many examples of ineffective, dysfunctional and even hurtful practices educators may be guilty of performing. Perhaps understanding the “nonsystemic, nonstructural- terms” (p. 91) and ways race can undermine renewal initiatives is where educators can begin to approach the entangled issues in professional development (Payne, 2004). Teachers must break this cycle of ineffective work by demanding PD that allows collaboration and true discussion with each other. In order to accomplish any true collaboration teachers must, “emphasize the importance of establishing and maintaining trust, which means understanding that what is essential to us is creating a dialogue between our differences that enriches us” all (hooks, 2010, p. 39).

Professional Learning Communities. Collaboration is defined as “a systematic process in which teachers work together interdependently in order to impact their classroom practice in ways that will lead to better results for their students, for their team, and for their school” (DuFour et al., 2016, p. 12). Teachers combat negative school cultures by developing their teacher-to-teacher trust and collective efficacy. Hord and Rutherford (1987) found that whole-school Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are a systematic change that functions by building collective efficacy between teachers while encouraging shared leadership, on-going learning and best practices. Effective principals must create collaborative opportunities to first model best practices and then collaborate with their

faculties. This deep, intentional systemic collaboration repairs and reaffirms a trusting culture.

DiPaola and Hoy (2014) described PLCs as one effective and comprehensive model for meeting the whole school's needs. Effective PLCs make use of deep, data-driven conversations about instruction and student performance (DuFour et al., 2016).

The DuFours (2012), the foremost authority on PLCs assert, "The world's worst school systems use the PLC process to support the ongoing learning of their educators through professional development that is collaborative, data-driven, and peer-facilitated" (p. 1). PLCs also are places where teachers and school instructional leaders discuss and challenge not only the status quo, but also discuss tough and uncomfortable issues present like race and its place in the school (Muhammad, 2018).

PLC research is prolific. In a review of eleven empirical studies on the effectiveness of PLCs, Vescio, Ross and Adams (2008) organized common practices to ensure successful work into four categories: "collaboration, a focus on student learning, teacher authority, and continuous teacher learning" (p. 84). Many schools attempt PLCs to create opportunities for collaboration, however, leaders who set up PLCs, align curricula, and insist on data-driven conversations can still wind up frustrated and in an ineffective school (DuFour et al., 2016). Merely dictating that teachers work together is not enough. Leithwood et al. (2013) suggested using a "collective advantage" to harness what teachers are learning and then finding ways for the teachers to share those learnings with each other (2013, p. 264). In short, leaders must foster comradeship and deep collaboration in their schools for change to take hold (Leithwood et al., 2013).

Riley and Solic (2017) studied preservice teachers who desire to work in urban school districts. They found that building inquiry-based communities of practice established trusting relationships between all who participated, allowed teachers to build professional support systems, and teachers became much more effective in their craft. When principals dictate that teachers work together in PLCs, they must take the time to ensure there are effective, trust-based structures for deep collaboration in place. Without a clear structure, principals and teachers do not move beyond their comfort zones to a place of vulnerability and trust building (Riley & Solic, 2017). Without a clear structure for collaboration, principals and teachers are doomed to repeat the status quo.

Leithwood et al. (2013) listed five ways to build a culture of trust and openness, and only one method involves structured collaboration time like what occurs in a PLC. The other four methods are providing meaningful professional development, modeling “desired practices (p. 263),” allowing teachers to work with those facing similar problems and respecting each person (2013). Clearly, the other four require a level of trust and collaboration that is unstated. A principal who is courageously working to address a toxic school culture or inequitable practices will need to be prepared to bring these many entities together; leading professional collaborative discussions will repair trust relationships while working on all other components of the 5Essentials, simultaneously. Again, “for collaboration to be most effective, it has to [emphasis added] encompass mutual trust” between all (Leithwood et al., 2013, p. 265).

Culturally Relevant Leadership. Culturally Relevant Leadership is broken into four main strands: critical self-reflection, contributions to culturally responsive teaching and

curricula, promoting culturally responsive schools, and engaging in culturally responsive community advocacy (Khalifa et al., 2016). Although not exhaustive, these four strands allow school leaders to address the “currently emerging,” shifting and “burgeoning cultural contexts” in today’s schools (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1296). These strands begin the culturally responsive work of leaders with an inside out model. Principals attend to themselves first, followed by their teachers, then their whole school, and finally the community at large. Terrell and Lindsey (2009) built a wealth of resources around educators becoming culturally proficient with diverse cultural groups as well as within diverse leadership roles and across a variety of school contexts. Their texts move educators along a culturally proficient continuum that is patterned after the inside out model.

Embracing and valuing equity for all is the first step instructional leaders must take. Principals must be willing to examine their own belief systems surrounding equity and challenge themselves to continuously create a culture of equity through implemented changes. Sonya Douglas Horsford (2011) corroborated this idea:

Given US education’s focus on race in everything from student test scores to school assignment plans and district-level achievement gaps, racial literacy, or understanding what race is and how it functions in society, is increasingly important to the work of educational leaders. (p. 123)

Effective instructional leaders must first commit to understanding their own awareness of how race shapes society and schools (because schools are microcosms that reflect society) (Horsford, 2011).

Due to the systemic foundation of racism and inequity woven into the United States and her social, cultural and economic systems each individual is shaped by her unique place in society (Howard, 1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Carr (2016) described

the prevalent inability to recognize one's position within society as "an immense salience" and inability to critically examine ideas from other cultural viewpoints (p. 1). If principals cannot recognize their own preferences and examine their thoughts for inherent biases, then they run the risk of not only being ethnocentric, but also perpetuating inequitable practices (Howard, 1999; Sleeter, 2017).

After principals work to examine their own cultural identities, they must work to have conversations about race to not only expand their racial literacy, but to lead learning around the school's position in promoting or rectifying inequitable practices (Khalifa et al., 2016; Singleton, 2015); Finally and simultaneously, principals must implement systemic, cultural changes like PLCs that help build teachers' culturally responsive teaching practices so they can better meet the needs of all students. Of course, challenging systems of inequity is scary, but a firm commitment to educational excellence for all helps navigate the tumultuous tide of resistance (Theoharis, 2010). In the musical *Hamilton*, characters Jefferson and Madison sing, "If there's a fire you're trying to douse/ You can't put it out from inside of the house" (Miranda, 2016). Despite this catchy turn of phrase, Horsford (2011) affirmed with determination and focus, healing should begin from within the burning house.

To do this, principals must build school cultures with trust and respect for all, with all. Teachers must be provided culturally relevant professional learning opportunities while simultaneously addressing issues of trust (Muhammad, 2018; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Murphy et al., 2009). When trust is high in a school, collaborative practices

like PLCs and PD can be used to patch, puzzle through and even prevent tough problems like systemic racism and the effects of poverty (Hawley & Nieto, 2010).

Acosta and Ackerman-Barger (2017) found that “An effective force of anti-racist leaders can foster real equity transformation in America’s schools and districts” (p. 240). When change begins with instructional leaders and teachers, it spreads quickly (Raskin et al., 2015). Preparing principals and teachers to teach and lead with racial competence, rather than colorblindness has been proven to help students of color achieve (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). These understandings narrow the achievement gaps between White students and students of color (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Kafilia, Gooden and Davis, 2016), and they provide improved learning achievements for the whole school.

Reaching high performance levels should be the goal of every educational leader. In their text, *Leadership in America’s Best Urban Schools*, Johnson et al. wrote that “school leaders will not generate excellent and equitable learning results unless they influence a critical mass of the school community members” (2017, p. 78). If principals truly desire to create equitable educational environments with high performance levels, then they must lead professional learning, and create PLCs to unravel systemic and cultural issues (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; DuFour & DuFour, 2012; Fullan, 2014, 2016; Muhammad, 2018).

Chapter Summary

This chapter explored four segments of the study’s theoretical framework that not only scaffold and support the research but also offer a unique platform to build from. First, I described the crucial component of trust in creating an effective school, specifically how collaborative structures like critical conversations and truthful storytelling help rebuild and

reinforce a healthy school culture. Next, I probed the shifting landscape of culturally relevant instruction, while highlighting its importance in today's schools and suggesting that educators receive professional development centered on developing a cultural proficiency. I examined the topic of school culture and educators' understandings of its relation to student achievement and the push for school renewal. Healthy school cultures are those that rest upon democratic ideals and academic optimism for all students. Finally, principals should be instructional leaders who work to affect change by leading professional learning, implementing PLCs, and attending to their own cultural proficiency. Shoring-up these footholds reinforces both school systems and school culture.

I have been described as a fixer. When confronted with a problem, I have always run toward research and literature for a wealth of answers. I have an intense desire to be the person who provides many solutions that allow others to choose the best fit for their situation. Clearly, there are amazing teachers who manage to work through the toxic pollution of a negatively-cultured school, who teach all students with the highest expectations. When principals implement new, different and unfamiliar culturally relevant pedagogy through professional development or PLCs, some teachers run toward the learning and others run away. What happens to the trust relationships between teachers in those situations? Is trust strengthened – through frank conversations and a desire to grow? Is trust demolished – by hurt feelings or silent subversion? The stories co-researchers provide will help offer richer, more nuanced learnings for those, like me who seek answers. Chapter Three: Methodology will offer a rationale for the proposed use of Heuristic Narrative Inquiry methods. The chapter will describe which data sources will be used and how data analysis

will be conducted. The chapter ends with a discussion of the study's limitations, validity, reliability and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Human beings have lived out and told stories about that living for as long as we could talk. And then we have talked about the stories we tell for almost as long. These lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities. (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 35)

Each narrative inquiry is composed around a particular wonder and, rather than thinking about framing a research question with a precise definition or expectation of an answer, narrative inquirers frame a research puzzle that carries with it "a sense of a search, a 'research,' a searching again", "a sense of continual reformulation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 124).

The problem of teacher-to-teacher mistrust in some Midwestern high schools is pervasive and documented in popular culture as well as academic journals (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Johnson et al., 2017; Leithwood et al., 2013; Muhammed, 2016; Payne, 2008). When teachers do not trust each other, they cannot implement professional development that may improve their practice. Improved practices can have great effects on students as well as the overall culture of the school. Like most urban schools in the United States, the majority of teachers are White, and the majority of students are of color (NCES, 2018; Sleeter, 2017). Because teachers have the noble job of teaching all students – even those who differ from them racially, culturally and ethnically, teachers must be provided culturally relevant professional learning opportunities (Hawley & Nieto, 2009; Hodgin, 2014; Howard, 2016; Matias et al., 2016; Muhammad, 2018; Sleeter, 2017). However, when

teachers do not trust their instructional leaders, principals, or fellow teachers, they cannot implement the practices that may allow them to better serve their students.

The purpose of this heuristic narratological study was to understand the role of teacher-to-teacher trust for secondary teachers in a Midwestern school who have undergone culturally relevant teaching professional development. Teacher-to-teacher trust was defined as the reciprocal desire and ability to be radically open with another, and the belief that the other person will greet the openness with reoccurring openness, thoughtfulness, and kindness (Baier, 1986). The Unit of Analysis was narrowed to the teachers' perceptions of and stories about teacher-to-teacher trust surrounding the shared experience of culturally relevant teaching professional development. In-depth interviews, documents collected at the participants' requests and artifacts will be examined.

One overarching question guided this study: What are the stories teachers tell of teacher-to-teacher trust when asked to participate in culturally relevant teaching professional development? This question will be explored through four sub questions:

1. How do teachers feel about their colleagues in the PD cohort?
2. How do teachers navigate teacher-to-teacher trust relationships when there is a school history of failed reform initiatives?
3. To what extent do teachers apply strategies learned through the culturally relevant teaching professional development to teacher-to-teacher relationships?

The problem of a predominately White teaching force and a very racially, culturally, and ethnically mixed student population is constant (NCES, 2018). If trust is in short supply, teachers will avoid and actively work to counter expectations to collaborate with other

teachers (Matias & Grosland, 2016; Milner & Laughter, 2014). Because this issue is not shrinking, educational policy makers as well as instructional leaders who wish to identify best practices for helping teachers use culturally relevant teaching to address student equity or to resuscitate school culture are the intended audience (Crowley, 2015; Meyer & Land, 2005; Picower, 2009; Pollock, 2001). As a result of the emotional appeal, the tangible way that stories grab a reader's heart and help the reader embody another's experiences, this study also hoped to share teachers' stories surrounding the essence of trust (Baier, 1986; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Patton, 2015; Seashore-Louis & Lee, 2016; Tschannen-Moran, 2013; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2012). Perhaps this will lead to changes in individual reader's own social constructions of Whiteness, race, trust and effect their personal and professional daily lives.

This chapter details a rationale for qualitative research, as well as the traditions at work within the study. Heuristic, and Narrative traditions will be discussed with a focus on the major theoretical approaches, techniques and methods associated with each. Then, I will discuss the study's design, including the setting, participant selection, data sources used, and how the data was managed. Data analysis procedures will be explicated for both heuristic and narrative methods. Finally, I conclude with the study's limitations and ethical considerations.

Rationale

Why conduct a qualitative study instead of a quantitative study? Why tell White teachers' stories from a woman of color's voice? To those questions I offer a poem and another brief personal history.

For Nice White Ladies

For nice white ladies
Who teach brown students
Or have beige and brown babies
Or marry black and brown men

I see you.
I call you Mom, bestie, wife, love
I know you
You “don’t see color”
You treat all based on the content of their character and not the color of their skin
I see you
I hear you
Yelling #me, too and #blacklivesmatter

I see you looking overwhelmed in front of the oils and grease and pomade and moisturizers
I see hear touch your heart wretch every time a brown or black body swings in the air after being destroyed by brutal police
I smell your hot sweat that accompanies the flushed chest and cheeks when someone makes a comment, tells a joke, wants to guess the race of the person you are talking about

This excruciating pain does not exempt you

I get it. They are your babies. All of them. I, too...
You want them to learn and grow and read and REACH
With arms outstretched, wide
I, too...

But if you don’t validate their experiences as different
If you don’t voice that heartache when bullshit is fucking bullshit
If you don’t scream with all the power and force of birthing
then you don’t see us

it is not enough to hashtag
and love
and even to teach

that’s how we got here

we need something different
you need to see us as different
and you need to DEMAND that
we

DESERVE
all
that our reaching arms can hold
I, too. (Jacobson, 2019)

I intentionally chose to work in the Jordan Jewell District because it had a more racially balanced student demographic than any neighboring districts. Area school districts are largely segregated (Moxley, 2018). In my 16 years of employment, our Latinex student population has doubled, and our white population has dropped by a third. Despite this increasing diversity, faculty demographics remain the same: almost everyone is White. There are no administrators of color in the district.

I have been “that teacher” that other teachers go to for advice on what to do with “those kids.” I have asked questions and been flat out told that I need to stop seeing students’ races. I have also been a safe place for white teachers to come to voice genuine concerns like, “I am interested in culturally sensitive teaching practices. How do I start?” Or, most recently, “I do not have anyone to talk to about this, and I am scared that if I do, colleagues will think I am accusing them of being racist.” There may always be more White teachers than teachers of color, and there may not always be trusted colleagues of color nearby to answer questions. Because my own experiences and thoughts shaped so much of this inquiry, and because I was a participant in the culturally relevant teaching PD, I used a heuristic approach in this narrative inquiry. Charmaz (2016) identified the importance of qualitative research and its position in social justice. If researchers are not prepared to ethically promote and report findings, then researchers will not hold to the moral, honorable challenge of promoting social justice.

I conducted a phenomenological study of teacher-to-teacher trust. Teachers must have a safe place to learn and examine their own biases and privileges, but many teachers do not have trusted colleagues who fit that description. Despite being the only instructional leader of color in the whole district, I was curious to know what happens to White teachers' trust relationships when they were asked to actively participate in culturally relevant teaching professional development. Could they create trusting bonds with each other? Would they refuse to participate and sit in angry silence? Would they give up when it got hard and retreat to their own classroom silos? Or would they form a lynch mob and demand I know my place?

The responsibility to act as the White teachers' Sojourner Truth, leading all through the bloody battlefield to what lies beyond does not fall upon of every person of color. White teachers will need to save themselves and each other. Like a pilgrimage to the Promised Land, understanding the stories of the journey allowed all to courageously choose and use the clues as a compass beyond diversity.

Research Design

The "fruit of qualitative methods" comes from collecting, analyzing and synthesizing stories (Patton, 2015, p. 3). Researchers prepare to examine *how* things work, not just *if* they work. Qualitative research requires that researchers examine stories within the context of their subjects' lives. Each context shapes the system as a whole, and researchers as well as readers of the research must take the time to understand the many factors at work (Patton, 2015). Creswell (2013) wrote that qualitative research is needed when we need "a complex, detailed understanding of the issue" (p. 48). This depth of understanding can be gained when

the researcher delves into the participant's story, "unencumbered by what we expect to find, or what we have read in literature" (Creswell, 2013, p. 48).

One reoccurring idea of importance is choosing the qualitative approach that is the best fit for purpose, methods and topic of study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I believe Richards and Morse (2013) communicated the importance of the intertwined nature of research components best. They stated, "The question goes with the method, which fits the appropriate data collection, and analysis" (Richards & Morse, 2013, p. 1). Each qualitative philosophy and interpretive framework has its strengths and weaknesses; the goal is to apply the best fit for the researcher and the subjects, as well as to combine theories to "create a personal theory of practice that challenges biases" (Owens & Valesky, 2015, p. 67). The researcher should situate herself within the process of researching, and the study topics and participants should be considered when researchers align ideas with theory and methodology (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This study used heuristic, qualitative research methods and narrative inquiry to examine the phenomenon of teacher-to-teacher trust for secondary teachers in a Midwestern school who have undergone culturally relevant teaching professional development. The phenomenon of teacher-to-teacher trust does not operate inside a tidy vacuum. It is waxing and waning in relation to the participants' lived experiences and individual realities within our negatively cultured school, as we undergo issues surrounding school reform, cultural shifts in student population, Whiteness, and the inequity of student achievement. Rossman and Rallis (2017) elucidated that research that is "recursive, iterative, messy, tedious, challenging, full of ambiguity, and exciting" *requires* qualitative methodology (p. 3).

Narrative Inquiry

At the outset, narrative inquiry was the tradition of narratology (studying the theory of story or narratives). The structuralists and linguists of the 1960s argued that examining a story with focus on its structure (whether it be plot or linguistic) enhanced understanding (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Webster and Mertova (2007) credited Rimmon-Kenan (1983) with linking narratology with deconstruction and viewing a story through specific theoretical lenses like feminism, sociology or critical race theory. Clandinin (2016) charted his own struggle while using narrative inquiry in the early 1980s while writing his dissertation; he characterized it as frustrating and inaccurate. Rather than deconstructing his participants' stories, Clandinin longed to experience stories as incomplete, shifting tales that impact and drive an educator's personal practices.

In 1988, Connelly and Clandinin published their first work, *Teachers as Curriculum Planners: Narratives of Experience*. Instead of dictating what and how curriculum needed to be designed, the researchers worked to understand teachers' perceptions of curriculum. Teachers' lived experiences were contemplated through and over time, in and out of the classroom, and in relation to their social structures (Clandinin, 2016; Craig, 2011). Clandinin (2016) recounted how he and Connelly originally defined narrative inquiry as both phenomenon and method, in their early works. Clandinin (2016) lamented, "Narrative has, for example, come to refer to almost anything that uses, for example, stories as data, narrative or story as representational form, narrative as content analysis, narrative as structure, and so forth" (p. 11). Presently, Clandinin describes narrative inquiry as the methodology *and* manner of thinking about one's experiences (Clandinin, 2016).

Educational research traditionally viewed teachers as those who instruct by delivering curricula. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) viewed teachers as part of the curricula because they are profoundly influenced and ever-changing in relation to their personal contexts, culture, community and classroom events. Instead of a fixed story with certain understandings, Connelly and Clandinin (1990b) used narrative inquiry to examine the tensions that arise when stories are temporal. Webster and Mertova (2007) untangled Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) postmodern beliefs from those foundational, traditional beliefs of the "grand narrative" (p. 33). The grand narrative is a modernist's view of an event as fixed and leading to certain evidence. Clandinin and Connelly (1990b) abandoned that rigidity of interpretation for tentative understandings.

The evolution of narrative inquiry sprung forth from Dewey's (1938) Theory of Experience which intertwined students' educational experiences with immediate learning experiences as well as long-term and future behaviors (Clandinin, 2016). Because the experiences are both situational and tied to a continuum of impact, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described teachers' experiences similarly: interactions and experiences that shape and drive educators toward their own interpretation and behaviors in reaction to the situations. Building on the experiential continuum of impact, Clandinin and Connelly (1990a) added Bruner's (1986) theory of narrative knowing, where individuals' experiences are understood, processed and communicated in stories. Clandinin and Connelly (1990a) used a three-dimensional narrative space (which will be discussed later in this chapter) to offer ways to examine stories. Importantly, Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) clarified that narrative inquiry is always shaped by the social, cultural and power stratification at work within the individual's

experiences. When considering the myriad influences on an educator and the researcher, Xu and Connelly (2010) eloquently interpreted narrative inquiry as “not so much a structured answer to a question, or a way of accounting for actions and events, as it is a gateway, a portal, ... into meaning and significance” (p. 356). Clandinin and Huber (2010) made plain that narrative research, or the journey to this magical portal must be justified.

Justifications

Each researcher must justify the use of narrative research, personally. Researchers (especially those conducting studies for dissertations and theses) must take time to explore personal reasons for conducting narrative research within the context of their own lives. Narrative inquiry should also be justified practically. The research process should “deepen [participants’] understandings of who they are in relation with” others, and additionally serve to improve their own practices (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 8). This is why narrative inquiry has always been a natural fit for researchers in educational contexts. Finally, narrative inquiry must be socially justified. Especially in today’s era of political extremes and social media #wokeness, researchers in education must always ensure their study is socially just, theoretically just and all still actionable.

Cheryl Craig (2011) argued, “Because teacher education is inextricably linked to teachers’ lives and narrative inquiry studies lives in motion, the link between teacher education and narrative inquiry could not be stronger” (p. 19). She is absolutely correct. Narrative work requires navigating these commonplaces, relationships and a constantly evolving understanding of knowledge. Clandinin and Connelly (1996) believed that “teacher education is compartmentalized – it begins, it ends, it starts over and over again

in one-shot training sessions” and then the teachers’ learnings and understandings move into and out of the classroom into their personal lives, “as they tell, and re-live and re-tell, cover stories” (p. 25).

Examining teachers’ individual stories centered around a shared experience mandates narrative inquiry. Creswell and Poth (2018) characterized narrative research as a method of “valorizing” individual’s experiences while providing a deeper look into the “social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within” each shared story (p. 68). Asking teachers to share their stories through in-depth interviews, artifacts from the PD sessions, and other documents (like written reflections) will provide opportunities for this deep analysis, while giving voice and validity to the participants’ unique experiences. Additionally, narrative inquiry will give voice to secondary teachers who work through the challenging task of undergoing tough conversations about race and culture with their colleagues. Often, in education, critical race research focuses on teachers’ silence or seclusion (Matias et al., 2016). Educators (self, included) are curious how some teachers are able to work through toxic school cultures, endless reform churn, and low-trust relationships to begin to implement culturally relevant teaching protocols. These navigations force consideration and examination of each participant’s unique social-cultural and power influences (Grbich, 2013).

Narrative inquiry allows the researcher to collect participants’ experiences as they are “defined interpersonally and intersubjectively by people interacting in a network of relationships” (Patton, 2015, p. 121). Therefore, participants’ individual stories and varied realities around a specific phenomenon can be understood by more than just the researcher (Patton, 2015). This story collection is much more intensive in terms of time and difficulty,

but it provides a deeper, more complete learning (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Furthermore, the teachers' stories offer a wealth of insight into a pervasive problem within education. A complete narratology (offering more context and personalization in participants' stories) can remove distance and further serve to impact the reader's knowledge (Patton, 2015).

The role of the researcher is integral in narrative inquiry, however because I used heuristic research the role was a blend of many ideas from both camps. Often, when a researcher is narrow in her understandings of the complexity of a researchers' roles, chaos and confusion abound (Grbich, 2004). After introducing heuristic inquiry, I will explain how I saw my role as a heuristic, narrative researcher.

Heuristic Research

Bach (2002) provided the etymology of the word "heuristic" as one related to the Greek word "Eureka," which embodies the joy a person feels and exclaims when she has discovered something new. Heuristic inquiry was developed by Moustakas during the 1950s as a method to systematically study the phenomena of loneliness, which he and his participants suffered from (Bach, 2002). Moustakas labored alone to detail his experiences with the phenomenon to understand it from his own perspective, first. He then went on to refine his understandings of the phenomenon through others' experiences. During heuristic research, the researcher works to gain personal understandings with the topic, as well as to examine the phenomena with participants (called co-researchers) (Bach, 2002). Dr. Moustakas wrote, "Our most significant awarenesses are developed from our own internal searches and from our attunement and empathic understandings of others" (1990, p. 26).

Uncovering these awarenesses often leads to the inward feeling and outward exclamation of “eureka!” This declaration guides the researcher through her six concepts and six phases of heuristic inquiry.

Heuristic research encircles a researcher’s personal experiences with a phenomenon and her desire to understand the phenomenon completely. There is a deep and probing examination of the researchers’ personal constructions of experiences, histories and knowledge of the phenomena that moves to an examination of how others experience the same phenomena (Bach, 2002). According to Moustakas (2001), heuristic research “engages one’s total self and evokes a personal and passionate involvement and active participation in the process.... It is illuminated through careful descriptions, illustrations, metaphors, poetry, dialogue, and other creative renderings rather than by measurements, ratings, or scores” (p. 265).

In an article for the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, Telles (2000) recounted how heuristic research methods allowed him to blend not only his personal experiences, but also various research theories and methods. This bricolage approach allowed for a personal and professional synthesis of meaning, and it wove together a layered, legitimate approach to understanding the phenomena in question. Sharing the intense experience of trust making through culturally relevant teaching trainings allowed me to examine my own experiences while also examining others’ (Patton, 2015). Moustakas’ clearly defined six phases of heuristic research (initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis) lighted the path forward (1990). Each phase will be discussed further in this chapter.

Examining the phenomenon of trust forced me to rigorously examine my own thoughts and biases while allowing me to apply the best fit for the research participants (Creswell and Poth, 2018). This intentional, personal puzzlement freed me from the entanglements of presuppositions, so I could better listen to and learn from my participants' stories. As Charmaz wrote in Denzin and Giardina, "unearned trust elicits silence, not stories of lived experience" (2016, p. 45). The inquiry methods of this study reinforced not repressed openness.

Role of the Researcher

The traditional omniscient, all-powerful role of the researcher no longer exists in this postmodern time. In an attempt to focus attention on participants' voices and stories, authors' voices are now decentered. If the researcher was also a subject, traditionally their voice was viewed as one of truth, fueled by academic knowledge and participants' stories (Grbich, 2004).

The role of the narrative researcher who conducts research in a school is one where the boundaries between researcher and subjects range from blurred to barely perceptible (Xu & Connelly, 2010). Within school-based research, Xu and Connelly (2010) clarified that the researcher has only two tasks: "experiencing the experience and thinking narratively" (p. 355). The researchers went on to describe researchers who participated in "life spaces," or unique worlds where the researcher may not understand everything, ever (p. 356). These spaces are comprised of myriad school, community, and countless other social norms that bend and change the story of the research, the researchers and the participants, alike. Much like the metaphorical parade that Clandinin and Connelly (1998) used to elucidate the shifting

landscape of lived experiences, understanding and accessing the life space is dependent on the researcher knowing herself, her entry point to the context, and her fluid surroundings. The researcher must also work through personal initial engagement, incubation, and illumination phases of heuristic research while traversing the collaborative narrative relationships (Moustakas, 1990).

Grbich (2004) revealed how social research often places minefields in the path of the researcher, if she does not understand the complexities of herself and the self's navigation of experiences. Grbich (2004) eloquently explained that the self is the "transitional compilation of an individual's internal and external conversations both past and present, of this person's desires, fantasies, wishes, interactions, and social and cultural values and understandings acquired and continually being adapted and adjusted in a range of contexts" (p. 69). The researcher's self is in constant flux, ebbing and flowing with multiple social contexts, past experiences, and future possibilities, so the role of the researcher is as well. Xu and Connelly (2010) argued that a researcher's personal experiences are equally and potentially dangerous and powerful. A researcher must be willing to wrestle with tension and find a balance between her understanding and others'.

To approach issues of subjectivity, Grbich (2004) suggested researchers carefully examine nodal points – places where the "body and psyche are seen as interacting and impacting upon each other" - like gender expression, diet and workout experiences or even tattoos. These nodal points are places where the self's reaction to a variety of social, political and economic contexts become visible to others (Grbich, 2004). As a researcher, I considered my own nodal points (my weight, my choice of natural hair style – that is blended with colors

that do not exist naturally, my own gender expression and body modifications), and I worked continuously to examine how these nodes lend my selves access to myself and others. Not carefully considering nodal points or opportunities to access the shared lived spaces can be a barrier to fully storying the research and should be addressed reflexively (Xu & Connelly, 2010).

Reflexivity, the inner interrogatory process is critical to the role of the researcher because it replaces objectivity (Grbich, 2004). Bach (2002) distinguished heuristic researchers as those who are deeply intuitive, committed to the juxtaposition between their own experiences and others' and, they are "respectful of their own processing styles" (p. 99). I plan to keep a journal of my own thoughts and feelings to clarify my ideas. This will be no cheesy diary of hopes and wishes. In an article on autoethnography, Carolyn Ellis (2015) expressed the depth of reflexivity needed for researchers to truly evoke their vulnerable selves. She wrote,

““Oh, it’s amazingly difficult. It’s certainly not something that most people can do well. Most social scientists don’t write well enough to carry it off. Or they’re not sufficiently introspective about their feelings or motives or the contradictions they experience. Ironically, many aren’t observant enough of the world around them. The self-questioning autoethnography demands is extremely difficult. So is confronting things about yourself that are less than flattering. Believe me, honest autoethnographic exploration generates a lot of fears and self-doubts—and emotional pain. Just when you think you can’t stand the pain anymore, well that’s when the real work has only begun. Then there’s the vulnerability of revealing yourself, not being able to take back what you’ve written or having any control over how readers interpret it. It’s hard not to feel your life is being critiqued as well as your work. It can be humiliating. And the ethical issues,’ I warn, ‘just wait until you’re writing about family members and loved ones who are part of your story.’” (p. 672)

This reflexive self helped elicit vulnerable and real stories from coresearchers, as well as helped elucidate the heuristic, author-as-participant-in-the-group role (Berry, 2016; Grbich, 2004; Moustakas, 1990).

Berry (2016) warned narrative and heuristic researchers to be careful of overstepping. Instead of going native, some researchers project their beliefs on their co-researchers, and then attempt to save co-researchers from themselves. Xu and Connelly (2010) also asked researchers to find a balance between narcissistic preaching, and personally detached sterile theory. Paying attention to the social power structures at work within each life space requires researchers to not only scrutinize social, physical and contextual power relationships but to consider how those structures affect the vulnerability and truthfulness of the participants' stories (Grbich, 2004; Xu & Connelly, 2010). Thoroughly examining the context of the study is a first step.

Context

Jordan Jewell School District is a small Midwest public-school district surrounded by two of the largest school districts in the state. The district hosts approximately 4000 students from pre-school through twelfth grade. It has one middle and one high school. Students are in school buildings with their whole graduating class cohort from sixth through twelfth grade; this whole cohort grouping creates a deep sense of unity in the graduating classes. Unfortunately, if a cohort has weak school leadership or teachers weak in instructional practices, then typically the vast majority of the students are affected.

Jordan Jewell is a diverse community where 11% of its students are African American, 44% are Hispanic, and 38% are white/non-Hispanic. Slightly over 84% of Jordan

Jewell's students qualify for free or reduced priced lunches. One in four students are identified as English Language Learners (State Department of Education, 2019).

Jordan Jewell High School (JJHS) serves 1143 students and its demographic numbers are consistent with the district's as a whole. The high school's mission is "Empowering students to be self-motivated learners within a diverse society" (State Department of Education, 2019). The school emphasizes meeting students' social and emotional needs to promote student learning through a whole-school structure called Ci3T. Research on meeting students social, behavioral, and academic needs with an integrated and comprehensive system of tiered supports is impressive (Lane, 2016). All JJHS faculty participate in professional development, quarterly student-data assessments, observations and self-evaluations to ensure fidelity to the system as well as to create, revise and implement research-proven student supports specific to JJHS' students' needs.

Jordan Jewell High certified faculty is numbered at 65; six percent of JJHS' faculty are people of color. There are only two African American teachers and two Latina teachers. Twenty-five percent of teachers are in their first five years of teaching, 40% have between five to fifteen years, and 34% have fifteen plus years in education.

For the last five years, JJHS has participated in the 5Essentials survey. During the 1990s, Bryk and Schneider (2002) worked in Chicago Public Schools to develop an evidence-based survey designed to focus on improvement in schools. This research became known as the 5Essentials. Their seminal work highlighted five components necessary for school success: Effective Leaders, Collaborative Teachers, Involved Families, Supportive Environment and Ambitious Instruction. These ideas were built upon by the University of

Chicago Consortium on School Research's twenty plus years of national data (UChicago Impact, 2018). Schools strong in at least three of the five essentials for school improvement are ten times more likely to show substantial gains in student learning than schools who are weak in more than three components (UChicago Impact, 2018). Parents, teachers and students take the annual survey and score categories on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Very Strong to Very Weak. All data are compiled to generate a comprehensive look at school improvement, and then they are disaggregated into the five categories for success. Year after year, JJHS scores Weak or Very Weak in all five categories. The school has a recorded history of ineffectiveness; poor instructional leadership, failed reform initiatives and low trust permeate the school.

Sampling Procedures

Maximum variation sampling was used to identify all members of the study. All co-researchers will have voluntarily completed culturally relevant teaching professional learning offered through Jordan Jewell School District. All will be members of JJHS' certified faculty, as well as self-identified White women. Careful attention was given to include educators who vary in their years in education.

Purposeful sampling, according to Tongco (2007) allows the researcher to set specific criteria that is representative of the whole culture being studied. Methods are based on the assumption that the researcher needs to uncover answers to questions from a specific group. Maximum variation allows those criterions to be as different as the co-researchers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The variation criterion was the number of years the teachers have taught. I included two novice teachers (between 0-5 years teaching), four intermediate

teachers (5-15 years of experience teaching), and one veteran teachers (15 plus years of teaching). Of the four intermediate teachers, two had only taught at Jordan Jewell and the other two taught at multiple schools before arriving at JJHS.

This small number of co-researchers allowed for a much deeper analysis; instead of broad knowledge, I evaluated and chronicled conclusions with what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call “rich, thick” detail. This type of description made known the cultural and social relationships and patterns within the context of the study’s setting.

This study aimed to gather stories around teacher-to-teacher trust as the educators underwent culturally relevant teaching professional development. The teachers’ voices provided a wealth of information into, if, and how trust is built within challenging conditions like a school history of failed reform initiatives, shifting demographics, and weak collegial relationships.

Data Sources

Richardson (1997) set forth the collection and analysis of multiple data sources with the metaphorically visual term, crystallization, or “a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. Ingeniously, we know there is always more to know” (p. 934). Ellingson (2009) depicted crystallization of data as pieces of a puzzle, all complementary to each other and yet never capable of depicting the whole image. My study made use of many genres of data to encroach upon faceted understandings. In the following section, I will discuss anticipated sources of data, how each source was collected, and how all were managed.

Documents

Documents provide data sources, while unobtrusively capturing participants' lived experiences surrounding the studied phenomenon. These data are, "specific details" and they "are useful clues to understanding your subjects' world" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 157). Documents fall into three main categories, personal, official and popular culture. Each category has many examples of document types, each with its own "rich descriptions" generated from what "the people who produced the materials think about their world" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 133). Documents offer data from unique vantage points because the researcher interacts with the specific document and not an individual. Often, documents can reveal information about the context of the study and its participants, long before the study began (Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) described the plethora of artifacts that can be considered for document analysis, while Clandinin and Connelly (2000) resisted offering a long list of documents to be considered.

Using researcher-created field texts and gathering documents (or photos of events that can be considered documentation) lead the researcher to an abundance of "imaginative possibilities" for document collection (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 116). Because field texts and documents can be gathered plentifully, researchers should not only collect documents that they believe will offer a look into the research questions at hand, but researchers must be open to unintended paths of inquiry. Narrative inquirers must consider not only their position within the research collection, but also that of the document's position in the three-dimensional narrative space. Evaluating documents through the narrative space allows researchers to sift through collected artifacts for those most relevant to the research

questions, and it allows the researcher to consider each document as uniquely situated within the research story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Besides offering a wealth of data, documents provide information that they researcher may not be able to gather through observation, alone. When combined with other sources of data collection, documents can also aid in crystallization of data (Borkan, 1999; Patton, 1999). This method of data collection does not allow a participant to omit, forget, or lie; all are inherent challenges when interviewing or observing for data collection (Patton, 2015).

Artifacts

“Artifacts have stories – origins, histories, moments, reasons -- about how they were collected, created, inherited, and/or purchased (Saldana & Omasta, 2018, p. 74). In her seminal work, Gillian Rose (2007) described analyzing visual artifacts with a critical approach that “takes images seriously,” considers the researcher’s own way of understanding the image, and “thinks about the social conditions and effects of visual objects” (p. 12). These considerations allowed for a reading of the two artifacts provided. The readings were then coded with descriptive codes, that fed the interpretive codes and were then organized thematically.

Personal Materials

I requested that participants bring documents they found significant, and that they believed help them answer the interview questions or tell their stories. I anticipated the participants would rely on documents associated with the culturally relevant teaching professional learning sessions: journal entries, *Me and White Supremacy* (Saad, 2018) writing prompt responses, or perhaps annotated articles that we read and discussed together.

Precisely because I left interpretation of the word “significant” to the co-researchers, none of the document types I expected were gathered. Participants submitted email correspondence, and many Facebook posts. Posts and emails were copied, pasted and saved as Word documents.

5Essentials Survey

For half a decade, Jordan Jewell school district has participated in the 5Essentials survey. When schools score weak in three or more of the five essentials, principals must decide which issues to address first. This is perhaps the most challenging because the five essentials are not mutually exclusive of each other. Bryk and Schneider (2002) clarified each component’s interdependence as dynamic and complex, and it is impossible to address one component without addressing the others. However, “the most powerful relationships found in our data are associated with relational trust and how it operates as both a lubricant for organizational change and a moral resource for sustaining the hard work of local school improvement” (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). All years of JJHS’ 5Essentials survey results were examined to provide accurate contextual data, and as a reference for developing interview protocols. These data formed another piece of the trust puzzle.

Field Notes

Field notes are those that the researcher makes describing events, observations and conversations. They also contain ideas about the researcher’s own feelings, reflections, reactions and tentative understandings (Patton, 2015). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) clarified that a researcher’s field notes may slip into an autobiographical story, which may

turn into a journal and then transform again into a list or different form of notetaking. They recommended considering any field text as one where the researcher not only chronicles events, but also riddles through the possible meanings of the events. Patton (2015) offered helpful advice; he suggested researchers be very intentional about taking field notes, so notation does not interfere with participation or observations. He also recommended researchers “*write promptly*, to complete field notes as soon and as often as physically and programmatically possible” (Patton, 2015, p. 389). I definitely made use of field notes throughout the study.

Interviews

Interviews provide data sources while helping a researcher examine the heart of a participant’s lived experiences (Patton, 2015). Despite many varieties and purposes of everyday interviews, qualitative interviews always rest upon a single purpose: to understand how a participant makes sense of her experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Interviews give insight to a participant’s own thoughts and meaning making around an experience and access to these internal processes that cannot be met through observation, alone. This method of data collection does allow a participant to omit, forget, or lie, however a skilled researcher builds rapport with participants to ensure honesty, and as mentioned, crystallization increases data reliability (Patton, 2015).

I have worked in this suburban school district for 16 years, beginning as a Paraprofessional, then substitute teacher, English 9 teacher, and librarian. Currently, I work as a Secondary-Level Instructional Coach. These varied positions have provided many opportunities for relationship building across the district. I also live in-district, and my

daughter is enrolled at JJHS. These factors provide additional layers of entrenchment, and many professional relationships have become personal. I hoped that these relationships would provide opportunities for genuine, sincere and frank interview responses, and I was pleasantly surprised that they did.

Interviews are organized into three main categories, structured, semi-structured and informal (Merriam, 1998). Each category asks interviewees questions with varied levels of flexibility. Structured interviews feature predetermined questions, and the same questions are asked to all participants, in the same order. Semi-structured interviews are more flexible; they allow the researcher to focus the structured questions on specific topics for all participants, but the researcher is allowed follow-up or additional, impromptu, probing questions. The informal interview may not have any predetermined questions but rather topics for exploration. DeMarrais (2004) reminded researchers that one interview type is not better than another, as long as the interview produces rich data generated from what “the people who produced the materials think about their world” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 133).

Semi-structured Interviews

Questions surrounding trust between teachers and how trust functions in our school will be loosely generated from the proposed research question: What are the stories teachers tell of teacher-to-teacher trust when asked to participate in culturally relevant teaching professional development? I used a semi-structured interview structure because Clandinin and Huber (2010) described the difficulty narrative researchers face when trying to capture a complete story with an inflexible set of questions. The authors noted that

most semi-structured interviews “often turn into a form of a conversation” (p. 110). Moustakas (1990) also recommended a “conversational interview” to be “most consistent with heuristic exploration and search for meaning” (p. 47). The first interview focused on gathering participant background information. Participants were formally interviewed about their experiences with trust twice, and the fourth interview was scheduled to confirm transcripts and in case corrections needed to be made. Many informal conversations took place once the interviews concluded for member checks.

Clandinin and Huber (2010) reminded researchers conducting narrative inquiry of the “need to be attentive to the features of the discourse communities where research texts are shared so that the lives represented are respected” (p. 11). Assuring this respectful sharing requires that I establish respectful relationships with participants and create environments that support and nurture this exchange. I planned to conduct these detailed interviews individually with participants in a local library’s study rooms because they were comfortable, private, nearby, and removed from the site of Jordan Jewell High School. While I did not conduct official observations, I did keep detailed field notes during and after interviews. Observations of body language, voice inflection and eye gaze when noted during in-person interviews are statistically accurate cues to the participant’s feelings (Ekman, 1964).

Data Analysis

Atieno (2009) defined qualitative data analysis as “methodological congruence” (p. 15), where methods affect the very way researchers think about collecting, analyzing and presenting data. This methodological congruence is not an inflexible set of rules, but rather it is a mashup of research techniques and strategies that are used to understand the phenomena

in question. This proposed study followed both Connelly and Clandinin's (1990b) narrative inquiry methods and Moustakas' (1990) heuristic inquiry methods. By blending both heuristic and narrative techniques, I was able to have a better understanding of teacher-to-teacher trust.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquirers interrogate the labyrinthian relationships between and within phenomena. This is accomplished by considering the participants' and researcher's perspectives in three commonplaces: temporality (the past, present and future beliefs around the phenomena), sociality (the cultural, political, and institutional social conditions that envelope), and place (the settings affecting the phenomena) (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Participants' stories are traversed in all three commonplaces to allow examination of the complex nature of each participant's story, and puzzle through "relational composition of people's lived experiences both inside and outside of an inquiry and, as well, to imagine the future possibilities of these lives" (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). The researcher is not outside of these spaces, rather she is a factor in relation to all (Clandinin et al., 2009).

Commonplaces

Clandinin, Murphy, Huber and Orr (2009) represented narrative research as a "puzzling," where "knowledge landscapes" of participants are constantly evolving, relational and tension filled (p. 82). Examining data through the three commonplaces helps researchers traverse the embedded tensions. The first commonplace is Temporality. This convention asks that researchers consider the phenomenon in the past, present and future of both the participants' and her own life (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Place, the

second commonplace considers the settings of each story. Each story may feature one setting, or it may feature multiple settings. Settings may be hypothetical, transcendental, or veritable, and all are related temporally (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000).

The final commonplace is Sociality. Sociality encourages the researcher to attend to the researcher's and participants' social and personal conditions. These may include "the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions," as well as the researcher's relationship with the participants (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). Built within each social construction is a power dynamic that must also be addressed. These ideas undergird each participant's story, and each story reflects "not only culture, ideology and socialization, they also provide insights to the political and historical climates impacting the storyteller's lives- like stones dropped into the water, the ripples reach out in ever-increasing circles" (Grbich, 2013, p. 221).

Coding Data

Once stories are collected, transcribed interviews will be coded through descriptive and interpretive coding processes. Coding storytellers' interviews allowed me to analyze and reshape my developing thoughts. After multiple readings, reoccurring and emergent ideas were noted. These formed many descriptive codes. Categorizing the descriptive codes into more complex categories formed interpretive codes (Miles et al., 2020). These also followed the same process of moving from specific to broad, and they supported the overarching themes.

Restorying

Once themes were identified, began to weave reoccurring ideas into narratives. Kim (2015) categorized the process of narrative data analysis as “flirtation:” the researcher works to stay engaged, curious, surprised, makes time for new or uncommon ideas and “plays with new ideas without letting those ideas be influenced by our wishes” (Kim, 2015, p. 187).

Working with the commonplaces in mind, Clandinin and Huber (2010) explained that thinking about creating a narrative,

in this way highlights the shifting, changing, personal and social nature of the phenomenon under study. Thinking narratively about a phenomenon challenges the dominant story of phenomenon as fixed and unchanging throughout an inquiry. Thinking narratively also influences the living of a narrative inquiry. (p.9)

This restorying is an important part of narratology (Patton, 2015). The thematic categories are a combination of emic (derived from the participants) and substantive (derived from the researchers’ understandings) (Maxwell, 2013). This new retelling offers “essential ways to communicate to readers how the social action... witnessed and synthesized unfolded and flowed through time” (Miles et al., 2020, p. 83).

Heuristic Inquiry

In heuristic inquiry, “discovery comes from being wide open to the thing itself, a recognition that one must relinquish control and be tumbled about with the newness and drama of a searching focus, asking questions about phenomena that disturb and challenge” (Patton, 2015, p. 119). Trust, along with Whiteness and race are all real and socially constructed, lending themselves to personal experiences that connect to the greater social context in which they operate (Maxwell, 2013). Due to the unpredictability of my and other participants’ reactions to trainings, and the acutely sensitive and emotionally charged nature

of examining culture to look at trust, the intensity of the shared experiences epitomize heuristic research (Patton, 2015).

Six Concepts

There are six concepts that allow the heuristic researcher to gain deeper understanding of the studied topic (Moustakas, 1990). They are indwelling, tacit knowing, intuition, self-dialogue, focusing, and the internal frame of reference. Indwelling requires the researcher to look inside herself to discover what she already knows and believes about the phenomenon. Tacit knowing asks the researcher to delve into how she knows what she knows about the topic. Although next in the sequence, intuition is a link between indwelling and tacit knowing. Intuition is “knowing independent of reason or logic” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 23). Intuition is the hunches or inklings that help a researcher get to a discovery. The researcher then enters into the process of self-dialogue. This allows the researcher to speak to herself about her own experiences with the phenomenon. Focusing gives the researcher permission to clear “an inner space, giving sustained attention to the question being explored, and being able to listen to what calls from within” (Bach, 2002, p. 94). Finally, the internal frame of reference is the personal, foundational scaffolding that supports all heuristic research.

Six Phases

Throughout data analysis, the researcher works through six phases: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis. Like the six concepts, the six phases do not have to be accomplished in order, or one at a time.

Unlike the six concepts, the six phases do have a task attached to each step of the process. Additionally, researchers complete the six concepts as they participate in the six phases.

Initial engagement asks the researcher to identify a “topic, theme, problem, or question that represents a critical interest” within her life (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27). Once the passionate topic is identified, immersion into the topic occurs. The researcher contemplates all that is known about the topic in question until she “lives the question” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). Incubation allows the researcher to remove herself from the intensity of the research so intuitive and tacit understandings can propagate. Typically, the researcher, fluent in her data sources’ fragments will begin to develop ah-ha moments (like those eureka revelations Bach (2002) told researchers to look forward to). Once the understandings are produced, illumination takes place. The researcher then moves to the explication phase, where she considers the data from herself and her co-researchers' perspectives. All data sources are coded, moving from First Cycle to Second Cycle coding in the illumination and explications phases of heuristic inquiry.

Descriptive codes give way to patterns of interpretive codes which build to more inclusive thematic data labels (Miles et al., 2020). Last, the researcher uses creative synthesis to present the total of all knowledge gleaned from the study in a method that is fresh and new. In this proposed study, this is the phase where all data were restoried using the elements of narrative analysis. The integration of the three-dimensional narrative analysis (Clandinin & Connelly 2000) and the socio-cultural process of narrative analysis (Grbich, 2013) allowed me to incorporate cultural, ideological, and socialization perspectives

with the restoried data. Since race is an area of contention at Jordan Jewel High School, it was imperative to view the data through a socio-cultural process.

In his conclusions about heuristic inquiry, Bach (2002) passionately wrote,

Heuristic inquiry contains a promise of growth for the researcher; it does not permit the knowledge seeker to remain untouched. Additionally, through rigorous self-analysis and self-reflection, the researcher discovers unknown treasures within. When entering a heuristic inquiry with a question, problem, or concern, the researcher can be sure that the process will yield information that leads to applications to self, others, and life. (p. 100)

Interviews, artifacts, documents and my own field notes and journal entries were also analyzed with a social-cultural lens (Grbich, 2013). Twice new teacher participants expressed concern over sharing their thoughts about colleagues or administration with me, their “boss.” I was quick to explain I am no one’s boss. However, I did not consider that this imbalance of power “landmine” (Grbich, 2004, p.69) would explode into our field of research. In both cases, I reiterated the measures I was taking to ensure confidentiality, and that I would never casually share their information with anyone. I also reminded both participants to only share what they were comfortable sharing. Both co-researchers nervously laughed through the awkwardness and leaned into open dialogue about their colleagues.

For these very reasons, I used heuristic inquiry to examine the subject of teacher-to-teacher trust during culturally relevant teaching professional learning. Race, its place in my school, and my faculty’s ability to collaborate effectively affect my students, my neighbors, my daughter, and my whole community equal to the amount they affect my personal life. Like Bach (2002) stated, I was passionate and eager to examine this phenomenon in my own life, but I was also ready to discover others’ stories for a more-complete understanding.

Data Management

All data were organized, managed and kept on a password-protected computer. All interviews were recorded with my personal device, transcribed using Weloty Transcription Services, and then checked for accuracy against field notes. The transcription files were also be saved on the personal computer. Documents were uploaded to files on the computer. Of course, all files were backed up to thwart loss of data; they were saved to the Cloud as well as on a personal flash drive. In addition to these safeguards, interview transcriptions were discussed with co-researchers for needed clarifications, additions or alterations. The audio files were destroyed after analyzation. Once the study is complete, all data associated with the study will remain in my locked office for the mandated period of seven years.

Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Questions about reliability and validity exist in all qualitative studies. Patton (1999) narrowed down issues surrounding credibility to three categories: attention to rigorous crystallization methods for gathering and analyzing data, credibility of the researcher, and the researcher's philosophical beliefs in qualitative inquiry's value. Maxwell (2005) cautioned researchers to identify possible threats to reliability and validity; he asked researchers to build strategies to safeguard against these errors. Examining stories of my participants in the proposed study from a holistic perspective reaffirms the interconnectedness of people, their behavior and their environments (Owens & Valesky, 2015).

Issues of objectivity and bias arise when researchers do not build their empathetic neutrality and mindfulness which can present as limitations or weaknesses to the study (Patton, 2015). My reflexivity and mindfulness can create "the opening to empathy,

and [are] intrinsically nonjudgmental” (Patton, 2015, p. 60). This openness coupled with the intentional insertion of “I-Thou” work to shine light on my thoughts; there will be no biases hidden in dark, unexplored corners (Patton, 2015, p. 73). As the researcher, my voice became one of intimacy, as well as skeptic, and most of all the heuristic and narrative methodology allowed me to delve into the experiences and connect with subjects, over and over again (Patton, 2015). I begin this discussion, by first focusing on the limitations or weaknesses that I worked to address throughout the conduct of the study

Limitations

As the researcher, I am the “instrument of inquiry” and I bring my own constructed, unique experiences, passions and views on the world (Patton, 2015, p. 3). The biggest anticipated limitation to the study are my own unconscious biases. As an instrument of inquiry, I may have inadvertently misinterpreted data, or added judgement instead of reporting findings without evaluation. Because of this, the study should be judged with this limit in mind. To combat unconscious personal biases, Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended the researcher ask herself questions while making interpretations of the data that may be marred by biases stemming from the researcher’s background or experiences. They asked researchers what information “did you not expect to find?” What is interesting or unusual? And, “what are the dominate interpretations and what are the alternative notions” (p. 195)? Answering these questions for myself in an ongoing journal was the first step in truthfully reporting findings, being radically open to the participants’ stories, and accessing the study’s data with validity.

This study is also limited by the honesty in the participants' stories. I anticipated that all interviewed teachers would already have a collegial relationship with me that was built on mutual trust and respect. However, the process of undergoing culturally relevant teaching PD and then openly discussing trust with colleagues may have challenged those bonds. To elude possible discomfort, I planned to host interviews off-site in a nearby library study room, and I wanted to offer small conveniences like beverages and snacks. The participants' comfort in the space and with me was imperative to their openness during the interviews. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic, libraries were closed. About a third of the interviews took place in a local café, a third took place in participants' homes and the final third took place virtually. I provided the study's questions, approach and methods with each co-participant. I also reminded all that participation is voluntary, confidential and dropping out at any time would be accepted without judgement from me.

A third limitation to this proposed study is the temporality of the participants' lived stories as well as my own (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Studying any phenomenon in participants' lived experiences requires many deep analyses amid ongoing and ever-changing lives. This fluidity is ever-shaping and changing participants' as well as the researcher's understanding of experiences. To ensure that this is not an issue, Clandinin and Huber (2010) suggested the researcher use a "recursive process among being in the field, composing field texts, drafting and sharing interim research texts and composing research texts" (p. 11). As mentioned, I adhered to Moustakas' (1990) six phases of heuristic inquiry and kept a journal to capture my feelings and thoughts at specific moments in time and as a way of documenting the evolution of my understandings.

Validity

Validity in qualitative research refers to if the study really examines what it intends to; briefly, can the study be viewed as trustworthy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)? Instead of Cho and Trent's (2006) interactive three-part process to establish validity, this study used many techniques to establish trustworthiness.

Crystallization

I made use of triangulation and crystallization of data sources and inquiry methods. The term triangulation (which refers to finding three data sources to corroborate findings) was replaced by crystallization to increase validity (Ellingson, 2009). Crystallization is a method that researchers use to ward against unconscious bias and hasty interpretations of data (Borkan, 1999). Crystallization allows researchers to examine and combine multiple analyses, while bringing forward potential problems, biases, and personal vulnerabilities within the researcher and study (Ellingson, 2009). The deep introspection and layered connections from multiple data sources provided a corroboration and crystallization of findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Specifically, crystallization “combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach” (Richardson, 1997, p. 92).

Thick Rich Description

I provided thick description because qualitative research results are context specific (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Readers must determine for themselves if components of the study's findings apply to their own lives based on well-presented contextual information. Thick rich description works to build the study's trustworthiness (Creswell &

Miller, 2000). Creswell and Miller (2000) explained that researchers must construct a contextualized report with “vivid detail” so, “the readers” have “the feeling that they have experienced, or could experience, the events being described in a study. Thus, credibility is established through the lens of readers who read a narrative account and are transported into a setting or situation” (p. 129). Providing a detailed description of the study’s context, and describing all procedures enhances a study’s trustworthiness, therefore upping its value (Golafshani, 2003).

Peer Debriefing

I discussed data collection, analysis and interpretations and burgeoning conclusions with a critical peer (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This peer was a colleague who was familiar with the phenomenon of trust, the setting of the study, and who understood my own personal biases. I expected this person to push me to confront my biases, help me to see beyond blind spots, and offer sound advice. She was invaluable. Not only did this peer “keep it real” when I needed to dig deeper into my analyses, she was always encouraging and kind.

Member Checks

Finally, I used member checks to share themes and interpretations with the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Clandinin and Huber (2010) explained that in narrative study, member checking is much more than running interview transcripts by participants. Researchers must “engage in negotiation with participants around unfolding threads of experience... in order to compose a more complex account” of the participants’ stories (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 12). Jason Loh (2013) stated, “member *checking* is not member *validation*” (p. 6). Because participants may have a personal agenda, they may

disagree with my own interpretations. Member checking worked to extend my own understandings and the participants' understandings and meanings of their storied experiences.

Bracketing

Bracketing refers to processes researchers undertake to identify “vested interests, personal experience, cultural factors, assumptions, and hunches” that may affect her view of the study’s data (Fischer, 2009, p. 583). I am a constructivist researcher, interested in “pluralistic, interpretive, open-ended, and contextualized (e.g., sensitive to place and situation) perspectives toward reality” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). I understand how sociocultural contexts affect my own and my participants’ stories (Grbich, 2013). Taking time to bracket helped ensure my own personal experiences did not interfere with participants’ storied experiences. Creswell and Miller (2000) proposed disclosing personal beliefs to participants early in the study and then explaining how bracketing helps keep interfering thoughts at bay. Often, I did exactly that. Participants and I discussed my ideas and understandings in comparison to their own.

Reliability

Potential threats to reliability may arise in all studies. Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted, “Since there can be no validity without reliability (and thus no credibility without dependability), a demonstration of the former is sufficient to establish the latter” (p. 316). Even so, there are methods a researcher can take to improve reliability – mainly, adhere to the study’s validity (Golafshani, 2003).

Ethical Considerations

Qualitative researchers should be aware of not only the usual challenges within their research approach, but also be prepared to handle those challenges ethically. Clandinin, Murphy, Huber and Orr (2009) recorded the challenges of negotiating the researcher's position within the context of the participants' lives as tension filled. Charmaz (2016) identified the importance of qualitative research and its position in social justice. If researchers are not prepared to ethically promote and report findings, then researchers will not hold to the moral, honorable challenge of promoting social justice. When teachers share their stories about trusting or not trusting colleagues after attempting conversations about sensitive topics like race, I actively and intentionally worked to remain objective and to ethically report the potentially taboo findings (Clandinin et al., 2009).

Because I work with the study participants at Jordan Jewell High School, confidentiality and privacy are of utmost concern. Providing the type of rich, thick context description that accompanies a dependable study may break down privacy protections. In an effort to protect my school and participants from any unintended harm, pseudonyms were used, and identifying details were changed. These privacy measures were shared with participants to help them feel secure in sharing their truths (Clandinin et al., 2009). Additionally, participation was voluntary. Participants were allowed to back out of the study at any time, without fear. I ensured all participants were aware of these ethical features to offset any potential issues of power or privilege.

After a series of ethical failures in medical research, the US Government commissioned the Belmont Report (Sims, 2010). The report was written to create ethical

conduct philosophies. The panel of experts identified three main principles for research involving human subjects: Respect for all people, beneficence and justice (Sims, 2010). Respect for all persons requires that researchers treat each person as an autonomous individual. Extra care and protections should be given to those with “diminished autonomy” (Sims, 2010, p. 173). Participants need to grant consent after understanding the study and deciding to participate voluntarily. Beneficence refers to considering the study with the risk to participants in mind (Sims, 2010). All participants face some element of risk when speaking the truth; researchers should consider ways to gather data that offer the least amounts of risk. Justice requires the researcher to delve into the costs and benefits affiliated with the study.

These three philosophical principles are known as the “Common Rule,” at universities overseeing research on human subjects. Specifically, at the University of Missouri: Kansas City, I have taken and passed the CITI exam, and I sought approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB approves and oversees all researchers conducting studies with human subjects to ensure ethical dilemmas do not arise. I followed all rules and regulations for ethical practices. Of course, when unforeseen ethical issues arose (such as COVID-19 restrictions), I worked quickly and diligently to seek advice from my department chair.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a rationale for qualitative research in addition to heuristic, and narrative traditions. The major theoretical approaches, techniques and methods associated with heuristic inquiry and narrative inquiry were explained. The study’s design, including

the setting, participant selection, and data sources used were detailed. Data analysis procedures for both heuristic and narrative analysis were elucidated. The chapter concluded with the study's limitations and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Even those texts or archaeological documents which seem the clearest and most accommodating will speak only when they are properly questioned. Marc Bloch, 1953

The purpose of this heuristic narratological study was to understand the role of teacher-to-teacher trust for secondary teachers in a Midwestern school who underwent culturally relevant teaching professional development. The units of analysis were the teachers' perceptions of and stories about teacher-to-teacher trust surrounding the shared experience of culturally relevant teaching professional development.

In the previous chapter, I addressed the need for qualitative research as well as explained heuristic and narrative theoretical traditions used in the study. The overall study design was detailed, including participant selection, and data analysis procedures. Ethical considerations, validity, reliability and limitations concluded the chapter.

Maxwell (2009) called research questions the heart of a study. The questions provide life blood to all components of the study's design. Since the research questions guided all data collection and interpretations, they are included here: What are the stories teachers tell of teacher-to-teacher trust when asked to participate in culturally relevant teaching professional development? This question was explored through three sub questions:

1. How do teachers feel about their colleagues in the PD cohort?

2. How do teachers navigate teacher-to-teacher trust relationships when there is a school history of failed reform initiatives?
3. To what extent do teachers apply strategies learned through the culturally relevant teaching professional development to teacher-to-teacher relationships?

Although the context of the study forced many alterations to the study's design, the heart of the study, the research questions remained.

This chapter begins with a summary of the rationale for qualitative study, heuristic and narrative inquiry, and reviews the general methodology of the study. However, the review is centered within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for the conduct of this study. Next, I present a discussion of the field work phase where emphasis is placed on validity and reliability and developing trust with co-researchers. The discussion is followed by my stance as a heuristic researcher. During field work gathering data changed; participants' and my own mind frame shifted, and all shifted again as we processed the racial and social turmoil of the spring and summer of 2020. There were surprises in findings as well as surprises in my carefully laid out plans. The section reveals these many shifting ideas not in an attempt to skirt the research questions, but rather to shine a light on the imperative impact context had on the research, and the researchers. The chapter then features co-researchers' narratives which integrate all data collected and closes with an inventory of the study's findings by theme and interpretive codes. I answer the research question in Chapter 5.

Qualitative Research within the COVID-19 Environment

This study was conducted in 2020. Originally, I planned a qualitative, heuristic, narrative study of the phenomenon of trust to better understand participants stories as well as my own because I believe true understanding stems from *how* (and not *if*) things work. Qualitative studies ask participants to delve into their own experiences within the many contexts of their lives (Patton, 2015). Narrative inquiry requires viewing experiences through social, temporal, spatial and situational frames (Clandinin, 2016; Grbich, 2013). Heuristic inquiry asks the researcher to reflect upon her own experiences with the phenomenon while being vulnerably open to the myriad possible interpretations that grow from an ever-changing world (Moustakas, 2001). Patton (2015) suggested that heuristic researchers “relinquish control” (p. 119) of what Rossman and Rallis (2017) called “messy” phenomena. If ever there were a time where the world was changing, where participants needed to examine how quickly their varied contexts were reshaping their experiences, and where I as a researcher needed to be incredibly reflective, it has been the truly messy dumpster fire of 2020’s loss of control. A pandemic, racial and social turmoil throughout the nation and the decision that thrust education into virtual spaces all beg that the study’s qualitative perspectives be adhered to, nay – cleaved to - for any sense of true understanding of the phenomena.

I anticipated the professional development would be over well before the study took place. Again, I originally hoped to conduct four face-to-face, in-depth interviews with each participant, while also gathering documents for another look at the layered phenomena of trust between teachers and our culturally relevant teaching professional development cohort. I visualized interviews taking place at the local library where participants and I leisurely

discussed our experiences while sipping iced coffees and eating Cheez-Its. Not only was the in-person 2020 school year cut short by COVID-19; our PD cohort was forced to meet virtually, and later in the summer, the pandemic effected how I conducted interviews.

Almost everything I planned changed. Schools were closed. Districts across the nation scrambled to find ways to get students access to devices, internet, and food with no extra funding. Libraries were closed. There were few places people could safely gather let alone sit and discuss at leisure. I held the majority of the interviews at a local café, and I bought every participant a drink every single time, so we could speak without being asked to leave. Two participants requested we meet at their homes. About a third of my interviews were conducted virtually because participants contracted COVID-19, or they had been exposed to the virus and were in quarantine.

Kozinets (2010) coined the term *netnography* when he described the need to move ethnographic fieldwork to online spaces. I was not certain I would see evidence of trust or how it functioned between teachers, and I was worried that the social media posts would be full of cover stories. Cover stories are those told when a person needs to cover up the true story. Cover stories are essentially lies educators share to conceal their lived stories (Olson & Craig, 2005). Warren (2018) cautioned, “it is critical to remind yourself that what you see is not an accurate picture of reality. ...Remind yourself that it is just a snapshot of their life—and one that they want you to see” (para 12). However, once I began collecting and analyzing, I realized that social media is a powerful microphone for the story a teacher wants to tell. When examined as a component of the multi-faceted lives participants lead,

these netnographic documents served to enhance the brilliance of a crystalized understanding (Ellingson, 2009).

Co-Researchers

All seven participants identify as White women and are employed at Jordan Jewell High School. Because all participants were selected for maximum variation within the professional development cohort and the cohort was only open to educators within the Jordan Jewell school district, I knew each participant from work (before the cohort began, and I got to interact and know each better throughout participation in the cohort). I worked with one participant for sixteen years and others only a year. The culturally relevant PD cohort began in September of 2019 and did not formally end until the last PD day May 2020. However, the virtual cohort began in April (at the request of the district to offer the remaining scheduled PD session virtually) and a dozen members met biweekly until the very end of July. Table 3 offers a quick glance at participants and their identifying information. As a reminder, all participants chose their own pseudonyms. Any identifying details (such as their content areas and children's names) as well as general identifying information (local school districts' names, city or state names, and the names of colleagues) were omitted or changed by me. All changes were made to preserve the overall message without compromising privacy. Participants varied in their years in education, and years at Jordan Jewell High School. Although Cara Waxon was the only participant with a Bachelor's degree, she was taking courses for her Master's during the 2019-2020 school year. She will complete her Master's, December of 2020.

Table 3

Participants

Pseudonym	Education	Years in Education	Years at Jordan Jewell
Lucy Maxwell	Master's	35	33
Teresa Ott	Master's	3	3
Elizabeth Miranda	Master's	16	3
Cara Waxon	Bachelor's	1	1
Jan Smith	Master's	13	3
Laura Collins	Master's	8	8
Jemma Nichols	Master's	8	8

My birthday is May 8th, and I was anticipating my Facebook feed to be full of well-wishers; instead, it was full of share after share of a horrific hate crime. Despite the February killing of Amhaud Arbury the video was not released until May 5th. Many of the PD cohort participants were horrified and asked to meet to process the events. School was out. The official district-sanctioned cohort was over. Many of us needed a place to keep our discussions going. Teachers asked to continue meeting to read and discuss *Multiplication is for White People* by Lisa Delpit (2012) and Emdin’s (2016) *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood ... and the Rest of Y’all, Too*. However, shortly after the meeting to decide what our summer should entail, George Floyd was killed. Then news of Breonna Taylor’s March 13th murder was everywhere.

The world’s pandemic forced us all to stay home and pay attention. The reactions of our friends, family and coworkers on social media demanded we address at least our position on these events. Anti-racist posts, resources, TV programs, blogs and radio shows exploded into our lives. Sesame Street aired *Elmo’s Playdate* about the pandemic, and *Coming*

Together: Standing Up to Racism across all WarnerMedia networks (CNN, HBO, HBO Latino, TBS, and Cartoon Network to name a few), so parents could discuss the world's events with small children in appropriate ways (Chaet, 2020; Prior, 2020). My own teenage daughter organized and led a local BLM march. I wrote in my journal, *The world is on fire and all I can do is watch. At least the cohort offers a group of people who I can lean on for support* (Reflective journal, June 10, 2020). Five of the seven co-researchers opted to continue meeting with the virtual cohort; Teresa Ott and Lucy Maxwell did not participate. I now turn to a description of the field work that began after the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Field Work

My thoughts were captured in field notes, as well as a personal reflective journal that I began in August of 2019 (when I found out I would be teaching the Culturally Relevant Teaching professional development cohort). This study began with IRB approval in June 23, 2020. I met with each participant for about an hour to an hour and a half once a week for three weeks in July to conduct three rounds of semi-structured interviews. The fourth round of formal interviews took place in August, and they were much shorter because I was confirming statements and transcripts of the previous interviews. Each interview transcript was sent to the participant for review. While my field notes and journals offered concrete time for individual reflection, they also served as a way to look back on my own experiences with the phenomena, and a way to chart tentative understandings over time (Moustakas, 1990). My thoughts were captured in field notes, as well as a personal reflective journal that I began in August of 2019 (when I found out I would be teaching the Culturally Relevant

Teaching professional development cohort). Each co-researcher chose to return to Jordan Jewell (although not all returned in their same roles), so our relationships are ongoing.

Each participant was asked to bring meaningful documents that helped them to answer the provided interview questions. Only one participant had physical items to share. Elizabeth Miranda did not bring documents. Rather, she shared artifacts; dozens of family photos, some greyed and preserved in frames and others in albums covered the dining room table. Most participants referenced their social media posts and emails sent to or chats shared within the PD cohort. I was unprepared for electronic documents, as well as photos. I used my phone to take pictures of Liz's artifacts, and I searched through months of Facebook posts and emails to copy and paste the e-correspondence mentioned into documents I could save for later analysis.

Data Analysis

Over the course of three months I examined documents, artifacts, interview transcripts and field notes from JJHS' teacher-participants. I interviewed each of the seven teachers about their experiences four times. Collecting stories of trust through multiple data sources allowed for "interweaving, blending, or otherwise drawing upon more than one genre of" data to form a crystallized, multi-faceted understanding of the phenomena (Ellingson, 2009, p. 11). Cho and Trent (2006) reminded researchers to use a variety of data points to further aid in validity. I now turn to the methods used to ensure validity and reliability.

Ensuring Validity and Reliability of the Data

I used frequent member checks during and after data collection in the study. Not only were all transcripts shared with participants, multiple informal follow-up conversations were

held to validate my understandings of the participants' experiences. Four of the seven co-researchers provided documents, and two provided artifacts of their choosing that helped them tell their stories. I also called participants to double check that I remembered details I neglected to write down in field notes (such as the placement of an artifact in a participant's home). These member checks were essential components of a good narrative analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I also adhered to Moustakas' (1990) six stages of heuristic research: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis; These stages were evident throughout my reflective journal writings.

I called all participants a handful of times to clarify understandings and to ask additional questions. I did not expect to need to do this as often as I did, however most frequently I doubted myself and the relationships I built with the participants. For example, I called Jemma four times in about an hour to ask a variety of clarifying questions, such as, "When you said, 'White ladies' did you mean you and the people in the cohort, or all White lady teachers at Jordan Jewell or all White ladies in the world?" Member checks for interpretation of artifacts and documents were humorous. I wanted to look at the Facebook posts before and after the one Laura submitted as a document, but I could not find the original post. I called Laura to ask when she "schooled that woman on equitable access to college education." She laughed and provided a date. To avoid taking up valuable time, I jumped into my question without pleasantries. I interrupted Liz' dinner to blurt out, "What's the name of your slave-trader ancestor?" Thank goodness Liz is kind and humored my poor manners. She replied with, "Hello, Chaur. How are you?" Beside member checks, all

participants asked to continue discussions for their personal reflection and growth so our future relationships will continue to evolve. We have truly become co-researchers.

Developing Trust with Co-researchers. Attention to issues of validity and reliability aided trust between co-researchers and me. Chase (1996) described the turmoil she felt while writing her co-researchers' stories of vulnerability. She concluded, "narrative research is a contingent and unfolding process" (p. 57). Taking time to develop trust with co-researchers is imperative to the "relational nature of narrative inquiry" (p. 473), and it is that trusting relationship that "resists simple answers to" research questions (Schulz et al., 1997, p. 473). The authors advised researchers to look for moments of vulnerability and silence in co-researchers' statements to gauge their trust relationships. I examined all transcripts for evidence of sacred stories, cover stories, secret stories, and silence to gauge the level of openness and trust between myself and participants (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Crites, 1979; Journell, 2017; Olson & Craig, 2005). Anytime participants admitted mistakes, not knowing something, shared embarrassing or shameful stories, or openly criticized a coworker, administrator or me directly, I made a note of the shared secret story. There were many of these notes for each participant.

Schulz et al. (1997) also suggested the easiest way to build trust was to simply care about the co-researchers. More recently, Jacob and Furgerson (2012) offered the following tips to help establish trust and demonstrate care of co-researchers:

- Begin with easy questions and move toward the more challenging, revealing or controversial as interviews progress.
- Provide co-researchers with the questions ahead of time.
- Remind co-researchers to share only what they are comfortable sharing, and they may refuse to answer questions.
- Do not make the interview too long.

- Conduct interviews where and when it is convenient for the co-researcher.
- Show genuine care and concern for the co-researcher. Use good eye contact and affirming non-verbal behaviors.
- “LISTEN! LISTEN! LISTEN! Seriously, close your mouth and listen!” (p. 9).

I followed these suggestions (and others) to provide comfortable interview experiences.

Despite being nervous about establishing trust all participants shared secret stories before the end of the second interview.

The world’s events of the spring and summer acted as a catalyst for moving from cover stories to secret stories. Cover stories are those that teachers share when their beliefs or praxis are too far removed from what is demanded by society (Olson & Craig, 2005). The teachers began sharing their mistakes, missteps and mishaps relating to teaching diverse students. Obviously, strong trust existed between me and the participants in the virtual cohort, as well as between participants and I because they frequently shared stories that began with the phrases, “I’ve never said this before,” and “I’m so uncomfortable with this but I need to share it so I can make sense of it...” Within the cohort, members shared heart-wrenching questions about their own practices – everything from how to handle White students wanting to get braids, to being called racist by students, to not knowing what to do with coworkers whose practices were problematic. There were tears. There were a few snarky retorts. There was questioning and conversation and grace. I never anticipated how much I would benefit from the co-researchers’ ongoing conversations about becoming culturally relevant teachers. In my journal I wrote,

Good LAWD! I didn’t mean to piss Jemma off. At all. I was just asking a question; did she think Cara should attend the [student’s] funeral with her husband because he was a man or a Black man? I wasn’t actively trying to accuse her of racism or sexism. I can see now why she got upset; I’d be pissed if someone challenged me,

especially when my intentions were good. I'm sure she only was thinking of Cara's safety; it is a shady part of town. But dang. Seriously didn't know she was mad at me. And that it happened in front of everyone [in the cohort]? Glad she came back and explained that she was angry and why. That shows some serious trust – between she and I and her and the other cohort peeps. Also, glad we can talk about her intentions and the accidental ways we are furthering the sexist/racist status quo. I didn't expect any of this. (June 12, 2020).

I also did not expect their willingness to share secret stories to be the key to unlocking other members' secret stories.

I am so proud of Liz. She shared a story about her background with me that she was obviously scared about sharing. She asked if I hated her at the end of the message. WTF? At first I was like – why would I hate you? But then I thought, if she's asking, I bet she is really worried I won't want to talk to her or be her friend anymore. God. That is awful to have that weight on your shoulders when you're just trying to share a part of yourself with someone. It's not even who she is; She can't control her ancestors any more than I can control mine. Long story short, she sent me the message and then she decided to send it to the whole group. Then days later, Jan messaged the whole group about her own secret story. And [group member] shared in the meeting stuff from her childhood that was so open and raw.... Man, these ladies are amazingly brave. It's like one unlocks her heart and then hands the key to another who does the same. (Reflective journal, May 1, 2020)

These incidents were true to Connelly and Clandinin's (1999) definition of secret stories that explained teachers will not share unless they decide they are safe from judgement and negative consequences. While Liz was the first to step out on the precipice of trust, in true teacher fashion, she modeled for others how it is done. The other participants and cohort members saw how her honesty and vulnerability were received and decided to follow suit.

Maintaining my Stance as a Heuristic Inquirer

As the study evolved, it was important as a heuristic researcher to maintain awareness of my experiences and their connections to the experiences of my co-researchers. Instead of losing the person in the experience to discover the essence of experience (the focus of transcendental phenomenology), I openly explored creative pathways of myself through

discovering meaning that resides within self. The individual is kept whole in heuristic research. I sought to keep this perspective apparent throughout my field work (Kenny, 2012; Moustakas, 1990, 1994; Patton, 2015; Sela-Smith, 2002).

In an article for the “International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education,” Telles (2000) wrote that heuristic research methods allowed him to blend not only his personal experiences, but also various research theories and methods. This bricolage approach allowed for a personal and professional synthesis of meaning, and it wove together a layered, legitimate approach to understanding the phenomena in question. Sharing the intense experience of trust making through CRT trainings allowed me to examine my own experiences while also examining others’ (Patton, 2015). Table 4 shows a general timeline of the study with Moustakas’ (1990) stages of heuristic research.

Table 4

Timeline of Study Events with Heuristic Phases

		Incubation & Illumination - Journal Writing, Bracketing					Explication & Creative Synthesis - Journal Writing, Bracketing, Data Analysis, Thematic Coding, Restorying		
Initial Engagement - Journal Writing, Solidification of Research Questions		Immersion -Journal Writing, Bracketing, Data Collection, Field Notes							
					Interview #3 7/27-29				
166		Last District Cohort Virtual PD 4/10			Interview #2 7/14-15				
PD Cohort Begins 9/23	School Closed Due to COVID 3/13	Weekly Virtual Meetings Begin 4/7	BiWeek Virtual Meetings Begin	IRB Approval 6/23	Interview #1 7/6-10	Interview #4 8/21			
Sep-19	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20

Note. Month and year appear at the bottom of the timeline. Key events are organized by date in the middle of the table. Stages of

heuristic research and their accompanying actions are included in the top portion of the table.

Moustakas' (1990) six stages of heuristic research: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis were all followed, although not chronologically and not with clear separation between the stages. Initial engagement brought to the forefront emotional connections to my research question, shaped by earlier experiences with the phenomenon, long before the research was undertaken. I often returned to the tacit knowing of this phase throughout the research. While the first type of knowing involves formal systemic language, tacit knowing is more personal, subjective, and connected to context – it is implicit knowing (Kenny, 2012). I had moments of illumination while mowing the backyard, which led me back to incubation and then to explication. I did a lot of bracketing as I interacted with my data (Fischer, 2009). My notes reflected literal brackets and clouds around my personal feelings and thoughts. Arrows, exclamation points and stars decorated all physical copies of data. I also wrote poetry and journal entries to process some of the feelings I experienced while working with the data.

True to 2020's *modus operandi*, there were quite a few surprises in the study. The one overarching question that guided the study (what are the stories teachers tell of teacher-to-teacher trust when asked to participate in culturally relevant teaching professional development?) remained unchanged, however there were many surprises due to COVID-19 restrictions. I showed up to the only open library in town to discover they removed tables and chairs so patrons would be encouraged to grab books and go. Everything from where and how to conduct interviews changed. I feared maintaining a social distance of six feet, while sometimes wearing a mask would interfere with the level of intimacy I hoped to create in the interviews. I believe the context gave participants and I a starting place for discussion, and

we returned to the initial engagement phase of heuristic inquiry to examine new tacit knowledge, situated by intuition. As co-researchers, we were definitely going through the experiences together.

There were also surprises in topics co-researchers brought up during our conversations and in their interpretations of ideas. We became entangled with the illumination phase that occurs at “that moment when there is a breakthrough into conscious awareness of wholes and clustered wholes that form into themes inherent in the question” (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 67). My first round of interviews asked questions about participants’ childhoods and backgrounds. Almost every participant had a parent who was an alcoholic and/or who struggled with serious mental illness. Never did I anticipate having an alcoholic parent in common with participants. Most participants felt school was a place they were safe to be themselves, so they liked school. I felt school was safe because it was predictable and not home where a violent father ruled; I never felt confident enough to be myself at school. Additionally, I did not expect participants to discuss the concept of change. Perhaps the widely visible social injustice and racial unrest in 2020 made action and change intricately tied to a willingness to discuss culturally relevant practices.

Almost all participants were terrified of saying the wrong thing and accidentally causing hurt to others. What I considered causing offense (and not that big of a deal), all participants thought of as hurting others (deeply). When they repeatedly mentioned saying the wrong thing, I believed this to be about committing microaggressions against students, but it was not. Participants were worried about referring to a person as “Black” when they were supposed to say, “African American” or saying, “People of Color” instead of “BIPOC.”

This interpretation of a descriptive code, “*Say Wrong*” was the only time I noticed my perspective as a woman of color radically differing from the White women’s perspectives. Entangled with the illumination phase, where analysis and interpretation occur through the coding process (Miles et al., 2013), I was able to make meaning of the co-researchers’ data coupled with my experiences regarding the phenomenon. In my field notes I expressed frustration that this was how participants were defining causing hurt to another. I wrote, “!!!” and “WTH is happening?!” Later in the evening, I tried to sort through my feelings in my journal.

I don't even know what the hell.... Like – what? Why would that be offensive? I don't care if you call me Black or a POC or African American or whatever. Just don't friggin' call me a nigger. Or treat me like one. Or think I can't do something because I'm 'JUST' a Black girl. Students and people of color do not care what you're calling us. WHO THE HELL CARES when there are people out there being killed in broad daylight? When there are teachers out there not teaching because they think, 'Oh those poor brown babies.' Or 'aww they are poor and have to work at night so who am I to ask them to write an essay when they are tired?' I hate that. Teach. TEACH. For the love of God, teach everyone like they NEED your course to become their best self. Causing offense, hurting students and hurting others is SO much more than mislabeling someone. (Reflective journal, July 10, 2020)

I waited in anticipation for application to occur, for co-researchers to apply the learnings they gained from the cohort within their classrooms and with co-workers. However, our school year was cut short, and the quarantine order forced us to communicate virtually. Their stories of learning and application were rerouted to virtual spaces, compounded by the violence of 2020 and COVID-19. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram were frequently brought up, as were news stories of protests, hate crimes, police brutality, pandemic relief, COVID-19 testing, schools reopening plans and the upcoming political season. This must be taken into consideration especially when examining sub question three: To what extent do teachers

apply strategies learned through the culturally relevant teaching professional development to teacher-to-teacher relationships? At this point, I had entered the explication phase to become fully aware of various levels of meaning. Moustakas (1990) states the purpose of this phase is to “fully examine what has awakened in consciousness, in order to understand its various layers of meaning” (p. 31), with attention to the tacit dimension of phase one. I continued with attention to focusing, indwelling, self-searching, and self-disclosure, elements of the immersion phase to form an understanding of the experience.

I hoped that I would see evidence of trust and culturally relevant practices in the conversations the participants would be having with the teachers in school. There were no opportunities to interact with coworkers over the summer. In a normal year, teachers get super excited to travel to week-long and three-day weekend conferences. Road trips provide time and opportunity for teachers to travel with and talk to their colleagues. Whole-day department PD and new resource trainings usually take place in the summer. Everyone wears shorts and gets to eat catered lunches. Papers for Master’s courses, and planning meetings take place at the neighborhood pools. None of this happened. Instead, the participants told tales of interacting with their families. Family dynamics came into play far more than I could have imagined.

In the previous sections, I provided a summary of and rationale for the study’s major qualitative perspectives, heuristic narrative inquiry, and carefully described how I captured embodied perceptions of the phenomenon, using the phase of heuristic inquiry to keep myself and co-researchers at the center of the process. Through embodied perceptions, the individual comes to know the truth of an abstract entity or event; truth is subjective with

meaning created through the experience of moving through space and across time (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Seven self-identified White female co-researchers who participated in a year-long culturally relevant teaching professional development cohort were selected for maximum variation. Each participant was interviewed four times, and each was asked to provide documents to help tell their stories. The COVID-19 pandemic and national civil unrest altered the contexts of the participants' lived experiences.

In the next section, I reveal the stories of co-researchers, the creative synthesis phase of heuristic inquiry. Sela-Smith (2002) expressed the synthesis phase, which “tells the story that reveals some new whole that has been identified and experienced as a result of this union of the deep-unconscious and the waking consciousness and between the internal and the external” (p. 68). Creativity is the result of the blending of intuition and tacit knowledge. To tell their stories, I introduce the co-researchers with a summative biography, followed by a restoried tale that synthesizes all of their data sources. While some co-researchers provided all three types, artifacts, documents, and interviews, others only had one type of data or had two data sets.

Introducing Co-Researcher Lucy Maxwell

Lucy Maxwell was raised in a small town in the Midwest that she described as predominately white but full of various denominations of Christianity. As the eldest sister in an unstable home, she grew up as the loud, open, brave sibling. She played teacher as a small child, and she decided that she would become a teacher in middle school. Lucy shared that the “hell” of her parents' dissolving marriage allowed her to find safety while avoid going home “by getting involved in all these activities” at school. Her junior year, a movie called

Voices came out. The film featured a young deaf girl who wanted to dance on Broadway. Seeing the main character's experiences at school on the big screen solidified the decision to teach Special Education.

Lucy attended a small state university known for excellent teacher preparation. While on campus she worked as a secretary in the International Student Office, which "opened up a whole, fantastic world" of diversity and thought. After graduation with a double major, she moved to Nogales, a US-Mexico border town in Arizona. Her first years of teaching were spent in an all "Special Education school in the district," teaching PE to students ages 3-22, where 95% of students were Latinex.

She interviewed in a handful of school districts in surrounding suburbs before deciding to take the position offered at Jordan Jewell Junior High. Half-way through the interview process in a neighboring district, Lucy did not like that she was asked to write an essay. She retells, "I looked at her [the interviewer] and I said, 'Let's stop this. I have job offers. I'm going to go to one of them. I know which job I'll accept.'" She's like, "Is it [affluent district]?" I said, "No, it's Jordan Jewell" and she's like, "What? You're going there?" I thought, "Oh, you're a snob."

L-Max (as I began to call her) likes the way the Jordan Jewell school district is centered within a small community, inside the larger city. Having most schools on the "main drag" reminded her of her hometown. Over her 35 years as an educator she has seen district schools open and shut, faculty, superintendents, programs and procedures all come and go. The best part of teaching in one district for 32 years is the heart-felt gratitude she feels at

receiving graduation invitations. A few years ago, L-Max told me she was invited to two graduation parties

where the kids that were graduating, I taught their mothers. And so, when people say teachers don't get the honor they deserve or whatever... When I went to both of those parties, I became the honored guest. The families were ... just so proud I was there. And that I believed in [all of] them. And I thought to myself, 'you don't get that if you change schools.'

Having introduced co-researcher Lucy, I turn to her story. She expresses the joys and challenges of learning how to teach culturally diverse students. To restory Lucy's data into a narrative of her experiences with teacher trust in the culturally relevant cohort, I relied solely on her data from four interview sessions. She did not provide artifacts or documents related to her experiences. As the oldest co-researcher, with 35 years of teaching, this might be due to her comfort level with technology. Lucy told me about conversations she had over Microsoft Teams and impactful artifacts she created in the cohort, but due to the pandemic and not having access to the building she did not have any way to provide these at her interview sessions. Lucy's co-constructed story of her experiences with the culturally relevant cohort follows.

Lucy's Stories

I signed up to participate in the culturally relevant teaching cohort because the year before I participated in a cohort that addressed meeting diverse students' social emotional needs. I felt like we barely scratched the surface, but we "got some good conversations and some good insight to things that you can learn when you listen to another's perspective." I loved the depth of the conversations and I hoped to continue my learning so I can become the

best teacher I can be. Unfortunately, our cohort was so big. It was really hard to connect to other teachers and have deep conversations when there were thirty-some people.

I will say, “it was exciting to see that many people were signed up.” That gave me hope that all the teachers were there for the right reasons – to be their best selves, too. And maybe everyone who signed up understood “that kids come from different cultures and then we have to” use that knowledge to teach students. I believe I was “open to the conversation” about improving my teaching practices. Sometimes, like when our conversations and activities brought up some of the inequities at Jordan Jewell High School, I really didn’t know what to do or say. I still feel like I’m not sure how to address these issues, “besides being open to chang[ing].” It was interesting because I got to “learn so much about” my coworkers. I was also excited by other teachers who were “willing” to “open up,” and let me in so we could work together to meet students’ needs. I was able to see another side of a few people I already knew.

There were a few people in the cohort who reminded me of my little sister. She’s like Peggy from the musical *Hamilton*. You know, how she just pops up to remind everyone, ‘I’m here! I’m a sister, too!’ My sister sometimes rushes to speak, and she’s insensitive or it rubs people the wrong way. In our home, whoever was talking had the power. She’s trying to keep up with my siblings and me. But she doesn’t understand that I am constantly evaluating my own thoughts and actions, so I won’t “have trouble making decisions or speaking my mind” without notice. Those thoughts came from “hours and years of experience” and I have to remind myself that new teachers are often looking for a voice, and they do not see “the internal battle I’ve had” to reach a conclusion.

There were a few times, and this happens a lot in my life, so maybe it is just me, but I had to wonder, “do you ever stop to think how your words might be received?” There are always people who don’t have a filter. I feel like I am always “busy trying to make sure that I’m not offending somebody.” I know I have a strong personality. I also know that “I am a Mama Bear.” Especially when I am defending my kids. “I’m not backing down though, right? That’s what I’ve been hired for.” This is my job. I will always, always fight for my students and what is in their best interest.

I know there have been times where I was full on Mama-Bearing, and I “could have handled the situation better” and not “raised my voice.” But when other teachers don’t do their jobs, I can’t do mine. I don’t feel too bad about the yelling situation. I mean, she told the principal, and he came up and said, ‘I heard you and Ms. So-and-So had an encounter.’” I started crying, and I said, “She told on me?” We worked it all out. I remember him telling me that we were going to help the teacher learn *how* to do her job, because she was really new. So, yeah, I could have handled the situation better, but I’m glad I got mad at her, and that the principal helped us figure out how to help the student. I try to let my “frustration level” with some teachers, or like when their actions say, “this student’s not worth it,” I just use that to fight for what’s right. It is my job.

The first PD session of the year, I was surprised to see two people. One, Peter Prince I’d worked with before, and I was so happy to see him. We sat together at each session. Years ago, we were the only two Jordan Jewell teachers who signed up for a class where we visited prisons all over the state. Instead of riding with everyone in the class to the prisons we rode together. It was awesome. We had time to have some really good conversations about

Jordan Jewell, our students, and our like – personal lives. I missed that in our cohort. There was never time for Peter and I to talk about the activities we were doing in the sessions.

I did get to see more of that deeper side of Peter that I saw on the prison trips, but it happened after the virtual sessions. We would stay on Teams to chat and process. “He expanded my view of him” in those visits. We reached a new level of openness. Just him signing up “reminded me that he is a teacher first.” You know, some people only want to like, profess their content. They don’t care about the individual learners in their classrooms. Not Mr. Prince. He “teaches to the whole child.” He cares about how his students learn, and he has a good heart, “the heart of a teacher.” You know, probably we were open with each other because we had time to talk and we weren’t at school. There is a freedom that comes from leaving the building. “You just never get to share that stuff in the classroom.”

The other person I was surprised to see was Ms. Evelyn Tremble. I mean, she is a great educator. I was just surprised that she would sign up to discuss culturally relevant anything because she is pretty open about her conservative views. She’s the person who always sides with the police. Well, maybe not the ones who killed George Floyd, but “she would never want anyone to say anything negative about officers. She told me that she didn’t agree with a lot of what was being said” in the cohort. Stuff like school is built with predominately middle class White cultural norms, and we should be aware of that. At the time she told me that, “I was thinking, ‘so why are you there?’” I was there to “open my eyes” to things I may not know about our students, or my teaching. “She wants to shut hers. I think she just doesn’t want to see the White privilege thing. Yeah, it’s too close to home. It hurts too much” for her to admit she has been given unfair advantages.

I've spent a lot of time thinking about my relationship with Ms. Tremble. A lot. I don't think that the cohort changed our relationship at all. We both still disagree on almost everything, but our "trust levels are high" because we both want to "fight for students." Before the cohort, I feel like I knew that she was competent, and "the one thing I know about this woman is that she is truly there for the kids and that she supports me" when I am working for my students' best interests. I've been in meetings where you leave "feeling like you've been stomped on." She never makes me feel that way. We've worked together for almost twenty years. We both already know how we feel about White privilege and politics. We can both discuss how and why we feel the ways we do; We can disagree, and it doesn't change how hard we work for our students. Maybe I've always trusted her because she is reliable and competent at work, vulnerable with me and I can be open with her and I never ever feel like she is trying to push her beliefs on me. Or, she is going to speak to me in a condescending way because she thinks she knows better. That is not who she is. "Our trust levels are high." We can always "work together to solve problems. I can always count on her."

I only have one more story to tell about the people in the cohort. There were other faculty members from the high school that I never talked with in the cohort sessions. They were just young, like new teachers. "They're the people who want to always speak up and tell you what they think." They have that passion. But they also "are so worried about being able to admit when they don't know something. Or when they feel like they failed at something in a job." As a veteran teacher and as a woman, I know that "it takes strength to say, 'Oh, I screwed up here. And I need help. And can you help me figure out how to do

this?' But they are still so in their – I-have-to-look-like-I-know-what-I'm-talking-about" stage that they don't realize how much they can still learn. Where does that confidence come from?

This one time, and this teacher wasn't in our Culturally Relevant Teaching cohort, but the new- young teacher part of that story reminded me of him. Once, I had a student who was failing her PE class. I went to the teacher and tried to advocate for what that student needed. I was "just amazed at how quickly" he was open to my ideas, because he was "young," and I didn't know "how many years he'd taught before." Usually, teachers feel threatened when I come in to talk to them because they have to admit there is something that needs improved. I was really surprised "for him to trust me so readily with his classroom."

"We older teachers are viewed as having a fixed [mindset]," or adhering to problematic stereotypes of the past. A few years ago, we had that Meeting Transgender Students' Needs whole-faculty training, and a young teacher rudely told me that "people of my generation didn't know how to work with transgender kids, and that she was highly qualified." I didn't say anything at the time, but you'd think that with her being fresh out of school and raised in these culturally open times, she would have more of a growth mindset – at least about us old fogeys. It was so ironic, because the facilitator of the Transgender Students' Needs training was obviously older than me. And if that young lady thought I was old, and incapable of helping her become a great teacher, what does that say about you, as an instructional coach? You're not new! Neither are the administrators. It's like she's so new she didn't realize that I could probably tell her how I've actually addressed students' needs in

my classroom, and she could share what she knew from her friends or life or whatever, and we could both grow. But, nooooo. I'm just old.

I really do try to focus on “glimmers of hope” after that teacher was rude. Even when I hear about a teacher being negative, I usually just offer “the benefit of the doubt.” I do pay attention to how they behave in faculty meetings and whole-faculty collaboration opportunities, though. Then I can ascertain “if the teacher does not play well with others” or if it “is just” my own misinterpretation. That young teacher who accused me of being narrow-minded “stepped up and did what is right” for students, and she asked me to organize sympathy cards for a faculty member. These glimmers of hope shine through.

But you have to be open. That openness to learn and willingness to improve yourself to become the best teacher you can be is the hallmark of a true teacher. That is why I really enjoyed the cohort. I could tell right away who has a teacher's heart, and I could work on improving my own practices. The topic of culturally relevant teaching is so big. I have just barely “started to scratch the surface.” I know I will be incorporating activities like the Cultural Frame and maybe the bingo with my students; I just haven't quite figured out how to do that virtually.

I hope we get a chance to really make some changes at JJHS. We really need to ... actually. It's not that we don't have opportunities to change at JJHS. “We don't give change a chance.” We've already jumped up to plant a new initiative, and not let it take root before we start planting more programs. Administrators “just assume that it's been planted, it's taken root, and it hasn't. Like they plant it, and they forget about it. And like if you're a new teacher, you don't even have the damn seed.”

Introducing Co-Researcher Teresa Ott

Teresa Ott's early school years were split between Catholic and public schools. She did not understand how her parents' mental health and relationship "tainted" all of her childhood memories until she was "further away from it." Teresa described her grandparents as "unbelievably racist" which led her to believe her parents were "super progressive" until they would make problematic comments while driving through rough parts of Chicago. The time she told her mother she liked a boy named Andre, her mother replied, "He better be French."

Teresa loved playing school with her sister, and in fourth grade all students were paired with a kindergartener for reading. She was elated. Finally, Teresa was going to teach! She excitedly chose a book to read, and on the first day, her kindergarten partner said, "Oh, I was hoping for a pretty one." That comment led her to believe she could "not stand little kids."

Teresa recalled feeling surprised that she and her husband were expecting, because they had never spoken directly about having children. As her daughter Elise grew up, Teresa enjoyed interacting with "E." and her friends. She led a Girl Scout troop. She coached soccer teams. She decided that letting one rude kindergartener ruin her opinion of all children was silly. Once Elise was in school, Teresa looked for a job that matched E.'s schedule. She began attending Masters' teacher certification courses in the evening, while working as a substitute teacher in E.'s elementary school.

After earning her teaching certificate in Secondary Mathematics, Teresa began interviewing in nearby districts. She showed up to interview in an affluent school district on

Valentine's Day. She was overwhelmed by the "stuff that was coming into the office from parents. Flowers and gifts and Starbucks coffee. There were like twenty to thirty kids just in the time I was there coming to get stuff from the office. And I was like, 'Oh, my gosh, I can't imagine.' I don't know. Like, I guess I just don't think I want to deal with those parents. What will happen if a student earns an F on a test? You know, like, right? I don't want to fight those battles. I'd rather fight battles at Jordan Jewell High School." Ms. Ott is in her third year of teaching, all at JJHS.

Although Teresa Ott did not submit any artifacts or documents, she granted permission for me to look through her Facebook page for "whatever might be important." I chose not to make the choice for Teresa, because I believed the identification of an item demonstrated evidence of reflection. I also did not want to impose my beliefs or biases on her documents. At one point in our interviews, Teresa expressed concern about teachers "getting in trouble" because of content posted on social media. The absence of her submission as well as content that may be deemed controversial on her pages lead me to believe her concern for negative consequences kept her silent. Teresa's stories were created from data provided from her four interview sessions.

Teresa's Stories

So, I substituted in an amazing school. It was my daughter Elise's elementary school, so it was close to home, and I was on the same schedule as her. I loved that school, because we all got along so well. I wasn't even a full-time faculty member, but they treated me as an equal. "We could talk about anything. The teachers, we did like a Bible study together. There was a student who passed away, and we all did a prayer group in the mornings." Everyone

was invited, and even though not everyone participated, “nobody complained” that we were praying in a public school. “There was a lot of trust.” I wonder sometimes if we trusted each other because it was smaller, or if it was an elementary school, or if it was just the group of teachers. Jordan Jewell is not like E.’s school.

This one time, in E’s school, the instructional coach was rolling out a new program. It was a really good one, but I can’t remember the details. I just remember him standing up and saying to all the teachers, “If you’re not going to have fidelity to the program, don’t stop progress. Like, get out of the way of change.” I knew then that he really believed in the power of the program to change our school. E’s school and JJHS, they are similar in that there is always something new being started. That’s the case in schools everywhere, I bet. But, he said don’t stand in the way of change, and I loved that. We don’t do that at JJHS.

I think there are lots of ways to meet and collaborate with new people. PLCs, committee meetings, department meetings and our PD cohorts all get me meeting new teachers. My first year I was with my mentor, Ms. Church. She helped me so much. Our PLCs “were amazing. I learned so much about my content and instruction.” I’m not sure if you heard, but E was having some problems at school, too. And my husband was sick. “It was a hard first year.” But Ms. Church, she was always there to support and help me figure out what to do. I appreciate her so much. Then these last few years, my PLC “just wasn’t the same.” It is like a waste of time, because we don’t really talk about anything. JJHS is a hard place to get to know people.

First, my classroom is off in no-man's-land. I am not near any of the people in my department or grade level. I don’t know. “The people I’m surrounded by are not necessarily the people

I'm like." I've only been at Jordan Jewell for a few years, but when you're the new teacher, and you're surrounded by all these negative teachers.... I don't know. We don't have similar philosophies on teaching, students, or anything. I wish I taught upstairs with the rest of the cool teachers. I think I could be "pretty good friends with both the science teachers, and some other teachers" up there. I know they are great teachers. I see how they interact with students. But there is no chance to talk. "It's not like I see them around." I only see the negative Nancys, and I can't let that much negativity into my day. I usually stay in my room during passing periods. In the beginning, I would just leave the conversation; I'm pretty sure those teachers thought I was like.... I just went to my room. I don't know. I just wanted to know, like "Can you *not* be negative for thirty seconds?"

I was excited for the cohort. There isn't anywhere to really discuss or talk about what I'm seeing and thinking in our school. Well, hardly anywhere, really. I don't know. I was worried a little, because I "didn't want to say something stupid, or you know, seem super ignorant or racist, if everybody else knew better than [she] did already." I was pretty sure we were all in the same boat, though. Like, we all wanted to learn.

When I walked into the cohort, I was just trying to sit somewhere safe. Like, by someone I knew. There weren't too many places to sit in the room with all the people who signed up and the flexible seating. I ended up sitting by Karen Addled. We teach the same grade, so I see her at PLCs and meetings. But she and I are not friends. I don't trust her because of a situation that happened the year before. Actually, it was more than one situation. Well, it was a lot of little things, like red flags, and then one big situation that hurt me. So, yeah.

I don't know. Do you remember the Brett Kavanaugh hearings? I was speaking to a substitute in the hallway about the hearing and the vote, and a few students overheard. They were like, "What are you talking about Miss?" These boys, they were rarely engaged, and "they were so into it" they called a few friends over. I explained who was voting and "I put it really simply. I said something like they are voting now, and I want to see how the vote goes. The boys were asking so many questions. I was excited that they were excited, you know? We had a teachable moment. So, we watched the vote. Just the vote! And I explained like representatives and how many there are and like yeas and nays."

Ms. Addled came downstairs to tell me I "needed to watch my back because parents were upset and complained that I let the students watch the Kavanaugh trial and that I was going to get in trouble. But she was like, 'Don't worry. I covered for you.' I don't know. I was so upset because I didn't show them any of the trial. I let them watch the vote and we didn't talk about it." Come to find out from my students that she let them watch the trial in class. For days and days. "She was trying to pin it on me for letting them watch the vote. I didn't know what to say or do. I was freaking out. I don't know. I thought I was gonna lose my job." And I was really upset that "I thought I was doing a good thing; the kids were learning. They're asking questions They were engaged, you know?"

Every time I see her, I think of that. It just stays in the back of my mind. "I doubt she even remembers." Besides, so many students complained about her. "I tried to give her the benefit of the doubt." She was in the same cohort, so she must have wanted to learn like me, to be better about connecting with our students who are like.... And that is great because like I said, the students were always talking about stuff that happened in her class. When the first

student says something negative about a teacher, I don't think anything about it. But after so many saying so many things? I don't know.

Hindsight is twenty-twenty. I should have distrusted her because so many of my students did. She doesn't want what is best for them. Or, maybe I should say, she doesn't ever put aside her own feelings or ideas to make space for theirs. They would come in so upset, and I'd just say, "that sounds pretty awful. You should probably talk to the principal about" Ms. Addled. "They're hurt and another teacher" did it. "Maybe there's a disconnect in [her] brain? Not in a mean way. But, obviously, if you're in the cohort you're trying to be" better, because, you know there's a problem, right? But she never changed.

I think I sat by Ms. Addled most of the meetings we had in person. "I don't remember any conversations that we had that made me go, 'Oh, yeah, you're super awesome' and I can trust you again, or any that made me think, 'that was the most terrible thing you've ever said.'" I don't know. We don't work together often. I mean, we are in the same meetings, but we don't have to collaborate. "She's not mean to me. It's just, I've seen how she's mean to some of my" students. I really wish there was some way to know what to do. I want my students to have good teachers, and I really think she "doesn't know she is not" a good teacher. I don't know, is there some sort of "process" I should be following? It's not my place to tell her. Who is supposed to tell her? I don't know; should I let someone know? I worry about the students who are gonna have her as a teacher.

I've considered "trying to have discussions" with Ms. Addled, but I worried that I'd be like, not "politically correct." I don't know. "I don't know what the process is" for having critical conversations with other teachers, because "some teachers say some pretty awful

things.” I hear from students and other teachers. But, is there a process? What should I have done? I already have been working on my class stuff and my own personal learning. I’ve been reading books about the stuff in the world, so I can be better. But Ms. Addled doesn’t seem like she is the kind of person who spends the summer reflecting on her school year or getting ready for the upcoming year. Maybe she is?

Oh, and, she and I are friends on Facebook. Karen kept posting fake news all summer. I mean, like crazy things that didn’t make any sense. I don’t know. “We teach our students to use Snopes.com.” Why can’t she? I’m glad we had the cohort before the spring. So many funny things happened with my family. They were posting crazy things on Facebook, too. “My mom posted this thing. It was a big picture of the Confederate flag and she’s like, ‘you want me to honor your history, but you won’t honor mine.’ Mom! Really? We’re not even from the south. We came over on a boat from Germany like after the Civil War and settled in Northern” Michigan.

“And my step-dad. He’s like, ‘Well, I don’t understand Black people. We don’t have them in my country, so there’s no racism’” He’s from El Salvador. Their president in the 1930s “wrote a law that Black people were not allowed in the country for more than three days at a time.” But he doesn’t see that the racist law is the reason he didn’t see racism in his country. Elise and I “were laughing so hard.” How? How do you not see? Elise is the best at asking lots of questions and she’s like, ‘Dude! That is racism, Grandpa!’ It is easier to call it out when we are all just laughing together.

Introducing Co-Researcher Elizabeth Miranda

Elizabeth “Liz” Miranda was born and raised in South Carolina. Although she was chronologically the younger sister, because of her elder sister’s physical and mental disability she has always felt like the big sister. Liz grew up knowing that her mother had a serious problem with alcohol. She recalled a time in elementary school where she said, “Mom, they talked to us at school about this stuff. And I think you’re doing, I don’t think this is good for you.” Liz recounts that her mother “had the audacity to say, ‘The doctor knows, and he says it’s fine.’” At the age of eight, Liz remembers thinking her parents were “extremely racist.” Liz grew up in a very segregated city. “If you were on the north side of the railroad tracks, you’re Black. And if you’re on the south side of the railroad tracks, you’re White. And the only reason people from the north came over was because they needed to do some shopping or um, they did some work.” There was also a Native American reservation nearby, but no one spoke about it. Liz’s high school was integrated through bussing. Things were tense, but “it never got to a point like Little Rock.... But, it got close.”

Liz wanted to be a veterinarian, and she had her “heart set” on going to college. She earned a scholarship for music, but her mother was completely unsupportive. She ended up attending a community college, but she was focused on the social aspects of school and not studying. “I just kept going to school. Then I got married, and I just kept going.” Twenty years after her first college class, armed with a Bachelor’s in Health Promotion, Liz wandered into the nearest university and asked what she could do with 200 credit hours. The advisor suggested education and the rest was history.

Ms. Miranda's husband's job requires moving every few years. Her twelve years as a teacher have been spread over six states. She has taught at Jordan Jewell High School for three years. When she first arrived, she thought the school "was just beautiful. I just really liked all the windows, and I liked the design. I liked the openness." Liz's favorite part of teaching at JJHS is how open the faculty are. "It is highly encouraged that you accept the children for who they are. And you don't try to make them something else, which I love. There're very few places [that I've worked] where you can do that."

Liz Miranda generously offered an artifact, many Facebook posts, an email to the Culturally Relevant Teaching summer group, and many hours of interview data. Liz indicated that her openness with me was just a part of who she is. I saw many instances of her openness with teachers in the cohort that extended beyond the school walls, and educational topics. Many times, she offered her supplies, her mini-fridge, homemade cookies and even her private office (to a breastfeeding cohort member).

I collected four posts from Liz Miranda on Facebook. Liz had more than nine posts related to race, culture or application of culturally relevant practices, however I felt that the nine were indicative of the type and frequency of their posts. Liz's posts most frequently were shared banners, posters and images. For example, one post featured ten examples (each one in a different color of the rainbow) why All Lives Matter was not an appropriate statement. Four of Liz's posts featured structural and systemic racism evident throughout a specific city's history. The cities were ones Liz lived in, grew up in, and the city we share now. Once, Liz reposted a teacher's personal statement condemning racism.

The artifact offered was a framed sketch of the town named after her ninth great grandfather, a slave ship owner and trader. The picture is black and white, approximately 18”x24”, and it usually hangs out of view in her front hall. The picture (for intensive purposes) looks like a quaint small-town map. There are renderings of homes (with wonderful names like “Juniper Hill” and “Edwards Estate”) on four blocks of streets. There are churches with tall steeples and bell towers with bells mid ring. In the top, right corner of the image is Liz’s direct ancestor’s home: Dover Place. Liz pointed out the properties owned by her ancestors, one, two, three.... The majority of the homes pictured were owned by siblings, and cousins of long ago. Stately trees decorated the streets, and the bottom of the map features a ribbon proudly stating the family name and the state in beautiful calligraphy.

Liz’s stories were written with all three types of data: artifacts, documents, and interviews. Often, Liz spoke directly to me, the researcher and asked that I include my own email responses with hers in a way that mirrored the type of interview-conversations we had throughout the cohort and the study. When the co-researcher mentioned “Chaur” or “you” she does so intentionally.

Liz’s Stories

I decided to participate in the chats because I feel “as a fifty-year-old White lady, there is always more to learn. And this is an area I can always have more growth. I wanted to learn.” I am very relationship-based, so I was excited to see teachers in the group who are not from our school. I love getting to know other people. Maybe it is because we are on the other side of the stay-at-home order, but I wish we could have had a lot more time and in-person

meetings. I don't feel like I would just go up to someone and say, "Hey, I know you from my group" because it was online. It's just a weird barrier in the relationship.

I chose to show you this picture of the town my ancestors founded, not because I am *so* proud of it. Actually, it is "horribly embarrassing" to know that I still benefit from the "slave trader's" White privilege. "There is more to it than white skin!" I don't know. It's not fair, and it's disgusting! I can't even track the possible ways my family has benefited from his horrific crimes! A whole town of people were employed and settled in the 1600's; The family flourished and weathered storms because they had money, power and influence – at the cost of other human beings' lives; Generations settled the new continent, and each made use of the benefits high society had to offer. "These people are my family. Even though the money is long gone, the remaining effects – like having great grandparents who went to college, and like, having all this white skin..." it just changes how I'm viewed in the world and I don't like it. "I didn't do anything to earn this privilege and I can't get rid of it. And the privilege came at such a horrible expense. It's disgusting." That's why I keep it hanging in a dark corner. It's out there because I can't get rid of it, but hopefully I can keep people from seeing it.

"I never dreamed I would talk about my family history. I just never thought it would be necessary, or that anyone would be interested? And that it could help anyone? I didn't want to" reveal such hurtful and personal things without a "reason" for sharing. "I never want to come across as... boastful because that's not it. I am very humbled and ashamed."

Basically, I emailed the group all that has been so heavy on my heart. I shared that years ago a cousin found out that our ninth great ancestor was the fourth wealthiest man in the United

States, because he owned slave ships. There is a whole town that was built around the port where his slave ships came in. It still exists. And it is still named after that "HORRIBLE human being!!!" Even though the port was up north, and the state outlawed slavery, he just paid everyone off.

"I am a nice person." I am a good teacher. I go to church and love God. When people look at me, do they just assume things "because of my heritage? I would argue, in spite of my heritage, in spite of my seriously dysfunctional family" I am a good person.

When I was in my Master's program my professor really wanted me to watch Armistad. I have not seen it, yet. As a White woman "who has a distant family member who was the cause of much pain, suffering and death. That continued for generations. I struggle talking about race. As a White person, by existing I am racist, and I know I have received privilege from my skin" color. How do I rectify all those horrors? How do I make sure I am not using that White privilege, or falling into the racist ideas I was raised with - in my classroom? In my life?

Do you remember, Chaur? I was so scared to send the email. I sent a draft to you, and you replied. Can I just read what you wrote in the email? You said,

*Speaking about race and culture and ethnicity is really hard for me, and I think it will be because I am constantly fighting against the norms I grew up with. *Shrug* I also really believe that if we don't at least try to talk about our feelings and stories and personal thoughts- together, then we may never get over those really uncomfortable feelings that keep us (me) silent and preserving the status quo. (Email correspondence, April 28, 2020)*

"I could come to you with anything, and I would feel safe." The PD cohort "and everything just reinforced that feeling." But first, when I shared my family's history with the cohort, I was so scared. I remember really considering not sharing. I wondered if people would be disgusted or hate me. I know the "band aid has to be ripped off..." but I "don't want to be judged. I suppose there is safety" in numbers. I know everyone is there because we all want to have those hard conversations to be the best teachers we can be for our students. But it is

more than our students. We are having these conversations with our families, and our neighbors and all over Facebook. Or maybe that's just me?

After I shared my story, it was cool. Everyone was so accepting. Everyone said that I am not my family, like they are not their families. I'm a crier. Everyone at JJHS knows this. I can't help it. I wear my heart on my sleeve. I was so moved or maybe relieved? Yeah, relieved that the teachers were kind and open that I cried. Ha! They were happy tears. Then when the other teachers began sharing stuff from their pasts and backgrounds? They were so vulnerable, and it was amazing. I felt like I was connected to like – everyone's common desire to be great teachers of diverse students, and also like we have all made mistakes or didn't know what to do. The White teachers, especially, but when the teachers of color shared their experiences.... "I was so emotional."

I think I was and am so angry and frustrated by how we treat our students of color and different cultural groups. We have a lot of diversity at Jordan Jewell. Gender non-conforming kids and gay students. And our teachers are really good about supporting our LGBTQ students. But what about our brown and Black kiddos? I sorta wonder if it is because they had that professional training where we learned about LGBTQ students' needs? Like we talked about common situations and were told as a whole faculty how to handle things. But we don't say anything about our Black kids or when race is definitely involved.

"To the marrow of my bones, I was so mad." I am just pissed off that these things are happening in our school district and to our teachers and students. "We tell people that education is the leveler of people." All the time. Get your education! Go to college! You'll be unstoppable if you get your degree! "But if our leaders who have reached the highest levels

of education but even they are ignoring and unable to lead our school [teachers] in educating others, then have I been lying to my students?” Especially when I know that in some places (and I hate to think that Jordan Jewell is one of these places), but “the reality is that it does not matter if you are educated or not, if you have brown or black skin. Even with a doctorate, Chaur, you” may not be considered “an expert. I hope I am wrong,” but listening to so many of the teachers’ experiences, I don’t think I am. Things need to change.

God, I’m crying again. That is why I genuinely said, if you need a middle-aged White person to say it instead of you, I’ll do it. It’s like, when I need to take the car to the shop. I don’t take it to the shop. My husband takes it to the shop. Because I swear to God, they don’t hear me.

It’s like ovaries make my voice one that only dogs can hear. “That was the big learning I took” from the cohort: find like-minded people who can support you, who can help you accomplish your goal, especially when the goal is so important to our students’ best interests.

You know, Chaur we both have seen how a teacher who is supposed to have your best interests in mind, how she can show her true colors. You know who I’m talking about? My first year at JJHS, I was new, so I didn’t know anything about any teachers. My boss, I knew she “really trusts this other person. So, I thought I could trust her, too.” I went to her this teacher leader, and I vented. I just thought I was letting off some steam. Well, she “was really looking for drama. She went all the way up to Human Resources and was trying to use my words to get another person fired.” I couldn’t believe it. She just betrayed any trust I had in her. And then she was intentionally attacking my newly-begun reputation at JJHS. I try not to speak to her now. I am always trying to “stay on alert” when she is nearby, because she is the source of most negative “gossip and rumors” at school. She doesn’t care who gets hurt so long as she’s not hurt.

I've really been trying to use my culturally relevant learnings with my family. "It's been fun to have conversations with the kids, but with my husband... he just doesn't get it." He thinks he is very open and understanding, but he doesn't have anyone to challenge him except me, and I'm just... supposed to be his safe place. If I do say something to him, he "totally shuts down." I really pick and choose when to have the conversation. Like, I "wait until it's something pretty big. Like, 'Oh I can't be quiet on this one.'"

My kiddos, they are all grown up. Everyone is back home because colleges closed, you know. They like to call me "to the carpet" to "get more broadening of my mind and enlightenment." Even at work, my friends will sometimes "hold up the mirror. They are not doing it to be ugly or mean. But to say, 'Do you see this?' and I'm like, 'Crap. No, I didn't.'"

Introducing Co-Researcher Cara Waxon

Cara Waxon recently completed her first-year teaching. She grew up in a neighboring school district that she identified as "definitely lower middle class," where almost everyone was White. She, her parents and her nine siblings lived on the "very edge of town," in an area that looks rural. Some of Ms. Waxon's siblings have been diagnosed with behavior disorders which she admits upset her eldest sisters more than her. She said, "I think they really struggled with the image of it all. Just the outbursts," and they were teenagers. As a young child, Cara didn't think of her siblings' disabilities at all; she was always happy to have lots of built-in friends. Cara's parents both work as educators, and her older siblings have all become doctors, nurses or teachers. Theirs is a family of service.

In fourth grade Cara had a crush on a Black boy, "probably because he was the only person in class taller than" she was. She remembers "being worried about telling [her] mom."

She told her mom she liked a boy, and she asked that they meet at a band concert. Her mom showed “no concern” that the boy was Black. Cara justified bringing this memory up, because she wondered if society or her mom taught her to worry about the race of a love interest. She also wonders if her mother was not concerned with the boy’s race because they were young.

As a teenager Ms. Waxon took a teaching internship class through her high school, and she observed her sister’s elementary classroom. She knew she liked kids, and she always felt helpful when she was allowed to help her father grade papers. Cara ran track in high school and college, and she was excited by the possibility of helping students tap into the myriad opportunities she gained from those experiences. She decided to work with high-school-age students, so she could coach. Ms. Waxon attended a local university to earn her Bachelor’s in Secondary Education and is almost finished with her Master’s in Curriculum and Instruction.

Precisely because she was raised nearby, Ms. Waxon knew of Jordan Jewell’s “reputation.” She expected the school to be “ghetto - like everyone used to say.” However, at the end of her interview she was shown into a Biology teacher’s classroom. “Holy crap. It was incredible. And her students obviously worshiped her. I was like, this is gonna be freakin’ awesome” if I get to work with her! Cara Waxon was excited to begin her first year of teaching at Jordan Jewell High School.

Cara informed me that she did not remember to bring any documents or artifacts that would help her tell her stories. As the youngest co-researcher, she and I often joked throughout our interviews about our age difference any time I did not know her slang or

cultural references. Cara told me that she did not use Facebook for “anything juicy,” but I was welcome to look. Like Teresa, I chose not to use any of her posts because she did not choose them for inclusion. The restorying of Cara’s data came from her four interviews, alone. Like Liz, Cara referred directly to me, the researcher as “you,” “the leader” of the cohort, and as Chaur.

Cara’s Stories

“I’m not trying to suck up, but I genuinely signed up” to be in the cohort “because I heard you were the leader.” I was a brand-new teacher and my mentor, Ms. Prime suggested it. “Also because of like my lack of exposure to our large population of Hispanic students. I was like, ‘this would probably be good for me to dabble in.’” Then I kept going to the virtual chats because “I really like the people in it, and I continued conversations.” For the spring meetings, I knew I’d do better if I had a schedule with due dates for reading the books, and then knew I would have to talk to everybody about stuff. It just helped me feel accountable.

I guess when the PD cohort started, I knew that it would be awesome, based on your reputation. “The format was wonderful.” I liked that you established clear norms, the activities were always reflective and interactive. “I felt like you were talking to each of us individually.” And I felt very open to share “even though I didn’t share very much” at first because “I didn’t want to step on other people’s toes.” Actually, when the cohort started, I was trying to really focus on listening. “So instead of trying to think of like, ‘Oh, what can I say in response to this?’ I just wanted to really listen. “Just listening is really difficult. So, after a couple of people shared, I feel much more willing to share.”

“I was worried about saying the wrong thing. Just ‘cause I mean, my goodness, my mom! With the life she’s led you’d think she would be more open-hearted” and accepting of others, but somehow, I don’t know, “there is some disconnect between the things she says” and does and like, what she *says* she believes. I get it. “It is okay to make mistakes. And I mean, it would take a lot for me to say something” terribly racist or horribly offensive “because I don’t believe any of those things. So, I guess I am just saying that, well, if something happens, I apologize and maybe I get tore up for it, but we’re all learning.” I can only remember where someone “interpreted something a little weird,” once, in all the months of meeting. So, a middle school teacher said something, and the other teacher asked a clarifying question about her interpretation. So the first JJMS teacher thought a bit. “Then it was all cleared up!” There were no lasting effects of misspeaking. It was a good safe space.

I was mostly worried I’d let my mentor, Ms. Prime down. And the other people in the group. “I just look up to them so much, and I really want to hear what they have to say. I didn’t feel pressure from them, but I do feel like I need to be ... better than I am.” Better at teaching. Better at dealing with student issues. I’m intimidated by her, and you, too, but you ladies are always so real. You’re like, “let’s figure this shit out.” I have a “healthy fear” of both of you! Ha!

Prime’s level of expertise kinda goes across the board. She is “an expert in her craft. Relationships with staff, with students, with administrators, are all ones I aspire to have. I look up to her and I also view her as a friend. I really got to see another side of her in the chats.” Does that make sense? Like, “please teach me how to be exactly like you.” She is definitely giving me more support and making space for me to trust her than I am giving to

her. I am always receiving. “That first year. I was like just absorbing” information. I basically won the mentor lottery. First, Ms. Prime. Second, my classroom was right next to hers, and her classroom was like surrounded by all the cool teachers. They gave me so much support. Even if I mess up, I knew “I wouldn’t be kicked out of the will.”

I think that will start to change as I get more experience, “but she still loves me anyway.” We are already planning on how to change the curriculum and materials to be more inclusive of diverse voices. It’s been challenging and fun to like make Biology reflect our student population. I can’t wait for next year. And because Prime and I have a great relationship, it has opened up relationships with other awesome teachers. If Prime trusts someone, I trust them. Like I have a whole network of kick-ass teacher-friends because she is so amazing. “I just feel more connected to” the group. They just took me in, and I am like, ‘Yas, my queens!’

But I knew already I would like you, Chaur. My older sister told me who to trust. “Her instructional coach was ah-maze-ing.” She didn’t think she would like it. She was worried the coach “would be bossy and tell her that her teaching sucks or whatever, but she really loved it. So, I knew I’d love my instructional coach. Heart-eyes emoji face.”

There was a “particular somebody that was like, really interesting who was in the cohort. It was good that she was in there. I didn’t know a lot of people initially, because,” hello, new teacher! “I didn’t know her that well at the beginning of the school year. So, I just knew *of* her.” From students and what other teachers said. It was bad. In the beginning, I just sorta ignored what everyone was saying because I wanted to know for myself. And I would say to myself, ‘maybe she’s having a bad day?’ But when it’s every single day?” I can’t

really offer her any grace if she never changes. You know? She just shows that is who she really is. That is her heart and it's not for kids.

I haven't had any other instances where teachers broke my trust, but this teacher in the cohort, Mrs. Addled was. The. One! I walked into her classroom to give a student a paper he left in my class. It was the start of the hour, and now I know that she "has a really hard time with classroom management. And she basically asked me to discipline a student in her class for her." It was so awkward and strange. I thought, 'Why are you asking me to do this right now?' It was just very weird. And it was first quarter, so like" there's no way she knew that I knew the student, or why I walked in, or I mean, *I* was the new teacher. Why would a teacher put someone in that situation? And what did she want me to do, yell at a student in front of everyone? That's ridiculous. My experience with Ms. Addled at the beginning of the school year was so "out of the blue" and "weird."

I'd heard she had a "tendency to snap immediately at the first offense rather than showing them a little grace." Ms. Addled's negative reputation, at first I thought, "maybe she's having a bad day, but when it's every single day?" And there were times students would say she made homophobic and transphobic or racist comments. Long story short, when I saw her in the cohort I thought, "This will be good for her." She can learn, and she will be a better teacher.

I sat by her because I knew her, and in the small group discussions and stuff, we talked. We did the activities and I feel like I was open and honest. She shared and she used to ask my advice in the hallway, or at lunch. Like, I think she asked me because she knew I was in the cohort with her, and maybe she thought I had experience dealing with culturally

diverse students? Maybe it was just that our classrooms are around the corner from each other? Now that I think about it, I wonder why she asked me, a brand-new teacher for advice. I just didn't ever really know how to handle discussions around race with grownups. Even when stuff happens in my classroom. It is awkward, but I handle it.

I guess it doesn't really matter, because unfortunately, she never took any of my advice. Well, maybe she stopped asking for advice from me? "I almost wonder if maybe after seeing me interact [with students] the way that I do she might feel less willing to share as much with me, if that makes sense." She probably feared being judged. She would have been right. She should have had "more knowledge of how we should be as teachers" but she didn't. "I do have kind of an awful question. How does one, and I'm not advocating for it, but what does it take to get fired? I am sorry. That is so awful. But, I am genuinely curious because I am a little baffled" as a new teacher who has seen this woman hurt students all year long.

I feel like the cohort was really a good fit for me because I am "just a very boring white lady." Look, I didn't have the years of teaching experiences everyone in the group had. Or life experiences! I'm still a baby! You know, I wonder, "do White people have anything to say" in this conversation? "I wanted to hear more from people that weren't like me."

Should we, though? "I just feel tired of all the crap. And I want to hear what other people have to say. Then, I can figure out how to help the crap in my world. I don't know." There's so much going on in the world right now. I feel hopeless. I don't want to bother you about it, because like, "you've been putting up with whatever crap and then I'm like, 'Am I

just assuming that you've been putting up with crap?" What about the other teachers of color? And goodness, what about the students of color? It is a lot.

Plus, I'm still trying to have conversations with my mom. Her neighbors across the street keep sharing posts with her on Facebook about Candace Owens. She is the Black lady who is really racist against Black people. I think that's where my mom gets these ideas from, the neighbor. Last week she was saying, "George Floyd and how he should not be a hero, or you know, not the face of the Black Lives Matter movement" and then she wanted to talk about why teenagers "use the N-word."

Like last week, we were looking at flowers and she said, "Oh! Those are Indian Paintbrushes. Or, Native American or Indigenous People's Paintbrushes. Gosh, you can't get it right nowadays," like she got annoyed that things are changing to become less offensive. One time she literally said, 'Black people are so loud.' I was like, 'Mom. Stop.'" This is the woman who raised me, and who raised my amazing siblings! I guess it's good that she asks questions at least. "It's very overwhelming" to have to lead her through these conversations when I don't even know what's happening. "She's definitely one of the people I talk to most about Black Lives Matter, and why it's not 'All Lives Matter.' I usually pull up resources that I've seen because they are a lot more eloquent than I am." So, I don't know. Usually I feel responsible for helping my mom like, progress. But most of the time I am like, "Oh. Okay. Wow. So, you're still back there."

Introducing Co-Researcher Jan Smith

Jan Smith was the first born to a midwestern couple who lived in the same thirty-square-miles their whole lives. Jan lived in a suburb with her two siblings and parents until

she was mid-way through her freshman year of high school. She moved from a school district where “everyone for the most part was White, but there was some diversity once you got to middle school” to a district where there was exactly “one Black family” in the entire district. Even as a fifteen-year-old, she wondered how the Black classmates handled being “the only ones.” Ms. Smith thought it was “weird that they were the only family that everybody in the whole town would know.” She called to mind a time she asked her mother why there was so little diversity in the town, and her mother had no answers.

The small-town high school did not foster warm feelings for Jan. She described the school system and teachers as “incestuous. Husbands and wives, sisters, cousins... worked there.” The whole town was filled with “families with deep roots in the town.” Jan was called a “transplant” because she moved in, and she did not have a last name that told everyone who her parents and grandparents were (even though both generations grew up in the town). There was a lot of “small-town gossip, even at the school” between the teachers. The teachers did not seem to work hard for their students, or even “care about” them.

Ms. Smith wanted to become an elementary school teacher, so she enrolled in a university program right out of high school. Jan’s advisor told her that she would not be “eligible to declare [education] as a major.” At the request of a trusted professor, Jan decided to earn a degree in History. Armed with her Bachelor’s degree she began job shadowing and worked in a “horrible call center.” She heard of a graduate-level teacher certification program on a commercial and decided that she would “go for it.” The accelerated program was geared toward working adults with a Bachelor’s degree who wanted to teach. Because the university was surrounded by urban school districts, the program emphasized preparing pre-service

teachers for meeting diverse students' needs. Jan was explicitly taught the Social Justice Standards in classes, and she was expected to observe and student teach in urban classrooms.

Ms. Smith's first decade of teaching took place in charter and alternative education schools, whose populations were mostly students of color, students in poverty, and language learners. In her tenth year, after being extremely frustrated by school leadership's "focus on the antiquated pedagogy," she left her position mid-year when she saw that Jordan Jewell High School had an opening. "They were the only school with a [history] opening in January." Immediately, she found the school "gorgeous" and "homey" in the face of its "enormous" size. There were decorations in the front office, and the secretary seemed kind. She told herself, "If I get the job and it's horrible, I can leave at the end of the semester." She has been at JJHS for four years.

Jan provided a wealth of data. Not only were her interview responses very rich, Jan provided multiple Facebook posts, emails, and an artifact as data. Jan was always working to become her best self, so she could be her best teacher-self. In a seven-paragraph email to the cohort, Jan asked poignant questions of her trusted teachers: "How do I change things? Does this go back to early education [for students]? Does it go back to [my] early experiences?" and "Can a group of teachers create enough impact to incite change?" Jan lamented, "Will someone call me on it if my actions are culturally insensitive?"

I collected twelve Facebook posts from Jan Smith. Although she had approximately fifty posts, the twelve I chose demonstrated the types of posts she made, as well as highlighted that she posted far more than the other participants. Overwhelmingly, Jan's posts were cultivated resources for educators who hope to be anti-racist or have culturally relevant

classrooms. Quite a few were specific to White teachers in diverse schools. One post from June 14, featured resources for White teachers, a commentary and a reposted page that read, “If you’re serious about change, you have to go through uncomfortable situations. Stop trying to dodge the process. It’s the only way to grow.” Above those words were Jan’s:

Two new (to me) Facebook/Twitter accounts to follow if you are a white teacher:

1. Teaching While White
2. Equity literacy Institute

I know many people are ‘tired of hearing about race,’ but that contributes to the problem. We have to continue to discuss and make progress. If we go quiet again until the next horrible act then we start over in a way. We can’t get comfortable and let it go we have to keep moving forward, learning more, and trying to be better....

One of Jan’s Facebook posts qualified as an artifact, because it was offered with no words (except the creator’s Twitter handle, “@Denny_OW”). Jan did not offer commentary to accompany the post, and there were no comments. Within a grey background, a young Black man wearing shorts and an undershirt walks away with seven bullet holes in his shirt. A full head of black, natural hair adorns his bowed head. Behind the man are two White police officers, each with their handguns drawn and aimed at the Black man’s back. Meanwhile, in the background, almost exactly even with the officers, is a young White teen. He has clearly walked past the officers in their defensive stances. Wearing jeans, a green shirt, boots and a backward baseball cap, the teen raises his hand as if to wave to an audience out of frame. The White teen wears blue latex gloves on each hand, as a defense against the Corona virus. He casually carries an AR-15 rifle strapped across his chest. Behind, the White boy leaves a path of blood.

The image is a clear reference to officers who shot Jacob Blake seven times in the back, while he was getting into a car with his children. A few days later, Kyle Rittenhouse, a seventeen-year-old White male attended a protest rally where he walked about wearing blue gloves and a Smith and Wesson AR-15. He has been charged with shooting and killing two protestors, and wounding a third in Kenosha, WI. “Police apparently let the gunman walk past them and leave the scene with a rifle over his shoulder and his hands in the air, as members of the crowd yelled for him to be arrested because he had shot people” according to the Associated Press (2020). In the image, White privilege is more than McIntosh’s (1988) ease of finding band aids that match your skin color or finding hair care products at the local store. White privilege allows a teen to openly, casually walk by officers with an assault weapon after having murdered people in public. The officers are focused on the unarmed Black man walking away, rather than the blood at their feet, or the gun that is four times the size of their own. No words or explanation are needed; injustice is in plain view.

Encountering Jan’s artifact on her Facebook page forced me to abandon my post at the computer, and it sent me in tears to my reflective journal. I was hurt by the image, which captured the outrageous inequity of the situation. I journaled,

It’s just so blatant. I was worried about cops shooting Black people, but I just... to see the audacity of that boy? To see him stroll past the officers, and to see their lack of care? Not only do I have to worry about my people being shot because of racist police, I now have to contend with their offering of White privilege in the face of gross evidence. It’s just so much. It is not fair. How can you ignore the many voices of the people screaming that he killed people when you are an officer of the law? That is a whole level of racism I was not ready to see. And it was on Facebook – which used to be just full of pictures of kids and food. (August 28, 2020)

Journaling and using field notes were absolutely necessary during and after illumination and explication phases of data analysis. Frequently I needed to identify, unravel or separate my own feelings from Jan's. This reflection and bracketing allowed me to restory Jan's three data sets with an open heart and mind. Her stories follow.

Jan's Stories

"I've been interested in [culturally relevant teaching] for a while now, because I am working on myself, and making sure that I'm doing the right things" in my classroom. Also, "I'm trying to maybe get other feedback" from teachers who have different experiences and perspectives than I do. "I like to learn new things." When I posted on Facebook that "We have to continue to discuss [race and inequity] to make progress," I meant it. Even though I feel so uncomfortable, I know that pushing for anti-racist education for all students "is the core of my teaching identity." I want to be a good person and a better teacher.

There were times in the cohort that I wished it wasn't open to the whole district. I thought, "man, I wish this was just high school. Because at times" not everything applied to everyone. "Nevertheless, I mean, I don't think we ever had a bad conversation. There was always a takeaway." It took a while before I started to trust everyone in the group. I just worried that I would be harshly judged. But that feeling, it goes beyond teachers. It's everyone in my life. I understand that if I don't have strong relationships, anything I say "may be turned around and used against" me.

"I was worried that I would like accidentally say something that was offensive but also that I could have said something that nobody called me on. Like obviously, I'm not going to use the N word." It's more obscure than that. "It is like leaving out parts of "groups.

Like some people are saying POC but maybe we should be saying BIPOC?" Even though I was critical of what I shared, I would think, "Huh. Would somebody have called me out if it wasn't right? 'Cause I wish they would." I guess I just am too critical of myself. It's probably selfish to think other people are paying that much attention to what I'm saying. I don't want to be someone who is "inarticulate" or who people think doesn't participate, but "it does make me think a lot more before speaking." What I'm trying to say is, "It's a fine balance."

I don't want to make mistakes like that in front of my colleagues or in front of my students. "With kids, you know, you could do just one thing and it's over." A teacher's reputation is so tightly intertwined with their rapport with students. "And it is so hard to get them back.... That's one of the hardest things about teaching: there's so many ways to lose relationships and it is super difficult to get them back." It is the same with teachers. "Do you know how many positive things it takes to undo that one negative thing?" It is impossible, especially when we don't have time or even see the teachers regularly.

"Teaching is so hard." Your reputation should be cultivated and protected. That is probably why I don't have very many teacher friends. Or even teachers I trust. It is my choice, but I prefer to have a few safe people instead of a whole bunch of teachers I can't really trust. "I'm pretty guarded. I learned that lesson when I first started teaching." In my first school, I was working with a teacher, and she was crossing the line in class. I was really uncomfortable, but I didn't know what to do. She got fired, but because other teachers saw us together, "it was more like, the rumors...."

I mean, I still collaborate with teachers, and I love hearing different perspectives. "I know certain teachers are better than I am at certain things." I find them, and I ask for advice

about those things. But, I prefer to be the one they come to for advice. I don't want to have to share too much that can be turned into gossip or rumors. Also, if someone asks for advice it means they want your feedback. Like, they trust that you will be honest and challenge them if they need to. You are a safe person. They are telling you, 'Hey, I can admit I'm not perfect in the classroom.'

That's a big deal. That takes vulnerability. But there are teachers who I would never ask because they already broke my trust, or their reputation with students and other teachers.... Yeah. I wouldn't ever go to them because they are too invested in their teacher cliques. In fact, a few of the teachers in the cohort are in a clique that really pissed some teachers off last year. "I was super disappointed. They showed who they really are." They basically excluded teachers in their departments and those teachers felt hurt. It was just a little thing; like someone wasn't on the email list for a potluck. One teacher "flat out blew up. She was very upset [that she was excluded]. And me and another teacher were trying to calm her down." I think I told her, it's just a potluck. We have our own food. We can go somewhere special to eat! "I could see the look on the other teacher's face and" It was awful. I knew in that instant that the teacher wouldn't go to her department head for support, again. I knew she was too hurt.

Last year I was accidentally left off an email list. There was a shared PowerPoint presentation that was emailed to each presenting teacher, except me. I had access to prior shared documents and versions of the presentation, but when I got up to present, and I saw that the presentation wasn't the last one I sent.... I felt "undermined" and "embarrassed." All the sudden I wasn't prepared. "That probably impacted me more than it should have." Being

a good teacher and being seen as a good teacher are “such a huge part of my self-identity,” and that presentation was in front of my colleagues, parents *and* students. Then, because it happened in live time, there was “no opportunity to talk to [the teacher-leader] about” the issue, I just struggled to reassure myself that “it wasn’t personal.” I guess what I’m saying is that I understand how a little hurt like the potluck can sever a relationship, because a big hurt like this one, where I was undermined just about destroyed my relationship with the teacher leader.

What I came to realize in the cohort was that those teachers in the clique, like the ones who were excluding the other teacher, it wasn’t intentional. That doesn’t make it any better, because it already happened. The other teacher was already hurt. But at least I know, now. Actually, I changed my mind about those teachers in the cohort. One lady, she led a committee I was in. The committee was full of some really negative teachers. “I’d never encountered the negative people before,” because they teach on the other side of the building and I was new. I cannot put into words how negative they were. Like, it started with one and then more teachers “joined in;” it spread to everyone but the teacher leading the committee and me. “She asked me to say something, and I felt like it did not go over well. That’s when I learned to be a little more quiet and not offer so much.” I felt like she didn’t value my opinion.

“I really started to feel like maybe she didn’t like me.” Then every time a student or another teacher mentioned something about her... I’m embarrassed that “I listened to them.” Because I know rumors and gossip are the worst. “Everyone has someone who doesn’t like them.” Through the cohort I realized how similar our teaching philosophies are, and how

hard we work for students. Especially with those kids who are hard to connect with. Now I think she asked my opinion in that meeting to try to find support, and that when the negative Nellies responded, “we shrank.” Both of us. I had just misunderstood her intent, probably because I didn’t know her and that affected how I saw her for a long time.

I thought it was her place to shut those teachers down. She was the committee leader. But she maybe thought it wasn’t her place. It’s funny. If that behavior was in a classroom, “like if a kid did something like that” both she and I would have been direct. We would have called out their “inappropriate behavior.” But because it was adults? “We were just powerless.” I kinda feel the same way about stuff I see in our school- policies and unfair treatment of students. Or even when someone like an administrator does something that needs to change. “I feel as a teacher like a very low person on the totem pole. We [teachers] don’t have the stature that we would need in order to push for the type of changes that would need to happen. You know, or, or, I don’t know. At least that is how I feel.”

There are a lot of teachers and there is “strength in numbers. I wish [teachers] would speak up more.” Especially those who have “similar philosophies.” I think the teachers who want to push for change need to band together. I know “we are in very different places” in our understanding of all these things, and definitely in feeling comfortable about speaking up. “But that fear of trying to push for changes against teachers who are fixed...?” Like, how do you have those conversations? “I can sit here and think, ‘well, that’s wrong wrong wrong.’ But there is nothing I could say to ever change them. And they are still teaching in our school. And they are still causing harm to students who are different than them.”

“Even with all my thoughts on trying to incite change,” I am still really scared of the consequences. “I don’t want a black mark on my record or a target on my back. I think the people involved are well enough established that it provides some comfort and safety.” It is different than my Facebook, where I am all by myself. I just recently started posting. I feel like I’ve found my voice; “I used to be very quiet on there.” Mostly, I just share resources on being an anti-racist teacher or building equity in the classroom. “I’m losing friends. The more that I’ve started talking and said things, I’ve started losing some people on there, which is interesting.”

I was raised to never speak about politics. “Both of my parents feel like that. Who they voted for and why they voted for that person is a very big secret. It’s a very sacred secret; it always has been.” So, now when my mom is with her friends chatting about political events.... She is very chameleon-like. When my sister and I are talking about a complicated situation she agrees with us, but when we are with her friends who think the opposite way, she agrees with them. She’s not really agreeing with any of us. She just goes along with what everyone says. I had to “cut myself off” the other day when her lunch ladies were talking about not seeing color. I have to try to not ostracize her from her friends, but at the same time, find time to really talk to her about how that is not right. My sister and I have been working out together. We “talked all the time” at the gym. She and I are “almost at the same place in our journey of learning” about race and culture, and she agrees with me. But my dad? He likes to joke about us, “Where did you all get these liberal ideas? College?”

I will say that participating in the cohort has made me “question my instinctive behaviors and thoughts.” Just the other day I was at the store with my sister and we were cut

in line by a Black woman and her daughter. Even though “in the grand scheme of things, it wasn’t a big deal” it did force me to wonder. Did the woman expect me to suffer from White guilt? Is presuming White guilt a good reason to assume I would let her cut in line? Should I be willing to give up my space in line to appease racial tensions in the world? Or was the lady just tacky and rude? “A few months ago, I wouldn’t have even thought anything but she was rude.”

That is one of the hardest parts of teaching, also. So many things are dependent on your experiences for interpretation. We are all on our own “journey of learning” and “change is so slow. I’m impatient. I get tired of waiting. I guess instead of trying to jump in I should just focus on making small changes.” Being a great teacher is a “huge part of my identity.” It is a huge part of every great teacher’s identity. There is just never enough time “to talk or talk regularly” with others who could help you on your journey, you know?

Introducing Co-Researcher Laura Collins

Laura Collins was born in Lincoln, Nebraska, but her family moved to an affluent midwestern suburb as a toddler. Next to her wealthy neighbors, Laura “felt poor, even though by most standards” she, her parents and her older sister were “pretty well off.” Ms. Collins enjoyed school. She liked learning, and she loved not being at home. Ms. Collins began staying at school because she could “just be” herself. At home, Laura felt like she needed to “put on a façade” for her mother. Her father sometimes came home drunk, and she did not want her mother to know his then-addiction upset her.

Laura graduated high school with four hundred students, and she can still name all fifteen students of color. Ms. Collins longed to be “in a helping profession” like teaching, and

once she developed a love for the school's theater program, she knew she wanted to teach high school theater. Her older sister went to college to become a teacher while she was in high school. She looked up to her sister and envied her happiness. Enrolling in an out of state university to major in Secondary Education: Theater and Drama excited Laura. She longed to become the type of teachers she had; she wanted to discuss powerful themes, moving works of art and "ideas that matter" with her future students.

Even though Laura grew up "twenty minutes from" Jordan Jewell High School, she had never heard of the school. Her sister told her about the student demographics, and the "socioeconomic status" of the district; that information piqued her interest. Laura knew she would never teach in the school district she graduated from. There were too many people who were willfully "ignorant and fake." When she began telling friends that she was hired for her first teaching job in the Jordan Jewell School District, most people had never heard of it. Once she located the district geographically, friends said "something like, 'oh, do you carry your AR15 with you' for safety? Or, 'Are there drug deals like in the hallways?' Some people are so stupid."

Laura and I have a strong relationship. She and I taught next door to each other at JJHS her first year teaching. Her mentor was my best-teacher friend. Early in our friendship we discovered that our mothers lived a mile apart. She and I also graduated high school from the same affluent school district (a fact we both try to distance ourselves from). Laura's participation in the cohort made me happy, and her agreement to participate in this study made me giddy. I joke that Laura is the quiet storm: she thinks deeply, rarely speaks, but when she does... she is powerful. I assumed she would journal to prepare for each of our

interviews, and I was correct. The desire to strengthen her voice was always tempered with the knowledge and fear of ostracizing herself from her family and friends.

To restory Laura's data, I blended her interview responses with four collected Facebook posts. Two posts included personal commentaries on reposted articles with resources for leading an anti-racist life, one was a long argument with a friend-of-a-friend, and the final post was a long personal writing where she explained her feelings and anger about family and friends negating the Black Lives Matter movement and political unrest.

Laura's Stories

“Growing up as a White woman in an affluent, really not diverse area, I think for a long time I thought that if I was kind to everyone, then I was doing what I needed to do. But as I've learned things, there's a lot more to it than that in order to be culturally relevant and responsive, and to make sure my kids are getting what they need.” I also really liked the teachers who signed up for the cohort. I enjoy really collaborating with one colleague. She was in the cohort and our relationship was great before, so it was just nice to be able to have another place to discuss things that matter. Usually, she is my person. “I can ask her questions about assignments, and she will be honest.” So, if I need to change something she will tell me, and I don't feel judged or stupid. I actually knew of this co-worker's reputation as a great teacher, because my sister happened to have classes in college with her. A year after hearing about this teacher, I had the opportunity to observe in her classroom at JJHS. I can confirm: she is “just such a badass.”

Having friends in the cohort made it a better fit for me. Just naturally, like in my personality, I'm the kind of person who wants to “just listen to other people and process

through my own” thoughts. But sometimes that makes it look like I’m not as engaged. But my friends, they know I’m paying attention and thinking. Plus, “I think people I am close with already know where I stand on things.” The other teachers in the cohort, I’m not close to. Like, physically, in the school. Ha! Not physically-physically. Our rooms are nowhere near each other, and some work in other schools, so I never see them. I would have to put in extra effort to find time to walk all the way to their part of the school, and then still have time for a good conversation.

Teaching is just so exhausting. I feel like, when I am at school, I want to be a good teacher more than I want to be a good colleague. If I have to choose one of those, I’m gonna put all my energy into teaching. I’m just too tired to try to go create relationships.

Some of my most profound experiences came when a cohort member shared moments from her personal life. Can I describe her, so I don’t have to say her name? She is a Black teacher who teaches elementary school. As a White woman, I was “open and excited” to hear other teachers’ experiences, especially the teachers of color. “I just feel like I learned more from them because they have personal experiences” that I don’t. “After the George Floyd murder,” we had that impromptu meeting to process everyone’s feelings. She was in the virtual chat for “like, five minutes” but her testimony was powerful. When she told us how she was discussing George Floyd’s death, police violence and racism with her eight-year-old son? It was “heartbreaking.”

And having these learning opportunities and discussions about different cultures, and what’s going on in the world, and like even just your own teaching philosophies requires vulnerability. That takes time and opportunity to like – be able to actually speak.

I'm always just nervous about anything, but especially because I feel like I still have a lot to learn, and so I am always nervous that I will accidentally say something politically incorrect or not use the correct terms. It's not that I felt like anyone would judge me, but... I like to tout myself as someone who's informed and educated, and I don't think I am as informed or educated about some of the stuff we talked about. It was probably just my fear or self-consciousness.

When teachers were open about "mistakes that they've made teaching" it made me "feel better" about myself. I was more willing to be open with my own stories because one teacher's openness was a "good reminder that we are all human and make mistakes."

There were "a few times I stumbled over my words. I thought people were very kind and gracious" with me. So, that helped me to be like "'Okay, this is a safe space.' Like I don't have to be perfect." If someone said something that "kinda hit me the wrong way, I just tried to show grace." I tried to remember that "we were all there because we wanted to be better. I know their hearts and they're the same as mine."

Where I really struggle is what to do to get other teachers in the school to want to learn more.

I have watched some interactions in the hallway with teachers and I'm like, 'That was disastrous.' I don't know. I don't know how to have those conversations. And I think sometimes the people I see who commit the worst interactions are above me in pay grade and role. And so, I feel inappropriate calling someone out. And also, it is not my place to. I honestly don't know how to handle that.

If I'm being totally honest, I think I would probably tell my friends [if a teacher was offensive] and then maybe we could come up with a plan, but I don't think in that moment ... I'm just trying to be honest. I don't think that I would go to that person's classroom or office at the end of the day and say, 'Hey. I think that was handled really inappropriately.' I should. I know I should. I don't.... I don't know why I don't.

Actually, there was one time where I did address an issue with a colleague. I was so hurt. I think you [co-researchers refers to Chaur Jacobson as "you"] came in and asked why I

was crying. I can't remember. But it was my second year of teaching, and I was "so hurt by it all... and bawling in my classroom." You "coaxed me into talking to him because I was so upset."

That teacher, all my students had him after they'd had my drama class. A group of girls rushed into my classroom to tell me he told them that "first year teachers don't know what they're doing. And, she has a lot of enthusiasm and energy, but she'll lose that as soon as" she gets some real experience. It just devastated me.

When I went to the colleague, "he was so apologetic." Now that I know him, I understand that his social cues are a bit different. Sometimes, "he doesn't realize what he's saying, or at least however he says it. It comes off a different way to students." The apology made me feel better, but I still was a bit hesitant to trust him. Even though I could tell he was intentionally trying to fix the hurt he caused, it still took time. "As years passed," we've had conversations. Now, "he's probably one of my favorite people... because I've gotten to understand him just through talking."

You've always been like a model of how to handle situations, for me. In the group discussions, I really liked that you would say things like, "I don't know how to say this, so I will just say it and we can fix it up later." I am just so self-conscious of what I say. Did I say it right? Did I say too much? Should I have said it differently? I worry that "I don't really have anything to bring to the table" because I'm just a White woman. I don't know. "I mean, I have seven years working in a diverse district, but? Lately, I have also been fearing that I have that White savior thing about me, and I really don't want to be that." I don't know. How can you tell a teacher who wants to help her students learn and succeed because she is a good

teacher from a White savior teacher? I don't know. When I tell people where I teach I either get those racist responses or like, "Awww. You're so sweet." It is disgusting. Like, really? Are those the only ways to view why I teach at Jordan Jewell?

Do the teachers of color in Jordan Jewell get that from their friends? I don't know. In the cohort, hearing the teachers' of color experiences was powerful. "I feel like I learned more from them because they have personal experiences" that I haven't had. Listening to everyone's backgrounds and how they teach was really nice. I liked listening to them. Even though we all were frustrated with students using the N-word in the hallways, or we are all similarly irritated with parts of our district leadership. I liked hearing how we approached dealing with the situations differently. But we all still have the same goal, you know?

"I expected them to speak out more, and maybe they thought the same about me." Maybe they were quiet because that is who they are, like their personalities. Or maybe that the personal stuff was shared in the virtual meetings, and there was that not-being-in-the-same-physical-space-barrier to overcome. Or maybe it was just too much with all that was happening in the world. "I just feel that as just a White woman, I should be doing more listening."

The cohort chats were "good for even some of the other White teachers to talk about mistakes that they've made teaching.... It made me feel better that I am not the only one who doesn't know what she's doing all the time." There are so many times when I just don't know what the right answer is. I don't know what to do to help. I don't know. I mean, with my friends, "we can come up with a plan." We can have those conversations where I can say,

“Hey, I think that was handled really inappropriately.’ I know I should speak” up more. I don’t know why I don’t. I guess it’s just ... fear.

I’m getting better at finding little ways to speak up. I think I’m changing a little. I am not sure if it is the confidence I get from having the conversations and resources from the PD, or if it is the chance to carefully write my words out ahead of time. Or maybe it is the quarantine? “I’ve had a lot of time to actually reflect and think about current events like the George Floyd murder, and Black Lives Matter, protests.... It is probably all of it. It’s like a catalyst for us to talk.” Usually, I am that “peacemaker. I just don’t want to ruffle any feathers. I know that’s not how change happens,” so I just take little steps.

I commented on a friend’s Facebook page after she went off about how her alma mater was going to offer free tuition to students whose family incomes were less than \$60,000. I tried to see things from her perspective, but I basically said, ‘just because you struggled doesn’t mean that everyone else who comes after has to struggle.’ But then her friend who I don’t even know, you know how social media is. She got involved and she tried to say that college *is* available to all people. I straight up told her that “there is nowhere NEAR equal access based on race, socioeconomic status, etc.” And that I was “ashamed to admit that it took years of working and immersing myself in a low-SES community to realize this.” Then I talked about how blessed I am to work at Jordan Jewell because I know the most amazing students, and they “deserve every privilege that we got to enjoy this world.” Microphone drop. I am so tired of people being stupid. I was respectful, and I did tell her when she made points that I agreed with, but come on. “I would never have spoken up a year ago.”

Then on June first, I was finally so fed up with all the stuff I was hearing and seeing from my friends and family. I wrote that Facebook post because I had to. I knew it would make a lot of them angry. I guess I should just share a little of...? Yeah.

I'm about to get real. Really real. More real than I've ever gotten on social media. I'm posting this with the knowledge that I will likely upset, or even disappoint or anger some of my family members and friends. Hopefully those family members and friends can recognize how much of a peacekeeper I am and how difficult this is for me to write, and hopefully they can recognize how broken and pained my heart must be to post this. I can no longer silence my voice.

My post was shared by a lot of the teachers in the cohort, and even some who weren't in the group. I think it captured how we were all feeling. Like, this is not okay. No one really said anything negative or anything about the post. I think the people in my life who didn't like it just were ... ignoring it. I don't know. Maybe they didn't see it?

I know my mom saw it. She liked the post. But she is always "on the fence," politically, and she's more of a "peacemaker" than I am. "We could talk for hours and hours and never have any silence between us," but I'm not really sure what she thought. I assume my dad didn't like it.

It's kinda funny. "I choose silence a million times over with my dad. I just. I just can't. He knows what I think. And I know what he thinks." But I don't think either of us will ever change. I don't know. "We have small conversations about it at like family dinners and I just get so emotional that I shut down." Just a few weeks ago, everyone was talking about the news and

it got kinda tense. I just said, ‘Can we please stop talking about this? I just. I just can’t. Let’s just stop talking about it.’ And later [my sister] was like, ‘I really wish you would have not said that. ‘Cause I was ready to hash this out.’

She’s not as concerned with hurting feelings or creating a divide as I am. The weird thing is, I know my dad loves me. He won’t disown me.

I do think maybe he has instilled some fear in me, but I think I’m also worried that I’ll get caught not knowing how to respond because I don’t know how to respond to a lot. I freeze and I just can’t. My mind goes blank and I’m like.... I have so many things I want to say, and now I can’t.

There is some disconnect between what he says he believes and what he does. For example, he coaches and mentors young men in an urban basketball league. He fights for them to have equal access to all these places. “He has a good heart but to me, you can’t have a good heart and support some of the things he supports.” I’m also wrestling with if I am not speaking up, then who will? I read somewhere that half of all educators are White women. If we are all waiting for the few teachers of color to speak up, nothing will ever change. The quiet teachers like me are going to have to get over being uncomfortable. Or making someone uncomfortable. “I don’t want to hurt anyone’s feelings, but if you’re damaging a child, you should probably have some feelings hurt.”

Introducing Co-Researcher Jemma Nichols

Jemma Nichols defines herself as a traditional military brat who grew up moving from base to base with her parents. Her father was “gone a lot” and her parents “fought a lot,” but her childhood is full of memories of road trips to see grandparents and cousins. Jemma attended schools off base, but because of the military influence there was almost always racial diversity. Her parents were very explicit in their instruction about differences between people. Once, her parents sat her down in their bedroom decorated with “gigantic

yellow flower” wallpaper to have a conversation. She would “probably hear people use the N-word. And that word is not okay. Everybody is the same.” This colorblind approach was not challenged until she went to college.

Ms. Nichols attended a medium-sized midwestern university, after deciding to become a teacher. Even as a child she says she was “inherently bossy” and very good at being the teacher when she played school with her brother. She could not imagine herself teaching anything as unstructured as PE or English, so she became a math teacher. She earned dual degrees in Mathematics Education and Secondary Education. She has a Master’s degree in Curriculum and Instruction and hopes to be working on her Educational Specialist degree soon.

While attending the university, Jemma took a general education course about multiculturalism. The first book they read was *Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* by Beverly Daniel Tatum. She recalls thinking, “This is stupid. I don’t want to do this anymore. I’m not a racist! I don’t use the N-word,” after reading the author’s argument that all White people are racist. Despite finishing the semester-long course, Jemma said it took her about a decade to begin to “unravel what all of that means in [her] life,” especially as a White teacher of students of color.

Jemma knew that she wanted to move to the city so she and her fiancé would have more job opportunities. She thoroughly examined the local school districts’ student demographics, socio-economic statuses, and even their students’ state assessment performances. She also drove to each school the day before her interview to ensure she would not be lost or late. Ms. Nichols always wants to be “a super prepared White lady.” The

evening she drove to Jordan Jewell High School, nearby, an empty plot of land was on fire. “Unmarked police cars and fire trucks flew by.” She wondered, “Where the fuck am I interviewing?”

The following day, Jemma’s interview began forty-five minutes late because there was a fight. “The administrative team was all tied up dealing with students. So, [she] sat there talking to the office secretary for the longest time. She was so nice.” As she sat, Jemma watched students and teachers interact and she could only think, ‘I love this place. Please hire me.’ She has worked at Jordan Jewell High School for eight years.

Jemma offered many self-created Facebook posts to accompany her interview data. Jemma Nichols’ posts were almost all self-created. Three posts began as shared letters she wrote to people in authority, and they spun off into lengthy arguments and conversations on her Facebook page. One personal statement addressing protests and looting was liked 85 times and shared dozens of times. Jemma also shared a few resources for leading an anti-racist life, reposted a fellow teacher’s personal statement condemning racism, and offered a virtual apology to her students of color.

Before the start of our first interview, Jemma sat me down and explained that she was excited to answer questions as fully and openly as she could. She hoped that her “real” answers would help us to better implement anti-racist and culturally relevant practices at Jordan Jewell High. Jemma told me she would “pull no punches,” even if it made her, her colleagues, or our school look unflattering. I joked that she could cuss as much as she usually did when speaking, to hide my trepidation. The intensity she used when declaring she would be “real” excited and scared me. Like other co-researchers, there are moments when Jemma

uses “you,” “the facilitator,” and “Chaur” to refer to me, the researcher. Her restoried data sets follow.

Jemma’s Stories

I’m going to level with you. “I’ve had lots of small discussions about race and culture and being good teachers in my little teacher-friend group, but I joined the cohort to see if we could figure” some shit out. Like, actually make change happen. We need a clear focus and a plan. I hate all this talking and talking. Like, that’s why I hate faculty meetings. Put that shit in an email, and let’s get to work! “We have a really diverse population in our district, and we keep asking each other and ourselves, ‘Are we really serving them the best way we can?’ Plus, you know I trusted the facilitator.” I was “frankly excited about talking to other adults who gave a shit about education.” I don’t know if everyone knows this, but “teaching is really hard. Trust is hard. It’s all hard.” That’s what she said! Can I quote Michael Scott in this story?

“Especially, you know, working through a pandemic, and like participating in the group chats,” forced us to be reflective and struggle with “concepts, and analyzing your own life and baggage.” Like I’ve told the cohort, “I’ve been having discussion in smaller groups, but I feel like it’s time for me to bring other people into the discussions. I feel like I’m always learning something.” There really has been so much going on these days. Maybe it’s the pandemic or the time at home or all the racism?

I’ve been reading so many books recently. They are starting to blend together, but they keep saying that “part of becoming an anti-racist ally is not asking people of color to tell you how to fix the problem. I’ve got to figure it out on my own. So that’s where I struggle, because I will do whatever I need to do. I feel like I have no power. But I’m a White lady. I have power, but I feel so unpowered by this. And then you know, because I am a fixer. I want somebody to be like, this is how we fix it. Just do

x,y, and z and ...But just tell me what to do. Just. Just tell me what to do. I know there is no answer.

So, I was excited for the cohort because I thought we could figure out how to change JJHS. And I really thought the more we talked, “the more answers we’d get; but then I remembered: there’s no answers to anything.”

I am always worried about having discussions about race, equity, being culturally responsive, all those things in a group format. More than just my close group of teacher friends? I just don’t want to be wrong. But you are going to be wrong in this process. And it’s how you recover from being wrong that matters.

It is weird because school and teaching is all about learning. You have to have a growth mindset, you know. You keep messing up, learning and growing. “I guess I don’t really give myself that much grace” when it comes to issues of equity or culturally relevant teaching. “I feel like I have a higher duty to our students to get it right for them. I don’t want to let them down.”

One of my friends is also in the cohort. We are like “each others’ people.” Our first year at JJHS was the same. We were in the same new-to-Jordan-Jewell meetings, and we “kind of just started talking.” We seemed to have “similar ideas” about education. Then we got roped into sponsoring a school club together and through the opportunities to work together on the same goals, we developed a friendship that I don’t “even remember happening.” This week she has been texting me about her worries about her daughter’s first day of daycare. I guess she thinks I know how to help, but honestly, I have no idea. I just listen and offer support. Now, we are the “emergency contacts for” each others’ children. “They aren’t the same age; her baby is just huge!” Doesn’t matter “whether it’s personal or professional” we got each other’s backs.

One of Jordan Jewell's problems is that we just fall into our little cliques. There are social events to get to know people outside of our departments "like cookie exchanges, potlucks, and ice cream socials." Teachers tend to "fall back into [their] own little cliques. Which is fine" for me because I like my clique. But, the new teachers they don't know who to trust. So, they "fall in with the 'dark side.'" For example, maybe they are struggling and "feeling alienated and not supported" and an awful teacher ropes them in.

One thing I did not like in the cohort was the way some people, well, okay. One person seemed to dominate the conversations and it made me want to "stop listening." We were talking about how do we better serve our students of color "and she wouldn't let anyone talk." Maybe I have a problem that she is White, and I wanted to hear more from the teachers of color. "Shouldn't our teachers of color be helping lead us in that discussion? I just wanted to be like, 'Can you stop talking? Let them talk!'"

I didn't say anything to her, because it's not my place. First, she is an English teacher and I feel like they always get to read more about like equal representation, and they talk about like deep things in their classrooms. Maybe I was wrong; like maybe her info was good but I didn't get it because I don't teach the same thing as her. "Plus, 'stop talking' sounds rude."

I also had a problem with her ... voice. I don't know if she was "codeswitching. Like switching from her nice White lady voice to her real voice, or if she was trying to sorta appropriate Black vernacular." I'd only had "casual interactions with her previously," and she has a really awesome reputation as a teacher. Like she works so hard for students. She is amazing at her job. But "it rubbed me the wrong way. It felt like hyperbole" like a minstrel

show. I was offended. But also, I wasn't sure if "it was just me." So, I texted my friends after that meeting and they noticed it, too!

"I didn't want to tell you. I was afraid it would insult you. I know I should have told you." Or maybe trusted that you wouldn't be mad at me. It was just really uncomfortable because I trust her as a professional, but why would someone who works so hard for equity and students' well beings act like that? And then were you going to call her out? Like, as the facilitator, that's your job but also, I didn't want to complain because everything else was so good. And you were working so hard to keep us pushing for change and learning even during a pandemic....

I was really sensitive to her voice in all the meetings. Like, at first, I paid attention to see if that was really how she spoke or if she was only doing it sometimes. I thought maybe it was a defense mechanism. That's eventually what I decided, so I could let it go and get back to learning. I mean, "we were all there to be better, so I needed to assume positive intent. It reinforces that I know she's in the group for the right reasons. Like I know she is committed to helping our students." That is what I finally decided to focus on.

And another cohort teacher, she and I are in the same department. She's new, or she was last year, when this happened. She made a "flippant comment" that stereotyped all JJHS students as coming from "horrible home lives." I was livid because, "they hadn't earned their chops to say that. First of all, it's false. Second of all, they hadn't been here long enough to make a generalization." I wasn't having that B.S. At all. But she was really working hard in the cohort to like – create culturally relevant materials that match our student population, and I respect that.

There was actually another teacher there who I sort of had a run in with, previously. The things she shared in the cohort were good. Listening like helped me realize we have very similar views on how to teach and work with our students. Helpful. It helped fix what happened between us. I mean, it wasn't really either of our faults. An assistant principal was dealing with a student and he basically pitted her against me. He's not very good at communicating clearly, so he probably doesn't even know he was doing it. But she and I "got twisted up in something because the student was triangulating us," and then the admin made me feel like I was in trouble. She probably felt the same way.

Now, because of the cohort, "it makes me feel like I am ready to... like I will go fight with somebody who I know is there for the right reasons. Maybe her methods" aren't always what I would do, but I will defend her. I know her heart. I feel like I got to see another side of all of them. So, to summarize: "it reinforced for me that I know she is doing what is best for the kids. Having been in the cohort, I think there are future opportunities for her and I to build that relationship. I'm looking forward."

There is a difference though between a teacher who is making mistakes because they don't know and someone who is "making decisions that harm a student." Like one teacher at JJHS, she thinks she is just strict, but she "constantly needles [students] about little things that you know are going to trigger the students. Then she is like, 'Why are the kids acting this way?' So, she gets even worse," and she overreacts, and then she's "going to hold that against them." I can't trust a teacher who "makes decisions that are not in the best interest of our students. Or who doesn't make [good decisions] consistently."

“I have seen multiple kids who are good kids... and they are like, what the hell?” This one teacher, she is straight up rude to kids. She’s disorganized and she has no classroom management. And she just picks and picks and she picks at kids until they hate her. It’s really uncomfortable because me and other teachers have to deal with the students.

They trust me enough and feel comfortable enough to say, ‘Hey, Ms. Nichols. This isn’t right. I’m angry. What do I do?’ And I try to be diplomatic and not bad mouth a teacher, but I feel bad as a coworker because there are absolutely times when I’m like, ‘Look, that’s not right.’ I usually tell them what to have their parents say when they call the principal. But I really want to be like, ‘That is some bullshit! I can’t believe she has a job!’

I mean, I’m willing to give everybody another chance. I will go with your personal life decisions just fine. People can live their life, whatever way they want. But in the workplace, if you’re a teacher, if you’re actively doing things that are not best for students then I don’t trust you.

And it’s not like I have all this extra time to get to know everyone and see if they are fighting for our students. We work in a big school with like little silos for departments, and there are multiple floors and wings? Plus, I have my own life. I sorta envy new teachers. Well, like, the young, single people without as many responsibilities. They can focus on content and their instruction. “What I’m saying is that it is hard to build a good relationship with people when your plate is already full.” It’s like trust is a piece of pie. “I need people to put that pie on their plate, right now. Ideally, trust should be the pie crust that holds everything together. I just need everyone to realize we have to save room for trust-pie.” It is just so uncomfortable.

I’m still working on figuring out how to have those conversations. I’m really good at going to you or the administrator and saying, ‘This is wrong. I don’t know how to have that conversation.’ I’ve done it multiple times. That’s why admin is paid the big bucks, right? But, I also know as a colleague, I need to build trust with those people

to make sure that I can have those conversations. In a very authentic, like a friendly sort of way. Like, 'You're doing this wrong.'

I don't know. It's tricky. I want to tell you about a time I was uncomfortable with you.

Actually. I was pissed.

Earlier this summer we had a student who passed away and we were discussing the arrangements in a group. And a young teacher, who had the student wanted to go to the ceremony. It was in this very stereotypically bad part of town. And I mentioned that she should bring her husband who is biracial. And you asked me if I thought she should take him because he was Black or if it was because he was a man. And at first, I was like, 'What? No.'

And I just walked away for a bit. Then I thought, 'Okay. You're mad, but that means she's right.' "So, I went back, and we all talked about it further." You thought that the teacher would be safe by herself because of her relationship with the students who live there is her protection. I only thought of how another student I had was killed in a drive by over there. I was only thinking of the volatile nature of the area, and that coupled with the really intense emotional toil that everyone was feeling.

I was looking at it from my frame of reference. I didn't realize that my frame of reference could be flawed. I was mad when you called me out, because I've been trying to be better and then I was like, 'Oh, shit.' So, yeah. I trust you to call me out even when I get mad. I want to be better.

I definitely don't want everyone to think I'm just a White lady. Like a Karen. I worry that students and people see my straight blond hair and green eyes and think that I can't have anything in common with students. "I come from an abusive family. My parents are divorced. There's substance abuse in my family." It's a bit like my social media posts. Most of my friends were surprised that I posted that letter to the chief of police about body cams.

Or like the one that I wrote about how it was wrong to judge people who were looting after the George Floyd murder. I kept losing friends. Oh well. “Another one bites the dust.”

The post about how you can wear a mask even if you have a conceal and carry license? It went sideways fast. And everyone from work was commenting. I was like, “Please don’t fire me!” It’s not my fault. I just posted the response from the state attorney general. And then Karen Addled went off about changing Uncle Ben’s rice and Aunt Jemima and somehow tied in taking down confederate statues? And defunding the police? I don’t know. I was trying to tell her that “whitewashing history” and omitting voices was problematic and “hurtful to students.”

Then other teachers were asking her to explain what the heck she was saying, and she just confused even more people. I think like four teachers responded to her directly, but who knows how many just read the thread and thought.... Then a former student called her “incoherent,” and she told him that he wasn’t like, brave enough to be a police officer? It was a dumpster fire. Hot damn mess. “I shut that shit down.” She can’t start insulting a student on *my* page.

I try to make sure I use my White lady power very strategically. I always go as high up as I can to find an answer or get a resource. I don’t care if it’s the State Attorney General, Chief of Police, School Superintendent, School Board President in the wealthiest district in the state. I think that helps people trust that I’m not like blowing smoke up their asses. You know what I mean? I don’t know. I feel like it gives my White lady voice some power. And then my social media friends, they can like trust that I am not trying to convince them of my opinion. I’m coming with the facts!

But why I bring it up, is because I may be just a White lady, but I am not a stereotype. It takes courage to speak up about racism. Because you never know what the consequences will be. “I never know if I am going to get in trouble for something I posted on Facebook at work. I joke, ‘please don’t fire me,’ but for real. Please don’t fire me!”

And even with my family. Well, my mom and I have some good conversations. We took time to talk about the accusation that “all White people are racist,” and “what White privilege really is.” But my dad? At one point, God bless him, at one point he said,

‘Why don’t we have a White History month?’ And I said, ‘Dad, every month is White History month.’ So, the fact that he’s not saying that anymore, and like he understands that things are not the same; that’s huge progress. But, like, he and I still have a long way to go, and I have to pick and choose where I’m gonna challenge him on those problematic thought processes.

We talked right after the Washington Football Team changed their name, and he was asking if I thought that like the Steelers football team was offensive to thieves. Or if the Giants were going to have to change their mascot. Because midget is derogatory, so giants must be too. He was joking, but not really. I don’t know what to say to him; he isn’t going to change. There are just some things I don’t have the energy to deal with. I have to pick and choose.

“I’m proud of the growth I’ve made.” Because I decided to set a clear focus for myself. It is “social justice.” I “found the [police department] budget for the county and their amended proposal for 2021.” I wrote the chief and said, “Hey, this article is from 2019. It said we were getting body cams. What’s the update on the status of the body cams?” I may be “just a White lady,” but I will not stop “fighting for what’s right.” I think if you... and then, like if you could help the school as the instructional coach “find a very clear focus” for

the upcoming school year.... A focus would help us “focus energies and look at our web of influence, and take the discussions ... and put them into action.”

Summary

The above co-researcher's introductory profiles provided a quick glance into who the participants are, where and how they grew up, why they became teachers, and their years in education. Their stories offered opportunities for the reader to “see from the point of view of the participant in the midst of what is happening” (Greene, 1995, p. 10). Most reconcile their concerns about the trust needed to implement culturally relevant instruction. Further, they understood that courageous conversations about race were required. As previously noted, when educators are taught how to courageously address wayward colleagues, their behaviors form a “positive peer pressure” (p. 53) that “forces a peer to engage at a high moral level” (Muhammad, 2018, p. 53). The following section offers a glimpse into their collective notions about trust as well as conversations about race and culturally relevant instruction. I report on the findings that formed emerging themes by data source, which also communicates common themes and sub-themes or interpretations found within co-researchers’ stories.

Reporting on Findings: Emerging Themes

In this section, I unravel the narrative themes that developed through coding data. Participants’ stories were traversed in three commonplaces: temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). These commonplaces allowed me to examine the complex nature of each participant’s story, while puzzling through “relational composition of people’s lived experiences both inside and outside of an inquiry and, as well, to imagine the future possibilities of these lives” (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Clandinin and Connelly believed that

“teacher education is compartmentalized – it begins, it ends, it starts over and over again in one-shot training sessions” and then their learnings and understandings move into and out of the classroom into their personal lives, “as they tell, and re-live and re-tell, cover stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, p. 25). Narrative research is a method of “valorizing” individual’s experiences while providing a deeper look into the “social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within” each shared story (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 68). Asking teachers to share their stories through in-depth interviews, documents and artifacts provided opportunities for deep analysis, while giving voice and validity to the participants’ unique experiences. Table 5 provides an image of the themes common in the co-researchers stories.

Findings from Artifacts and Documents

For clarity, Table 5 demonstrates the reoccurring themes and their interpretive codes by the two co-researchers with artifacts, Liz Miranda and Jan Smith, and the four participants who provided artifacts, Liz Miranda, Jan Smith, Laura Collins and Jemma Nichols.

Table 5

Artifact and Document Analysis by Co-Researcher, Theme and Interpretive Code

	Liz Miranda	Jan Smith	Jemma Nichols	Laura Collins
Artifacts				
<i>Inequity</i>	X	X		
White Privilege	X	X		
Documents				
<i>Inequity</i>	X	X	X	X

(table continues)

	Liz Miranda	Jan Smith	Jemma Nichols	Laura Collins
Named Injustice	X	X	X	X
Reflection	X	X	X	X
<i>Application</i>	X	X	X	X
Change - Talking		X	X	X
Change - Action	X	X	X	X
<i>Silence</i>	X	X	X	X
Fear	X	X	X	X
Negative Consequences	X	X	X	X
<i>Trusted Teachers</i>	X	X	X	X
Know/Do	X	X	X	X
Reputation	X	X	X	
Hurt Students	X	X	X	X
Safety	X	X		

Note. Data sources appear in bold. Themes appear in italics. Interpretive codes are centered.

X marks the presence.

Examining Liz Miranda’s and Jan Smith’s artifacts produced one theme, *inequity*. Inequity was defined as any example where there was “a lack of fairness or injustice” (inequity, 2020). Both Liz’s and Jan’s images worked together to offer an unobtrusive view into the inequity plaguing both women’s lives. Liz’s artifact and accompanying commentary centered our conversation in a way that helped me read her artifact more fully. “Since artifacts can’t speak for themselves, researchers need to infer their history or use them as conversation pieces with participants to learn more about the relationship between objects and humans” (Saldana & Omasta, 2018, p. 74). The *White privilege* interpretive code examined in the artifact fueled the *inequity* theme, like Jan’s artifact. Without Liz’s identification of the many homes of her connected relatives, I would never have known how much of the town belonged to her family. I did find it interesting that there were no small

homes, or expansive estates with land on the outskirts of the map. The image offered a singular focus, and almost no one outside of the family was included. Like Liz said, “It’s not fair.” Inequity marked the town, and Liz’s frustration.

In the case of Jan Smith’s artifact, the visual horrors of police violence merged into an interpretive code (*White privilege*) and eventually became a part of the theme. *White privilege* is the many systemic, social and yet invisible advantages that accompany White people (McIntosh, 1990). Liz was clearly upset and “disgusted” by her powerlessness to separate her life from the unwanted White privilege her family passed on to her. Liz did not offer any ideas on how to work through the inequity she was disgusted by; however, like the artifact, she tried to relegate those feelings to a dark corner of her life. Incidences of police violence were plentiful throughout the study’s interviews, documents, artifacts and my own journal responses. While Liz strained to put her feelings about White privilege into words, and when she did, they were filled with anger and frustration, Jan Smith used no words. Her artifact told a similarly powerful, frustrating and anger-filled story - through a reposted Facebook image.

Analysis of the 39 documents generated four themes, *Inequity*, *Application*, *Silence* and *Trusted Teachers*, in order of their prevalence. The theme *Inequity* like the artifact analysis, was also encountered in the documents, however in the documents it was comprised of two interpretive codes, *Named Injustice* and *Reflection*. Named injustices included any specifically named examples of injustice like racism or inequity, as well as any times participants commented that something was “not fair.” The specific examples of injustice were individual descriptive codes such as, “Breonna Taylor,” “George Floyd,”

“structural racism,” “police brutality,” as well as comments that addressed All Lives Matter statements and motives for protests. All four co-researchers with documents (Liz, Jan, Laura and Jemma) were very specific in their naming of injustices. The range of named injustices was far more specific on social media as well as in the participants’ emails than within the interviews. I believe this is due to the nature of intentionality that goes into reposting or sharing on social media.

Reflection, the second interpretive code was embedded throughout all written posts. Laura Collins stated, “Writing is how I make sense of the world,” and Jemma Nichols, Jan Smith and Liz Miranda all explained in their emails and personal posts that they had engaged in much reflection before deciding to share. The limited-view snapshots Warren (2018) warned against interpreting as the whole story were very specific and thought out. When any post or comment can be a “damning pejorative,” simply reposting already created content such as the “declaration that ‘All Lives Matter’ should be understood by many today as an in-your-face rejection of ‘Black Lives Matter,’ and not as a friendly reminder” of the only positive, cover stories teachers could share (Subotnik, 2016). Specifically naming examples of injustice for friends and followers to see and possibly comment on is the perfect example of breaking the White “conspiracy of silence” around race and inequity (Sue, 2015).

The second theme, *Application* consisted of two interpretive codes, *Change Comes from Talking, and Change - Through Actions*. At no time during the PD sessions were members explicitly asked to apply their learnings within their classrooms or outside of their schools. I was pleasantly surprised to see evidence of application throughout the participants’ emails and social media posts, and I was even more elated to see evidence of participants

acting as allies. Allies are those teachers who belong to the socially dominate group (White) but “actively work toward the eradication of prejudicial practices they witness in both their personal and professional lives” (Sue et al., 2019, p. 132). Actively working through the conspiracy of silence demonstrated application of culturally relevant ideals and strategies.

Change worked to highlight the participants’ breaking from the conspiracy of silence that permeates polite society and their abilities and methods toward applying their learnings from the cohort throughout their lives. Change is defined as “to make or become different” (change, 2020). Participants Jan Smith and Jemma Nichols both explained that *change comes from talking*. Even though Liz, Laura and I all said our first instincts were to stay silent when uncomfortable, we also discussed that change is most evident when we speak up. The descriptive codes that made up *Change - Through Action* were very specific to each of the four participants, despite all expressing the same desire to change a part of their behavior or actions in order to become a more just person and teacher. Sue (2015) explained that until White educators examined their own constructions of race and bias, they will continuously silence race talk, and forever perpetuate an unjust status quo. These four participants, Liz, Jan, Laura and Jemma demonstrated the unpacking of their own racial lives and told the stories in social media and electronic mail posts.

The theme *Silence* was defined as actively stopping conversation, and it was easy to identify on social media posts. Refusing to comment on or introduce a post or choosing to “ghost” while an active conversation or argument raged on their own page were classified as evidence of silence. Participants were silent for two overarching reasons, *Fear* and *Negative Consequences*. Those markers became interpretative codes that

held cacophonous descriptive codes. Often the descriptive codes were offered up as preemptive apologies or admissions of past mistakes.

Decades ago, when I was in high school, an English teacher explained that after writing a thesis statement, we needed to “take the wind out of their sails” or remove power from an opponent’s argument by finding the flaws in our position and addressing them openly. These moments in participants’ posts reminded me time and time again of the teacher’s instruction.

When Laura Collins argued on Facebook, she wrote, “I admit, I am not the best person to ask about this” (the topic of equitable access to post-secondary education), however she followed up with the fact that she worked in a school district with low socio-economic status for eight years. Out of everyone in the conversation, she was the only school teacher, and she was the only person with extensive knowledge of students in poverty going to college.

This self-minimizing of authority or expertise happened with all co-researchers, even me. I wondered how this self-silencing affected trust, and if this was specific to women in a journal response. I wrote,

This minimizing ourselves and our experiences is making me mad. It’s like when someone apologizes before asking a question. Or when someone shrinks her responses because of her own self-doubt and insecurity. I am someone. It’s me. Why do I do it? Why are the participants doing it? I get doing it on social media when you have a wide, sorta- unsafe audience. But why do I do it with colleagues I’ve known forever? And why do the participants and I keep doing it with people we know and trust? Do we really trust them if we keep reigning our truest selves in? Or is it more an issue of minimizing ourselves because we are women and we’ve been conditioned to? I don’t know. I don’t like it. (August 28, 2020)

Participants used their fear of an inadequate argument to address feeling *uncomfortable*, their limited *life experiences*, the idea that they are “*just a White*

lady,” their personality and reputation for being a *peacemaker*, and that they, too have made “*mistakes*” in the past. Additionally, the participants explicitly stated that they did not want to “*offend*” or “*argue and disagree*” with readers. Sue et. al. (2019) wrote that it is the “Diffusion of responsibility, fear of retaliation, fear of losing friends, not wanting to get involved, and other anticipated negative consequences” (p. 132) that keep participants silent. Liz, Jan, Laura and Jemma all worried about the negative consequences associated with speaking up about culturally relevant teaching and anti-racist practices. Jan and Liz both mentioned being harshly judged by the people in their lives; Liz went so far as to request that the cohort not “hate” her for her family’s actions.

Judgement was nothing to joke about when the consequences can lose you a job, or relationships with others.

Trusted Teachers is the fourth theme found during document analysis. A trusted teacher is one who a participant either explicitly stated she trusts, or someone who she demonstrated trusting actions toward. These actions were derived from Tschannen-Moran's definition of trust: the interdependent five components (benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability, and competence) all working in harmony. Literature shows teachers cannot break through the miasma of systemic inequity, low expectations, White-privilege superiority and silence without developing strong trusting relationships (Bryk, 2010; Eppinga et al., 2018; Forsyth & Adams, 2013; Goddard et al., 2009; Hoy & Hoy, 2006; Johnson et al., 2017; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

When teachers trust each other, they can work together to meet specific objectives, and they know a variety of information about each other. The interpretive code *Know/Do* was

created as a nod to a student-friendly way to communicate lesson objectives, and because it is very fitting for the nature of a trusting relationship. Trusting teachers *know* each other's philosophies about teaching, students, and how those philosophies apply to broader contexts like the world outside of school. In an email to the group, Ms. Liz Miranda shared that she knew “we all agree that education is the great equalizer.” She expressed frustration that other teachers’ and school leaders’ actions did not support this philosophy. In addition, trusting teachers know and *do* work together to *solve problems*, ask *questions* and *challenge each other* to be their best selves. The cohort agreed: teachers would gently let each other know if their actions were problematic.

When teachers are not in the same physical space, they are described by their competence and reputation with students. Recurrently, participants described a teacher by reputation. *Reputation* became an interpretive code with both positive and negative connotations for trust. Suciu et. al. (2012), made plain the link between trust and reputation. Describing trust as the “liaison” between reputation and organizational culture, if teachers have a reputation for not adhering to the sacred stories of a school (teachers teach *all* students, well) trust will be broken. The authors stated that in a school, “trust, cooperation, reputation, innovation and creativity are the triggers and the fuel at the same time” (p. 334). Trusted teachers were described by Jan as those who, “worked hard for students,” and “had a ton of experience with kids of all ages and backgrounds.” Liz described a teacher who it was “an honor to work with” as “incredible,” and Jemma described her trusted teachers as “friends” who “are beautiful, smart and so. damn. right” on a Facebook post.

Contrarily, when coworkers commented on Facebook posts, the participants refused to allow them to *hurt students* or *hurt others* – in word or deed. Liz, Jan, Laura and Jemma moved swiftly to shut down instances where students or others could be hurt, so long as it was online. Laura and Jan implied that hurting students (whether intentional or not) meant that one is not a good teacher. Knowing that they have in the past held and been complicit in teaching practices, pedagogy or perceptions that are problematic hurt them, personally. Burns (2020) implored that we educators work to push past a teacher’s negative reputation and the intentional or accidental hurt to “never stop offering and seeking such help” (p. 50). When we are unable to reach through the hurt, he wrote that as educators and activists, “we fail; it is always a result of turning inward rather than outward and thus unraveling to the point where we become lost in our own tangled quests instead of seeing others who could add their light to ours and help us clear the paths to justice” (p. 50). Admitting to personal flaws and mistakes that do not “make [you] sound like your best self” in front of teachers is evidence of strong trust. These characteristics are confirmation of Secret Stories, which are not told unless trust is very high (Aoki, 2008; Clandinin & Connelly, 1996).

Safety, the final interpretive category ties perfectly to the *Trusted Teachers* theme. Safety was identified when teachers noted feeling “safe” or “comfortable” with others, and it joined other examples of safety to become an interpretive code. In order for teachers to trust, they must feel safe. Maslow’s (1946) Hierarchy of Needs recognized the human desire for safety as the second most immediate need, after physical needs such as food, water and shelter are met. Sumathipala (2020) recognized the need for healthcare workers operating in virtual spaces to also need trust and safety; when a person is psychologically safe, she is

encouraged to “think freely, and take risks which are key aspects of learning, with confidence that there is mutual respect and trust within the team” (p. 54). Additionally, Sumathipala (2020) characterized psychological safety as a group phenomenon. There were very no instances of safety collected from the co-researchers' Facebook posts. This is most likely due to the absence of the “safe” audience. Instead, safety came from Liz and Jan’s emails to the PD cohort.

The safety Liz found in our cohort sparked Jan’s openness. Both women shared emails with the group within a few days of each other. I personally responded to Liz’s email with the following quote, “I have to consciously choose discomfort and constantly choose to trust that you all (my homies [in the cohort]) know my heart, so if I misspeak or say something crazy... you’ll gently correct me and/or won’t hold it against me.” To Jan, I reiterated that I appreciated her vulnerability with the group, and that “her heart shined through.” I told her that her email and Liz’s were “models” of openness and trust. The next time the group met, almost all members shared very vulnerable experiences from their pasts. Safety and trust are woven together to form an impenetrable parachute for group members leaping into the unknown.

Examining Liz, Jan, Laura and Jemma’s social media and email documents produced four themes, *Named Inequity*, *Application*, *Silence*, and *Trusted Teachers*. All data gleaned from the documents offered a multi-layered and cohesive view. These documents told the stories of the teachers’ experiences, one that would not have been captured through interview alone.

Findings from Semi-Structured Interviews

I was eager to interview participants because I wanted to guide the focus of our conversation, as opposed to gathering documents that I had little to no control over. Also, the COVID-19 Stay-At-Home order was recently lifted, and I was excited to see teachers in person. My study explored teachers' experiences with the phenomenon of trust after working in a culturally relevant teaching professional learning cohort. This idea was explored through questions which probed into the teachers' feelings of trust in their colleagues, personal examples of working with those in the cohort, as well as the challenges within our school that the participants needed to overcome to trust colleagues, and how they were using their learnings in their lives.

DeMarrais (2004) wrote that one interview type is not better than another, as long as the interview produces rich data. The four semi-structured interviews were flexible; they allowed me to focus the structured questions on specific topics for all participants, but frequently I asked follow-up or additional, impromptu, probing questions. Often, what was slated for an hour-long interview stretched into an hour and a half (and twice, two-hours). Participants and I digressed, processed and thought through possible implications of our lived-experiences in the middle of interviews. Neighborhood children played next door, dogs barked at trash collectors, spouses interrupted and derailed lines of thought, and once huge bumblebees dive bombed Jemma. Midway through an interview with Laura Collins, a man who looked exactly like a local NFL quarterback entered the café, and she and I discussed football for about ten minutes. Neither of us are die-hard football fans. Once during a meeting with Cara in the same café, a woman entered who looked like my recently deceased

mother. I was overwhelmed with emotion and had to excuse myself to regain composure. Cara and I talked about loving our mothers, fiercely. Teresa received a text message from her newly-driving daughter, and she and I spoke about our growing kids, and how scary motherhood can be. Lucy and I somehow began talking about supporting colleagues whose sons took their lives. We both cried, and if it were not for the transcription of the conversation, I would have no recollection of how we ended up in that moment.

These moments of unified reflection and open discussion were some of my favorite. Usually, I made statements like, “Well, there’s one more thing I will need to journal about, later” or “I guess that will be your dissertation topic.” Once, Jemma and I joked that if all the participants and I all get doctorates, maybe we could address the issues in the Jordan Jewell school district. Lucy summarized my feelings in a statement that I have quoted multiple times since she plainly stated, “This. Right here. This is the trust making.” The four interviews with each of the seven participants generated over thirty-four hours of discussion and thick rich data from what “the people who produced the materials think about their world” (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007, p. 133). These data were categorized into four themes: *Trusted Teachers Talk, Silence, Barriers to Trust and Application*. All themes offered a cohesive look at trust that varied in the details. Table 6 details the themes and interpretive codes by participant that originated from the wealth of interview data.

Table 6

Interview Analysis by Theme and Interpretive Code

	Lucy Maxwell	Teresa Ott	Liz Miranda	Cara Waxon	Jan Smith	Laura Collins	Jemma Nichols
Trusted Teachers Talk	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Openness	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Listen	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Know/Do	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Silence	X	X		X	X	X	X
Safety	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Fear	X		X	X	X	X	
Negative Consequences	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Critical Conversations		X	X	X	X	X	X
Barriers to Trust	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Physical	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Age & Experience	X				X		X
Negative School Culture	X	X	X		X	X	X
Reputation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Application	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
I Don't Know	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Reflection	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

(table continues)

	Lucy Maxwell	Teresa Ott	Liz Miranda	Cara Waxon	Jan Smith	Laura Collins	Jemma Nichols
World	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Family	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Change	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Speak Up	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Note. Themes appear in bold. X marks the presence of the theme or interpretive code.

Trusted Teachers Talk

Trusted Teachers Talk is the first theme found during interview analysis. A similar theme was previously defined in the document analysis section as occurring when one a participant either explicitly stated that she trusts someone, or when the participant demonstrated trusting actions toward another. The *Trusted Teachers Talk* theme varies only in one word: talk. Talking however modifies the theme in ways similar to water modifying anything it touches. Discussion, like water can act as a method to transport important materials and ideas. There is a reason cities spring up near waterways. Trust springs up when people talk (Muhammad, 2018; Tschannen-Moran, 2015). Relationships are developed in response to discussions. Words are powerful; sometimes speaking works like a tsunami – destroying relationships, structures, and any sense of normalcy in instances of horror. Sometimes, conversations operate like the trickle that carved the Grand Canyon – slowly, steadily eroding all around. Water and discussion can both be harnessed to make one’s work easier or more effective. Bodies of water offer wonderful respite from the world’s frenzied pace, and I, for one look forward to TGIF chats without time limits to unwind. Talking, discussing, chatting, speaking, arguing and conversing were mentioned hundreds of times within the participants’ interviews. Talking is not only what Trusting Teachers do, it is how they develop trust, repair trust, destroy trust, and show evidence of trusting others.

A teacher-to-teacher trusting relationship consists of the five components of trust, benevolence, honest, openness, reliability and competence (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). As the co-researchers told their stories, evidence of trust tangled and tied ideas and teachers together. Trust is the phenomena being studied, so its markers became naturally reoccurring

code that extended and linked to an interpretive code, while simultaneously forming its own all-encompassing theme and reaching into all parts of the other explored themes. The *Trusted Teachers Talk* theme was comprised of the following interpretive codes: *Openness*, *Listen*, and *Know/Do*. Each of these interpretive codes were formed as envelopes for many descriptive codes and will be elucidated upon in turn.

Openness. Openness is a component of trust defined as vulnerability through sharing feelings, thoughts and intentions (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Education creates an atmosphere that requires privacy, and because educators are expected to be moral leaders in the community, openness is carefully guarded. Teachers are plainly told not to be open with students; sharing one's political affiliations, values, beliefs and personal life with students or other teachers can result in disciplinary action. Many educators fear being accused of crossing a line of appropriateness. When teachers are open with one another it displays an intentional, moral choice (Baier, 1986).

Throughout the interviews, every participant brought up being open with other teachers both in and out of the cohort. When the participants were open, they were open to sharing their experiences in and out of the classroom, and they considered themselves openminded and open to change. The two newest teachers (Teresa Ott and Cara Waxon) discussed being open far less than the veteran teachers. Veteran teachers discussed openness in proportion to their number of years teaching. Lucy Maxwell, the teacher with thirty-five years teaching led the group. Lucy Maxwell was the only co-researcher who plainly divulged that openness came with age and experience. Jan Smith was the only seasoned teacher with discrepant data. Despite over a decade of teaching experience, Jan's openness mirrored that

of a new teacher. Tschannen-Moran (2014) reminded readers that openness does not have to mean sharing everything with everyone. Teachers can work with transparency, so fellow teachers do not wonder about intentions or fear that they or their students will be hurt (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Ms. Smith's self-protection did not prevent her from wanting to listen and learn from others' experiences.

Listen. The second interpretive code, *Listen* is closely intertwined with *Openness*. The willingness to listen to another's perspective requires someone to openly share their perspective, and the listener must be open to understanding another way. Listening is more than taking in auditory sound; it is "considering with thoughtful attention" (listen, 2020). The co-researchers discussed listening to others as frequently as they did being open. Unlike *Openness*, the interpretative code *Listen* was not mentioned in proportion to a co-researcher's years of experience.

The participants found listening to cohort members a great way "to learn so much about people," and experiences "outside your own world" according to Lucy Maxwell. *Learning* was a descriptive code within that all participants mentioned in relation to listening. Liz Miranda's comment tied the ideas of openness, listening and learning together when she stated, "I liked getting to listen to other [members'] perspectives. Although I feel like I'm open and I'm willing to learn and be receptive, there's stuff I just don't live."

I wrote about the impact this topic had on me personally, in my reflective journal.

Everyone and I mean everyone keeps saying how much they like listening to each other. Background, experiences, stories... doesn't really matter what they call it. All participants say they learn best when they listen to someone with a different experience. I keep singing Beyonce's "Listen" while I'm out and about. I think that her character – or the songwriter? - totally understood the concept of listening the way the participants do. Queen B sings about how she needs Clarence to LISTEN to

“the song in [her] heart,” her dreams, what’s on her mind, what she is feeling, and to her voice. Listening isn’t just hearing stuff. It is understanding all those things that make a person who they are. I wonder if the participants feel that. Do they feel like when they listen to someone in the cohort, they are understanding all that depth? Probably, because I feel like I really get to know each person as soon as they open up, and I can listen. (August 12, 2020)

Clandinin, Huber, Steeves and Li (2011) eloquently stated that listening to another’s story is a process requiring “profoundly complex” responsibility because (p. 44), “human lives are composed on landscapes shaped by dominant social, cultural, linguistic, familial and institutional narratives in which stories are understood only in terms of their usefulness in relation with casting blame, justifying actions and, sometimes, solving problems” (p. 44).

Capitalizing on this profound process, co-researchers all expressed learning the most from the members who differed from them. This idea was coded as *Different*, and it was applied when participants discussed hearing from teachers that varied in their experiences. At times this meant a different religion -one cohort member shared that she was Jewish and this difference was brought up by half the participants; sometimes participants pointed out that teachers of color had different experiences; once a teacher shared that she was homeless as a teen, so her experiences were mentioned as different. Also, the level the teacher worked at (elementary, middle or high school) and the school within the Jordan Jewell district were all categorized as a difference from the participants. Differences and disagreements did not prevent the co-researchers from talking to and trusting other cohort members. Only Lucy told multiple stories of disagreeing with cohort members. Jemma summarized that as long as a teacher was not hurting students, they could disagree on almost any topic and still have a great working relationship.

Know/Do. Another interpretive code shared between the document and interview analyses was *Know/Do*. Like the document analysis, trusting teachers *know* each other's philosophies about teaching, students, and how those philosophies apply to broader contexts like the world outside of school. They discover these ideas through discussion. When teachers trust each other, their “dos” are reciprocal. Reciprocity of actions are seen in myriad moments that all populated the study’s stories.

Grace, or forgiveness is the first of these examples. Every participant discussed receiving grace as well as offering grace to their colleagues when discussion of taboo topics occurred. Trusting teachers *do support* each other. Support takes form inside and outside of the school day. Teachers worked to help each other problem solve how to handle issues that popped up in the classroom and navigated personal issues. Mangrum (2010) determined that the simplest path to trust is to ask teachers to have open discussions about frustrations and issues in their classrooms, and then to use that to establish fellowship to put problem-solving plans into action. This collegiality in and out of the classroom helps improves both teacher’s overall effectiveness (Deal & Peterson, 2016; DuFour, 2007; Fullan, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2004; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Waters et al., 2004).

Trusting teachers *do* ask each other *challenging questions*. These questions ask that the teacher consider another perspective or way of accomplishing a task. Most frequently, this took place within school-related topics. Vulnerability and openness are high when these challenging questions occur. When Jan Smith trusts a coworker, she seeks out “feedback” and “advice” about how to “handle a student issue or something that didn’t go well in the classroom.” This allows the teacher an opportunity to ask challenging questions about her

own praxis. Because Jemma trusts a colleague, she asks her to play “devil’s advocate” when looking at her lessons, instructional practices or even writing letters to parents. Muhammad (2018) wrote that “when a school has a healthy culture, the professionals within it will seek the tools that they need to accomplish their goal of universal student achievement; they will give a school new life by overcoming the staff division that halts transformation” (p. 25). Even with these pockets of trusting teachers, openly listening, talking and working together, rarely, do they have challenging or critical conversations about taboo topics (like race, gender identity, sexuality and politics) without an established protocol to follow. This will be analyzed in the theme *Silence*.

Silence

Silence is the next theme present in the interview analysis. Teachers remained silent when they did not feel *safe*, were riddled with *fear*, believed there would be *negative consequences* associated with speaking up, and when they felt discomfort at holding *critical conversations*. “Making informed judgements about the significance of nonoccurrences can be among the most important contributions an evaluator can make...” (Patton, 2015, p. 379). Silence, especially on topics that are integral to a school’s purpose or a teacher’s purpose is concerning. As a member of this school community, I was prepared before interviewing participants to encounter silence within not only the participants’ stories, but also around specifically challenging topics like race and inequity. Castagano (2008, p. 315) made clear that “White educators are reluctant to name things that are perceived as uncomfortable or threatening to the established social order.”

Participants frequently chose not to name specific inequities or injustices. Unlike the many named inequities in the document analysis, in interviews participants were silent. White females are typically socialized to avoid conflict and offending others; thus, discussion of topics like race and culture are met with silence (Muhammad, 2018; Sue, 2015). Rather than saying “dealing with racism,” Cara asked me if I was “dealing with crap.” Teresa often substituted the words “stuff” and “things” or the pronoun “it” for racism and inequity. Jan, Jemma and Laura named specific inequities like the deaths of George Floyd or white privilege, and silently substituted words like “all this” or “sad stuff” for them moments later. I could not identify any times Liz Miranda made similar silent substitutions in our conversations. I find this interesting because document analysis of her Facebook posts and emails suggested that she was very uncomfortable speaking her lived experiences within the group a mere six months previously. Time and trust have been on Liz’ side.

Safety. *Safety* is the first interpretive code in the *silence* theme. As demonstrated in the document analysis section, safety and trust go hand in hand. For teachers to trust each other enough to speak openly to each other, they must feel safe (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2015). Maslow’s (1946) Hierarchy of Needs recognized safety as the second most important need for humans. Safety is a feature of effective schools (UChicago Impact, 2018). The 5Essentials survey asks if teachers feel safe at school (alluding to school violence and procedures to create an environment conducive to learning), and it asks if teachers feel safe sharing “feelings, frustrations and problems” with teachers (alluding to a social, emotional and instructional support). An effective school culture must make teachers feel safe both ways (UChicago Impact, 2018). Importantly, there is a difference between

choosing silence because of an unsafe or uncomfortable feeling, and the active silencing from another person. The latter implies an act of reprimand (Castagno, 2008). None of the participants were actively silenced by another teacher or administrator. Their silences were self-imposed as a form of social decorum.

Fear. All but two participants specifically used words like worried, scared, terrified, or concerned. These marked instances of *fear*, the second reason for silence. Participants were absolutely terrified of accidentally *saying the wrong thing* and offending someone, *making mistakes* that hurt others (especially students), and being *judged* for those mistakes. Laura Collins admitted that “saying the wrong thing was just fear, or insecurity.” Jemma Nichols elaborated, “I don’t think students have figured out that we [teachers] think so much about things that are not in our curriculum.” The thinking about challenging topics is happening; actually giving voice to the ideas is still prevented by fear.

Negative Consequences. Similar to the document analysis, interview participants were silent when they feared *negative consequences* may be attached to their words. These consequences most frequently took the form of judgement from other teachers. Like Laura Collins, Jan had a difficult time determining if her fear of negative consequences was valid. Jan and Laura both made statements attributing their very rational fears to personal insecurities or personality types. These participants typified the emotional roller coaster that accompanies challenging sacred stories within a school’s culture (Mathis, Henry & Darland, 2017). Jan Smith’s “stomach really turn[ed]” when she thought teachers may judge her unfairly. In her 2004 dissertation on the silences women psychologists create when discussing race and ethnicity, Hope identified physical and emotional costs of silence on the

women's bodies. Jan's stomachache was a common response to fear. All participants discussed the possible negative consequences of their actions having a lasting effect on their students with statements like, "once you say the wrong thing, you've lost them forever." Despite the fear, none of the teachers mentioned silencing their students. Participants believed that despite their discomfort and unpreparedness, if issues arose in the classroom, it *was* their place to have a discussion.

Unique to analysis of the interview statements, every co-researcher except Lucy did not feel that speaking up, addressing problematic behaviors or dealing with inequities with faculty at Jordan Jewell High was 'their place.' The phrase *not my place* carried the sacred story of the inherent power dynamic participants honored in their refusal to break the silence (Grbich, 2004, 2013; Sue, 2015). This sacred story, like all others was anonymously written by the cultural power structures at work in the teachers' experiences and consciousnesses (Crites, 1971). Preserving the status quo of a sacred story occurs because there is no critical reflection or move to challenge colleagues (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990a). Jordan Jewell High's "Comfortable Collaborative Culture" is evident when teachers are polite (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). Moreover, "honest and frank conversations about important issues" cannot take place without first establishing trust (Johnson et al., 2017, p. 127). Research confirms that principals who focus their attention on instructional leadership while addressing a school's sacred stories and culture improve student achievement (Fullan, 2010, 2014, 2016; Johnson et al., 2017; Marzano et al., 2005; Seashore-Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2015).

Critical Conversations. As alluded to in the *Trusting Teachers Talk* theme, within the *Know/Do* interpretive code, teachers who trust each other have challenging conversations. When there is no or very little trust, teachers seep in silence. The Critical conversations interpretive code was comprised of discomfort and silence instead of an actual conversation. Critical conversations are those where teachers work to address issues around how taboo topics like race, ethnicity, language, immigration status, socio-economic status and gender identity impact student success (Johnson et al., 2017; Leithwood et al., 2013; Milner & Laughter, 2014). The women stopped themselves from speaking when they felt uncomfortable, and often they chalked those feelings to personal insecurities, despite research and literature suggesting that discomfort is a natural response and not a personal flaw (Hope, 2004; Matais et al., 2017, Sue, 2015).

Ms. Waxon also asked for a procedure for having critical conversations with colleagues. Even surrounded by cohort colleagues, she worried “just about anytime [a problematic teacher] opened their mouths.” A small portion of our dialogue about critical conversations with teachers in our school follows:

CW: There are just some teachers – some brains in here that I am scared of.

CJ: I guess I really struggle with calling people out in front of others. And so, unless it’s like super offensive. Usually, I’ll just send a little email or a DM or something afterward.

CW: Like a little note?

CJ: Sure.

CW: Like?

CJ: “Hey racist! How ya doing? Also, please say Latinex instead of classifying all our students as Mexicans” on pre-made notecards.

CW: I’m gonna need to get some of those cards.

This moment of levity raised important notions. The participants and I all wrestled with the desire to have the needed conversations with faculty, while trying to hold silence, fear of negative consequences, and our own sacred stories of appropriateness within our roles at bay.

Once again, Lucy Maxwell was the only co-researcher who jumped into critical conversations with teachers, as well as students, parents and administration. Her stories began, were built upon, and were bound up in working for her students' best interests. Boldly, she declared, "It's my job to fight for this child." Rather than feeling uncomfortable about having conversations like the other co-researchers and I, Lucy let the "frustration level" she had about teachers "who just [thought] 'this student's not worth it'" fuel her determination to speak up and address the other person.

Barriers to Building Trust

The next reoccurring theme identified, *Barriers to Building Trust* was solidified by three interpretive codes. Each interpretive code featured a different type of barrier to teacher-to-teacher trust relationships: physical barriers, age and experience, and the most toxic barrier to trust, negative school culture.

Physical Barriers. *Physical barriers* to trust building were prevalent as well as easily anticipated. Every participant complained that there was never enough *time* to work with, talk with, or even focus on anything besides teaching with colleagues. The layout of Jordan Jewell came up multiple times. Jemma Nichols said, "The physical layout makes it hard to develop" relationships with other teachers. The horseshoe-shaped building has multiple floors and wings. Teresa Ott stated her classroom was removed from the teachers she liked, as well as those who had similar philosophies and teaching practices. Cara Waxon only knew

her mentor teacher and people in her department, but she “never had time to talk to anyone,” anyway. Laura Collins perceived how her energy was better spent working on being a good teacher rather than walking to see a colleague to have a conversation. Liz Miranda struggled to connect with teachers in our virtual spaces. As the COVID-19 pandemic impacted our school district, our meetings were relegated to Microsoft Teams. Even with face-to-face conversations about controversial topics, Liz still did not feel comfortable initiating conversations with teachers from the cohort. Although a leader cannot rebuild a school to remove physical barriers to trust, she can find ways to restructure time and classroom assignment in democratic ways to influence instructional practices, so teachers can work productively (Dewey, 2015).

Age and Experience. The next barrier to building trust was *Age and Experience*. Jemma Nichols rationalized that most new teachers were young, single and/or childless and therefore had fewer responsibilities. She hypothesized that the freedom opened their schedules and time for meaningful connections between colleagues. Lucy Maxwell shared that new teachers, specifically young new teachers were full of “passion” and “exciting ideas” that they were eager to share to prove they were competent. These assertions came across as “arrogance,” stereotypes about older or veteran teachers, and cover stories instead of “humble” openness that “builds relationships.” When Jemma was upset that a new teacher stereotyped students’ home lives, she was first angered that the teacher “hadn’t earned their chops,” yet. They were new. Jan Smith tied these participant’s ideas together. She rationalized that as an experienced teacher who was new at Jordan Jewell she missed the

opportunity to build relationships with same-stage educators, and that she was trying to “prove” she was a good teacher since she joined Jordan Jewell mid school year.

Intentionally facilitating opportunities for teachers, young and old, newbies and oldies to feel included in a collaborative spirit of a school could help mitigate the barriers to trust building while promoting an open flow of ideas (Apple & Beane, 1995). If the principal had chosen to follow up the training with these intentional opportunities, Lucy may have shared her wealth of experiences with young teachers, and they could have reciprocated. Jan Smith could have had opportunity to meet new and same stage teachers, and Jemma, Teresa and Laura would not have had to make extra time or juggle responsibilities to collaborate with teachers. Sharing their stories creates a safe place to be open, as well as challenges the “paradigm of sameness” (Caruthers, 2006, p. 664) that perpetuates stereotypes and silence.

Negative School Culture. The most detrimental barrier to trusting relationships is a *negative school culture*. Negative cultures are often marked by *gossip, rumors, negativity, isolated teachers, exclusion* and *faculty cliques*. A Balkanized Culture is splintered, in that teachers are pitted against one another in competition for resources, and they align themselves in cliques within the school (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). Unbeknownst to Teresa, one of Jan’s stories of negative teachers featured her hallway neighbors. Jan attended a committee meeting where the leader was a teacher in the PD cohort. The other committee members were so negative that Jan called them “negative Nellys.” Initially, Jan was surprised by the negative Nellys because she had “never encountered them because they work” in a totally different part of the school than she. Negativity brooded and bred within the meeting,

until Jan and the committee leader “shrank” into silence. In negative school cultures, even excellent teachers become ineffective (Gomez et al., 2016).

Being a good teacher and being seen as a good teacher are integral parts of a teacher’s sense of self (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). The co-researchers did not care if negative offenses were intentional or not; each was viewed as an attack on her sense of self. Negativity was to be avoided at all costs. Lucy did explain that her own actions solidified her sense of self. This choice allowed her to focus on “glimmers of hope” from the offending Negative Nellys. Cara’s relationship with her mentor Mrs. Prime acted as both a lightsaber and shield from the negativity. These glimmers of hope shine brightly in a negatively cultured school.

Reputation. When teachers do not have time or opportunities to build trust through talking, they lean on a teacher’s *reputation*. Similar to the interpretive code definition in the document analysis section, *reputation* has both positive and negative connotations for trust. Cara brought up my own teenage daughter when discussing how she knew to trust me. “She opened yet another door to my trust of Chaur. I’m like, Chaur has raised this beautiful child. She can raise me” in teaching. Flattering the researcher works every time! Truthfully, at the time of the interview, I was delighted that Cara thought I was raising my child well. Later, in my reflective journal I wrote,

So, yes this first-born daughter is amazing and smart and hard working. Cara never taught her, so I wonder if she is hearing of Lillie’s good qualities from teachers or students. And I wonder if that affects how she trusts me. If Lillie was a pickle maybe Cara would hesitate to trust me. Just proves what my mom always said, “You never know who’s watching.” (July 29, 2020)

Rumors of a teachers' positive reputation must be focused on reliability and competence when interacting with students. Both participants confirmed rumors of teachers' reputations through structured collaboration, like PLCs (DuFour et al., 2016).

Personal experiences with kindness, respect, and friendliness, however were not enough to overcome a teacher's negative reputation with students. Pleasantries did not create the sense of belonging and shared values that having a good reputation did (Suciu et al, 2012). Teresa wondered aloud, "You'd think she'd be mean to me" but the teacher with a negative reputation, Ms. Addled "never said anything bad or unkind." When Ms. Ott began hearing "one kid say something" about Ms. Addled, she doubted the negative reputation. "But when you hear it multiple times over and over? You know." If teachers hold problematic or negative beliefs about students, distrust reinforces those beliefs (Muhammad, 2018).

One caveat important to mention is that *all* participants presumed positive intentions for the teachers who participated in the PD cohort, no matter how negative their reputations, or how problematic to students' well-beings the offenses were. This grace was applied despite experiences where the participants (like Jemma, Jan, and Teresa) were intentionally hurt by the teacher. Jemma said, "I'm willing to give everybody another chance." Unfortunately, positive intentions were not enough to reconstruct trust (Milner & Laughter, 2014). Jan spelled out, "if you don't ever take advice" or change your actions nothing improves. Matias and Grosland (2016) verified that when teacher-to-teacher trust is in short supply, teachers avoid expectations to collaborate and even refuse to privately reflect on their own praxis.

Application

Application is the final theme examined in the interview analysis. *Application* is defined as the active working through the conspiracy of silence that demonstrates culturally relevant ideals and strategies. There are two contrary interpretive codes within the theme: *I Don't Know* and *Reflection*. Two interpretive codes rely on context for application; they are *World* and *Family*. There are also two interpretive codes centered on application in practice, *Change* and *Speak Up*.

I Don't Know. At first inspection, there did not seem much to elaborate on for the *I Don't Know* code. The participants said, "I don't know" with such frequency that I wondered if the utterance should be considered a vocal pause, such as "um" or "uh." I looked for examples of vocal pauses, and with the exception of "like" they were very few. Teachers used the phrase "I don't know" almost as much as they discussed the idea of talking. Laura Collins said, "I don't ... I don't know. I don't know" when she was flustered about naming the reason she could not openly discuss her feelings about Black Lives Matter protests with her father. Jemma started with, "I don't know," and followed it with, "I just...." Usually she ended with "feel" or "think." Teresa said "I don't know" far more than any participant, usually to elaborate on what she did not understand.

Admitting to not knowing something identifies a secret story (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Anytime participants admitted to making mistakes, not knowing, or they told stories where they were not seen in a positive light, secret story alarm bells rang in my mind (Aoki, 2008). I was excited that the co-researchers were sharing their secret stories with me, because it was a sign of trust. Participants did not know what to do, who to talk to, how to address

colleagues, what to say, when to say it, where to get help, how to ... and neither did I, I admitted. As previously mentioned, when I was asked a question in the interviews that stumped me, I was quick to admit that I did not know, or that I never considered that perspective before. Our secret stories, although shared individually were communal and representative of the participants and I, collectively.

Besides communicating a secret story, participants and I were navigating the uncomfortable roller coaster ride of race talk in real time (Matais et al., 2017). The phrase “I don’t know” was not used as vocal pause, but rather a vocal cue that co-researchers were engaged in processing their thoughts and drawing tentative conclusions. Gorski and Pothini (2018) offered a seven-step framework for examining educational case studies for equity and social justice. Their framework asked that educators examine a case from multiple angles, and deeply reflect upon the stories one has been told by family, experiences and pop culture. Those stories have become one’s own sacred stories; and Gorski and Pothini (2018) argued that tussling with the stories is both an act of reflection and rebellion against the status quo.

I was usually befuddled at the same point the participants were – when I had to really delve into the sacred stories I had built my life upon. Jemma and I, as well as Liz and I often joked that we needed multiple studies to get to the bottom of our sacred stories that motivated our teacher selves. For example, Jemma and I digressed one morning and talked about the absence of men color in our PD cohort, and of men in the virtual summer cohort. Our sacred stories of gender roles and responsibilities were embedded. Our conversation follows:

JN: I was trying to remember if they were invited to continue [meeting during the summer].

CJ: Yeah. I invited everyone. Like thirty-five to forty-something people.

JN: Maybe it was the time?

CJ: I don't know. I mean, we all have responsibilities. I don't know if their not participating means that, you know, other people have decided not to allot time to the ideas because they have the responsibilities. Or maybe this isn't as important? Like learning something new or becoming a better practitioner?

JN: It's hard to determine.

CJ: I think it really does make a statement that there were no men of color. Also, about White male privilege. I'm just not entirely sure what statement is being made. Like, do they have more responsibilities for being the breadwinner than I do?

JN: Or like, as a male teacher in a field that is predominately female? I don't know.

CJ: Girl. Me either.

I believe I was privy to the co-researchers actively applying the culturally relevant and anti-racist ideas as they wrestled with their internal sacred stories. Like Clandinin and Connelly's (1998) metaphorical parade, the co-researchers' lived experiences were shifting in real time, and in response to real-world events. Understanding and accessing the life space is dependent on the co-researcher knowing herself, her entry point to the context, and her fluid surroundings. The phrase "I don't know" became one of the most powerful statements in the study.

Reflection. The interpretive code, *Reflection* was far easier to identify. As I wrote previously, I frequently joked with co-researchers that I was stumped and needed to journal to untangle my feelings. Liz mentioned reflecting on how our PD chats were similar to her lunch group's discussions. "I've really been thinking," she said, "We didn't all agree. We have some pretty unique personalities in there, but we all are open and care about each other. We want what is best for each other and for the students." Laura spent time trying to reflect upon how her trusting relationships with teacher-friends developed. "Maybe it's like did the chicken or the egg come first. I don't know that. I don't know it." Jemma and Jan both illustrated the impact the stay-at-home order had on their reflection and application of culturally relevant practices when they tied staying in with creating time they had not had,

previously. The civil unrest and race-driven murders of the spring and summer of 2020 seemed to force everyone to stop and think about “which side [of history] they want to be on.”

World. The events of the *world* provided myriad opportunities for participants to apply their learnings. With the onset of the stay-at-home order, school districts were in the news for having no way to provide education to students. Jordan Jewell was already 1:1 with devices, and free hotspots for students without reliable internet. Teachers were technologically savvy and had been expected to use technology as a means to improve interaction between and differentiation for students. Most districts, especially nearby urban districts were not as lucky. News articles shined a spotlight on the inequities of education faster than daffodils popping up in the spring. As mentioned, the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd threw participants into conversations with family, neighbors and friends (albeit on social media), regularly.

Liz Miranda told me that “it [was] a really weird time in our history.” When I asked if she meant “our world history, national history or,” she cut me off and said, “all of it. And our community. Like with the little girl who was killed.” The world was a big place, as well as a very small Midwest community. While participants shared anti-racist and culturally relevant teaching titles and resources with me, only Cara had begun planning to change her classroom practices. I believe this was due to the way she leaned on her trusted mentor. Cara and her mentor, Ms. Prime were meeting regularly to identify problematic curricular materials and discuss ways to infuse their courses with diverse representation. Most of the other participants were worried about if we would begin school in person or virtually in the fall.

Also, because there was no district or building-based professional development during the summer due to the pandemic, teachers did not have structured opportunities to apply their learnings in the classroom.

Family. Family conversations were taking place, and they held the most demonstrations of application. Akin to the artifact analysis' descriptive code, *Family*, this interpretive code began with any mention of relatives from participants. All participants mentioned their family members. I did not anticipate how frequently family would come up in interviews about teacher-to-teacher trust. Everyone told stories of trying to apply culturally relevant or anti-racist practices in conversations with family, or they discussed family when struggling against the sacred stories they were raised with. The co-researchers bravely used their family interactions to apply culturally relevant teachings through conversations and comparisons to sacred stories. Sue et. al. (2019) advised people who witness microaggressions to be strategic when, where and with whom they intervene. The researchers' four-step framework for microinterventions included instructions to "make the invisible visible, disarm the microaggression, educate the perpetrator, and seek external reinforcement or support" (p. 128). All participants held microinterventions with their family members.

Change. All participants addressed the idea of *Change*, within their application of learnings. *Change* is defined as "to make or become different" (change, 2020). The document analysis provided two methods for change: talking and action. This interpretive code differs. Participants brought up how important change is, especially when addressing inequities within the Jordan Jewell district. Clandinin et. al. (2011) characterized change as a necessary

component of true understanding that comes only after a teacher has listened to another's shifting ideas and used them to examine her own sacred stories. When writing about the lack of change produced by the third wave of school reform initiatives, Goodman (1995) made a similar declaration. He argued that until educators addressed their context of "values, upon which people's actions and ideas are based" nothing would change. Similar to the phrase, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder," change can be seen as a positive or negative based on one's sacred stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Cuban, 1990). Co-researchers and I viewed culturally relevant teaching practices, pushing for more equitable school policies, and even anti-racist Facebook statements as evidence of positive changes. The abundance of times the co-researchers demonstrated their changes clearly shows changed values and altered sacred stories.

The co-researchers also were dissatisfied with the pace of change. Lucy, Jan and Jemma wished to "jump in" and change the school all at once. Jan, working through her knowledge of systems of change and school reform experiences lamented, "I get tired of waiting. I'm impatient. Change takes so long." Lucy identified the main problem with change at JJHS when she compared changes to initiatives and programs to sowing seeds, not tending the garden, and expecting a harvest. Finding ways to cultivate change at an appropriate speed, without allowing the negative teachers to stall progress will meet the co-researchers' requests. Components of a positive school culture include a clear vision in an open, trusting collaborative community, where teachers have high expectations and manage conflict, and where leaders provide meaningful professional development, create pride in the school, all while building student and teacher creativity and capacity (Gimbel & Leana, 2013).

Speaking Up. The final way the women showed that they changed, was in speaking up. Lucy, always the advocate for her students said she was comfortable continuing to speak up, but now she could recognize when her students were also speaking up about race or culture. Once a student offered her advice on how to discipline a classmate. He suggested Ms. Maxwell act “like a Mexican mama; yell a little, and threaten to hit the kid with [her] shoe.” At the time, Lucy was not certain if the student was trying to genuinely suggest she did not know how to discipline a student. She smiled, “Now, I know he was sharing a part of his culture with all of us, and being funny to diffuse the situation.” Ms. Miranda phrased the sentiment perfectly when she clumsily told the cohort, “I will be your White woman.” She knew a cohort member of color needed “someone to be her backup, sometimes.” Finding support to question policies and practices was “the big learning” for Liz.

Ms. Smith and I sipped iced tea while discussing speaking up at JJHS.

JS: I like how you always put it, though. Like, small pieces.

CJ: Yeah. Like really small pieces. I used to feel that my purpose, or the purpose of our cohort was to like, push a boulder up the hill or um, off the edge of a cliff. But I don't think that's it anymore. I feel like now, I'm just trying to remove the crap that's in the way, preventing the boulder from rolling. That way it can just roll.

JS: The little stones.

CJ: Yeah, exactly.

JS: Yeah, let's!

Ms. Collins did not believe her Facebook posts showed evidence of speaking up.

When I asked if she was ready to continue speaking up for change, she claimed she had not spoken up. However, posting comments on Facebook sparked other cohort members' conversations with faculty, and they proved to be very effective way of speaking up during a pandemic. Ms. Nichols also was excited to speak up about change. She had long felt that

“shit was ridiculous at school” and she was a part of a group “who wanted to burn things down” but also stick around to “make sure they built it up” to better meet students’ needs.

The lived experiences of trust from the seven co-researchers varied in contexts and time. Be that as it may, four themes were shared by all participants. The interview analysis produced the following overarching themes: *Trusted Teachers Talk, Silence, Barriers to Trust and Application*. Examining Liz, Jan, Laura and Jemma’s social media and email documents produced four themes, *Named Inequity, Application, Silence, and Trusted Teachers*. Jan and Liz’s artifact analysis generated one theme, *Inequity*. Within each theme were many interpretive codes and dozens of descriptive codes. The data from the sources created rich, thick, crystalized stories of the phenomenon trust before and throughout the Culturally Relevant PD cohort meetings. In essence, all three data sets suggested that the participants were actively working to make sense of the application of culturally relevant practices amid changing lives. Although there are many barriers to trust, and each participant had valid fears of negative consequences (that kept all but Lucy silent), every participant was open to learning how to have critical conversations with colleagues. The co-researchers also found solace and safety in the PD group.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this heuristic narrative study was to inspect and explore the stories of seven White, female teachers who had undergone Culturally Relevant professional development sessions. This chapter began with a review of the study’s methodology and shifts in contextual elements due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Each participant was introduced, and I provided a restoried tale that used all data sources to offer a look at the

participant's experiences with trust at Jordan Jewell High School. Data were organized by source type and each were shared with emerging themes and defined interpretive codes common among participants. Discrepant evidence and variations within the codes were highlighted through co-researchers' lived experiences. The next chapter, Chapter 5: Conclusions will answer the research questions, provide implications and recommendations of the findings, and offer ideas for further research.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Inquiries conclude still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up narrative inquirers' and participants' lives, both individual and social. Clandinin & Huber, 2010

The purpose of this heuristic narrative inquiry research was to identify and explore the stories White female teachers tell of teacher-to-teacher trust as they navigated culturally relevant teaching practices presented through a professional learning cohort. By examining the teacher-participants' provided artifacts and documents as well as interview statements, I am beginning to understand how teacher-to-teacher trust functions; how it is built, destroyed and reestablished in a negatively cultured school. Although negatively cultured urban high schools are plentiful (Stich & Cipollone, 2017), these findings should not be transferred to another context (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996); each context differs. Reading and reflecting upon the participants' stories may provide deeper understandings of trust between teachers and perhaps revelatory insight to addressing issues through practices, policies and procedures. In this final chapter I answer the research questions. Following those answers, I provide implications and recommendations for the findings, and recommendations for further research. A final reflection closes the chapter and the study.

Answering the Research Questions

One overarching question guided the study: What are the stories teachers tell of teacher-to-teacher trust when asked to participate in culturally relevant teaching professional development? This question was explored through three sub questions:

1. How do teachers feel about their colleagues in the professional development cohort?
2. How do teachers navigate teacher-to-teacher trust relationships when there is a school history of failed reform initiatives?
3. To what extent do teachers apply strategies learned through the culturally relevant teaching professional development to teacher-to-teacher relationships?

Each question was examined through the two artifacts and 39 documents the participants selected as instrumental to or illustrative of their storied experiences. Additionally, each of the seven participants participated in four, semi-structured interviews. Qualitative data were analyzed with heuristic and narrative inquiry methods. First, I will answer the sub questions, each in turn, and then I will address the overarching question.

Sub-question One: How Do Teachers Feel about Their Colleagues in the Professional Development Cohort?

Despite its appearance in the *Barriers to Trust* theme, the *Reputation* interpretive code offered multi-faceted insights into how participants felt about their colleagues in the cohort. Positive intentions prevailed for all participants when encountering colleague cohort members. The women were willing to suspend distrust, knowledge of rumors and negative reputations of the cohort members. Some teacher's reputations were abysmal. A participant,

Cara heard that a cohort member made “homophobic comments and talked so much shit on” students. Despite this knowledge, Cara believed the teacher was in the cohort to “learn to be better,” so she sat by her. Teresa sat by and made similar positive assumptions for a teacher who had previously “lied to my face” and “pinned her bad behavior on me.”

Although the barriers to trust were ever-present throughout the study, teachers were willing to ignore beliefs about a teacher’s experience and ability in the classroom, history of excluding others, participation in cliques and overall negativity to extend this initial grace. As Jemma Nichols said, “I’m willing to give everybody another chance... no matter your personal life decisions.” Participants similarly transferred their own beliefs about signing up to discuss race and culture onto cohort participants. Teresa Ott decided, “Everybody was in the same place. Yeah, like we were all there to learn. So, we weren’t gonna be upset....”

These presumed positive intentions for teachers who had obviously broken trust previously show faith in Apple and Beane’s (1995) seven key components of democratic schools:

- The open flow of ideas, regardless of their popularity, that enables people to be as fully informed as possible.
- Faith in the individual and collective capacity of people to create possibilities for resolving problems.
- The use of critical reflection and analysis to evaluate ideas, problems, and policies.
- Concern for the welfare of others and "the common good."
- Concern for the dignity and rights of individuals and minorities.
- An understanding that democracy is not so much an "ideal" to be pursued as an "idealized" set of values that we must live and that must guide our life as a people.
- The organization of social institutions to promote and extend the democratic way of life. (p. 2)

The participants expected the PD cohort to be a place where the democratic collaborative spirit reigned. Lucy, Teresa and Cara explained that setting clear norms for the cohort

solidified the positive purpose of the group. This positivity was extended to all members of the cohort. Apple and Beane (2007) wrote that the holistic inclusion and respect for all voices is “a genuine attempt to honor the right of people to participate in making decisions that affect their lives” (p. 9).

Participants were eager to hear from their colleagues and to begin problem solving in their own classrooms. Many participants mentioned the desire to “grow” and “learn.” Keeping a growth mindset no matter how experienced a teacher, was seen as positive. Being open to improvement was seen as a sign of maturity, experience and willingness to do what is best for students. Finally, simply signing up to participate in the cohort was a signal to all participants to begin to build trust anew.

Sub-question Two: How Do Teachers Navigate Teacher-to-Teacher Trust Relationships When There Is a School History of Failed Reform Initiatives?

When the participants were prevented from building trust relationships with colleagues (by barriers like time or physical layout of the school), they relied upon teacher reputations to generate trust. *Barriers to Trust* theme’s *Reputation* interpretive code was again in play. The participants relied on a teacher’s reputation to begin forming opinions of a teacher. However, each discussed reserving judgement until students’ claims could be confirmed or denied. Teresa Ott confessed,

I have heard secondhand from a lot of my kids. Some of the things that she has said in class and said to them, and I just... every time they tell me, I just think, ‘why? Why would anyone do that?’ I know one kid could say something. And when you hear it multiple times, over and over.... Over and over, over and over and I’m like, okay. Dang. Like, something’s going on.

Distrust spread by proxy. When students were hurt by a teacher's actions or incompetence, the teacher-participants were hesitant to trust. Rumors of teachers with deficit mindsets and implicit biases were most often transferred from student to teacher, and rarely from teacher to teacher, in the participant sample. I believe this is because none of the participants were active members in any of the negative teacher cliques. I hypothesize that if one were, she would have had plenty of teacher-fueled stories about reputation to gossip about.

The participants avoided negative teachers and cliques who excluded others. Jan and Laura internalized the negativity. Both participants struggled not to find exclusion or negativity a flaw in their personalities. Jemma and Teresa often retreated to their classrooms. Teresa, as a new teacher had the most to fear with this isolation. Hargreaves (2001) characterized isolated teachers as “mediocre loners” (p. 504). Instead of working together with the teachers she liked, shared similar philosophies with, or wanted to collaborate with, Teresa chose to “toil alone in the classroom...isolated” (Gomez et al., 2016). As Jemma said, teachers who are struggling “run the risk of falling into ‘the dark side’” with the Negative Nancys.

Laura, Lucy and Jemma preferred to focus energy on building relationships with colleagues who already had good reputations, or who could help them perform their jobs more effectively. Jan Smith, by far the most guarded teacher in the study intentionally reserved trust until the offending teacher “proved” she or he could improve their praxis by “taking advice” or changing. When teachers were praised by colleagues and students as being competent, reliable, or as participant Lucy Maxwell described, “fighting for students” or “working hard for all our kids,” they were extended trust. Trust was transferred by proxy;

Cara trusted her mentor's trusted colleagues. Jemma described trust that worked "like a web" that grew "when [her] people trusted their people."

The 5Essentials survey data identified Jordan Jewell High School as a place where many initiatives come and go (UChicago Impact, 2018). I asked each participant how she felt about these data, and if there were initiatives that should be continued or discontinued to build a better school. The newest participants to Jordan Jewell, Cara, Teresa and Jan all were upset by the data. Cara said she was, "very overwhelmed by the 5Essentials data. It stresses me out and like, what am I supposed to do to make all this better?" Teresa and Jan both desired beginning the school year with a new start.

I have always been invested in the 5Essentials data, and the ladies' responses caught me off guard. I journaled,

Three participants said almost the EXACT same thing. So now I've had a couple of days to think. Oh my God, why did I never think of that? I never considered what presenting the data at the start of the school year would do to new teachers, and then to everybody else's morale. Like, it's supposed to be a fresh start. And every year we are like, 'Hey! Last year sucked, guys!' And in reality, we get the results of the survey in May. So why not take May, disaggregate the data and say, 'Here's how we need to grow. What are the root causes? What's within our control? What can we figure out and what do we need to look at further to make a plan over summer? Then we start fresh in August. (Reflective journal, July 30, 2020)

I called the building principal that afternoon and mentioned that we probably should find a more positive way to communicate the 5Essentials data. Granting all this, participants did not attribute the many initiative changes to a problem with building leadership or those spurring on the changes. Instead, participants believed that the JJHS 5Essentials data were typical of all schools' initiatives. Lucy believed that initiatives were like plants, and most of the time

they were neglected. Teresa rationalized that programs “come and go” in education, no matter the school.

The co-researchers were very open with the teachers in the cohort. Having a safe place, free of the fears of judgement and negative consequences created a micro-school culture where grace and support were the norm. The theme Trusting Teachers Talk demonstrated vulnerability, openness, collaboration, support, problem solving and even a few instances of critical conversations. Participants and members shared stories of mistakes, offenses, troubled upbringings, families riddled with racism, and they often asked for advice and support. Teachers were reciprocal in their offering of grace, understanding and all seemed to want to better themselves and their praxis. Teachers were open to sharing worries, fears and frustrations both in and out of the classroom, as well as problem solving in both contexts. Those teachers who were “expert” in their praxis and who “had a heart” for students were recruited for support. In the case of Cara, the trust between she and her mentor offered protection from the negativity in the school at large.

Outside of the cohort’s positive culture, fear of negative consequences or judgment from colleagues forced all participants (save Lucy) from speaking up and challenging colleagues at one time or another. *Silence*, a theme where the thunderous silences of fear and discomfort ruled participants’ decisions like evil twins, was pervasive around topics about race, culture and inequitable treatment of students. Participants believed it was not their place to have critical conversations with colleagues, and they worried incessantly about saying the wrong thing. This “wrong thing” turned out not to be an egregious act of prejudice or bigotry, but rather a mistake generated from misnaming a group. Most women felt physical and

mental discomfort; stomach aches and feelings of insecurity were most at fault for relegating participants to silence. Again, the co-researchers actively combatted the feelings of fear, discomfort and insecurity in real-time interview conversations. Laura decided, “I don’t want to hurt anyone’s feelings, but it’s also like if you’re damaging a child, you should probably have some feelings hurt.”

Sub-question Three: To What Extent do Teachers Apply the Strategies Learned Through the Culturally Relevant Teaching Professional Development to Teacher-to-Teacher Trust Relationships?

The application of culturally relevant practices was pervasive in all participants stories. However, because the COVID-19 pandemic forced an early closure to schools and prevented mandatory and in-person collaboration over the summer, participants displayed evidence of the *application* theme on their social media pages, in emails to the cohort, or within family discussions. Facebook posts highlighted specific inequities plaguing the nation. Laura and Jemma boldly shared principled posts, like Martin Luther tacking his *95 Theses* up for all to see. Jan and Liz shared resource after resource for building an anti-racist classroom. Jan and Liz both wrote emails to the cohort admitting to making mistakes when dealing with culture and race in their classrooms and lives, as well as contending with their White privilege. Within the interviews, participants told many stories of conversations with family and friends that allowed them to utilize their learnings. Only Cara had actively begun planning for implementation of teaching practices in her classroom.

Interview responses were completed before the 2020-21 school year began. I am fortunate to work with every participant at Jordan Jewell High School, this year. Although

we have only been in school for a matter of weeks, all participants and I have had chats in the hallway (while donning masks) about addressing systemic inequities in our school.

Sometimes the conversations are grand: how do we get resources from district administration for the whole faculty? Sometimes our conversations are very specific: Do you think it is problematic to teach *To Kill a Mockingbird*? Sometimes our conversations are intense: How do we get administration to notice an openly racist teacher? One participant pushed for her whole department to add Teaching Tolerance's (2016) Social Justice Standards to their mastery gradebook. Another participant challenged her department chair when he refused to purchase more diverse materials. The answer to sub-question three, like Clandinin and Connelly's (1998) parade is happily still in progress.

Central Question: What are the Stories Teachers Tell of Teacher-to-Teacher Trust When Asked to Participate in Culturally Relevant Teaching Professional Development?

White, female teachers who participated in a Culturally Relevant Teaching professional development cohort told stories of the promise and power of teacher-to-teacher trust and the struggles to build those relationships. Co-researchers told stories where they actively applied their learnings and fought against the silencing fear of negative consequences. Trust and distrust functioned by proxy until beliefs could be confirmed with first-hand experiences.

The reoccurring themes and interpretive codes were plentiful. Participants resoundingly discussed talking with other colleagues as their preferred method for building, maintaining and reconstructing trust within the theme *Trusting Teachers Talk*. Trusting Teachers know/do a variety of reciprocal behaviors. They support, challenge and collaborate

with each other. Trusting teachers problem solve in and outside of the classroom. They also know each other's philosophies and respect their competence in the classroom. Each participant was open and excited to not only learn to be their best teacher selves, but to also learn *with* their colleagues. Second and third chances were offered when trust was in short supply, so long as students were not being hurt.

Despite physical and mental anguish, each teacher-researcher was willing to offer grace, reserve judgement and presume positive intentions for colleagues. The women told stories of how uncomfortable and afraid they were when needing to speak up for change or have critical conversations with other teachers. Because the COVID-19 pandemic and racially-motivated murders forced the participants to contend with societal and systemic racism and inequity while being socially distant from colleagues, participants used their families and friends to make sense of their learnings and to practice having uncomfortable conversations. Jemma elaborated, "We all genuinely want what's best for our kids, even if it is sacrificing our own personal comfort.... We are willing to do what we need to do to make sure our kids have the best opportunities."

Jemma described trust as a pie, where each faculty member needed a slice. She visualized trust to be the crust, capable of holding teachers together. If trust is the crust, perhaps discussion and talking are the flour within the crust. Even though participants adamantly denied changing their trust relationships with the cohort members, each mentioned seeing another side of someone. Jan and Jemma both repaired relationships with cohort members when they each realized their distrust sprang from misinformation and

misunderstandings. Fast or slow, each co-researcher, Lucy, Teresa, Liz, Cara, Jan, Laura and Jemma all worked tirelessly to make change happen in their lives.

Participants like Liz realized there was “power in numbers” and they could leverage each other’s support. Openness and vulnerability were reciprocated, like Rube Goldberg machines; each event was singular and personal, but it triggered the next individual’s openness and vulnerability, which triggered the next, and so on and so on until all members had participated in the creation of a new shared culture. In defiance of the aforementioned negative school culture, co-researchers were all excited to learn from, listen to and speak with all cohort members. The participants offered grace and positive intentions that strengthened when “glimmers of hope” shined thorough.

Implications of and Recommendations for the Findings

This study aimed to discover the storied experiences White, female teachers had with teacher-to-teacher trust throughout their culturally relevant teaching professional development cohort. Their stories illuminated two implications: creating a culture of safety is imperative to breaking through a negative culture, and trusting teachers want to work through fear and discomfort to apply learnings. Three recommendations are offered for each implication.

Implication One: Creating a Culture of Safety is Imperative to Breaking Through a Negative Culture

A decade ago, Bryk (2010) determined “the most powerful relationships found in our data are associated with relational trust and how it operates as both a lubricant for organizational change and a moral resource for sustaining the hard work of local school

improvement” (p. 27). This study’s participants told stories of isolation, fear and silence when surrounded by a negative school culture. Each had their trust broken by a colleague or two. Yet, these same seven women told stories of radical openness, willingness to change and a heart-felt desire to improve their instructional praxis when working in the positive micro-culture of the culturally relevant teaching PD cohort. When teachers feel safe from the judgement and negativity of their colleagues, they can problem solve. Their collaborative synergy is critical to the success of a school (Leithwood et al., 2013). Creating micro-cultures of trust and safety is imperative to breaking through the negativity.

Recommendation One: Create Many Opportunities for True Collaboration

Often, high schools have large faculties, and are organized into departments, pathways or houses. Hallways and wings can isolate teachers from the whole, and due to the physical barriers, collaboration is nearly impossible (Payne, 2013). Mangrum (2010) determined that the simplest act to restore trust is to ask teachers to work together to address problems they see in their classrooms. This process is two-fold. First, structured collaboration creates real opportunity to trust-build with components like honesty, openness and benevolence. Second, when generated solutions are turned into actions, faith in another’s competence and reliability are reinforced (Tschannen-Moran, 2015).

However, asking teachers to collaborate in their natural department or hallway divisions is not enough. Teachers may be separated from the best educators in the school, or they may be surrounded by negativity. When teachers do not have first-hand experience with a teacher, they rely on the teacher’s reputation. Creating opportunities to problem solve across contents, grades, and physical locations must be a priority. All participants agreed that

there is never enough time in the school day to have a great conversation with colleagues. These collaborative opportunities must be embedded within existing expectations like PLCs, department meetings, faculty meetings and teachers' lounge conversations, so teachers can begin to share their stories (Caruthers et al., 2004).

Recommendation Two: Establish and Enforce Clear Norms and Procedures

Never is it nor will it be enough for principals to simply dictate that collaboration must happen (Romero & Mitchell, 2018). Principals must create collaborative opportunities so they can first model best practices (Hord & Rutherford, 1987). Leaders must take the time to ensure there is an effective, democratic trust-based structure in place. Without a clear structure, principals and teachers do not move beyond their comfort zones to places of vulnerability and trust building (Riley & Stoic, 2017). Without a clear structure for democratic collaboration, principals and teachers are doomed to repeat the status quo.

Early in the first meeting of the culturally relevant teaching cohort, I asked members if they would like to create norms for the cohort, or if they preferred using norms I prepared. One member boldly spoke out, "Let's see what you have. Then, if we need to, we can add or change them." I offered Singleton and Linton's (2007) Four Agreements for Courageous Conversations about Race. Members were asked to be engaged, experience discomfort, speak their truths and to accept and expect nonclosure at each meeting. Cohort members were satisfied with the norms as presented. Cara mentioned that establishing norms helped her feel "like [I] was speaking directly to [her]." The norms signaled to Teresa that "we were all in the same place." Norms told Jemma that "if someone said something crazy, it would be

handled,” appropriately. Planning, modeling and holding faculty accountable to democratic norms fosters comradeship and a safe place to begin learning.

Recommendation Three: Create Support Networks for New Teachers

No matter if a teacher was new to the field of education or if she was only new in the school, new-teacher participants Liz, Jan and Teresa shared that they did not feel supported or know who to trust. Only Cara was unwavering in her trust relationship with her mentor Ms. Prime. Ms. Prime’s instructional practices became Cara’s. Ms. Prime’s “badass teacher friends” became Cara’s. Cara begged for me, the instructional coach and her mentor to make her like us. The location of Cara’s classroom (next door to her mentor and surrounded by some of the strongest teachers in the school) was not intentional. Nevertheless, the network of support Cara Waxon received stood in stark comparison to the other teachers’. Cara’s network buffered her from the negativity in the school so much so that when she experienced negativity, she did not believe it was common. Originally, Cara believed the incident was evidence of a teacher having a bad day, and she felt it was “weird.”

Squires (2019) confirmed that mentorship programs support new teachers’ social, emotional and personal lives. Successful programs lead to resiliency and retention over the years. In their recent article, Kutsyuruba, Walker, Stasel and Al Makhamreh (2019) found that new teachers self-recommended “an eclectic approach that [they] decided to call the ‘3 Cs’: consulting a mentor, connecting with colleagues, and collaborating with others” (p. 301). These 3Cs were found to help the new teachers “flourish.” Apparently, all three Cs were at work in Cara’s story. She consulted Ms. Prime on all matters; she connected with Ms. Prime’s supports, and she was open to collaborate with many other teachers. Educators

should be intentional when they partner new teachers for mentorship. Careful consideration must be given to allow ease of the 3Cs for the new teacher.

Implication Two: Trusting Teachers Want to Work Through Fear and Discomfort to Apply Learnings

Co-researchers storied experiences of applying culturally relevant principles with teachers suffered from the suffocating stillness of silence. Even though participants were rendered ineffective when it came to challenging the status quo and sacred stories of the school, each woman wanted to be better. Jan Smith told me that despite being in a different place on her culturally relevant “journey of learning,” she was sometimes physically sick when she knew she needed to address colleagues. Jemma stated that she had a “higher purpose” to students’ futures, so she would continue to push through discomfort to address equity. Likewise, Lucy understood “fighting for students is [her] job,” and she used that declaration to drive her choices. Laura Collins recognized, “I need help, too” when she honestly told of how overwhelmed and uncomfortable she was speaking to teachers about their problematic practices. Laura continued,

I just wish that more people, like we could have this as a staff-wide conversation. I know it could get insanely intense, because I think some people on our staff have very different [views], in my opinion. And correct me [if I am wrong], but I think that’s the only thing that I wish. Because, I still feel like we are all, we all want to do better. I think that a lot of teachers want to do better, but they just don’t... they just don’t know anything.

Teachers do not understand how to communicate with their colleagues about their multicultural classrooms and students (Hawley & Nieto, 2010). These conversations can be leveraged if principals help their faculty navigate the discussions. Creating and communicating a firm commitment to educational equity and excellence goes far to assist

teachers with the uncomfortableness of challenging and rectifying inequities (Khalifa et al., 2016; Singleton, 2015).

Recommendation One: Offer Whole-school PD on Critical Conversations

Effective leaders do not “shy away from critical concerns about race, language, background, socio-economic status, gender, or other variables” (Johnson et al., 2017, p. 127). Taking a hard look at data will require difficult conversations with faculty about why achievement gaps exist for specific groups of students. Milner and Laughter (2014) discovered that despite educators’ good intentions and hopes to provide equitable education for students, unless there is a clear procedure for discussing taboo topics the status quo is never challenged. If there is no faculty trust, teachers avoid and sometimes work to undermine expectations to collaborate or self-reflect (Matias & Grosland, 2016). Evident in the participant’s stories was the struggle through discomfort, and the plea for “procedures” or PD on how to have critical conversations with colleagues.

Facilitating difficult discussions (especially on traditionally taboo topics) forces educators to contend with “fears of appearing racist, of realizing their racism, of acknowledging White privilege, and of taking responsibility to combat racism” (Sue, 2013, p. 663). However difficult, Bagylos’ 2017 study evaluated how teachers used Courageous Conversations about Race (CCAR) PD practices within their classrooms, and everyone showed positive progress. Over half of the teachers transferred the CCAR skills to their personal lives. Providing PD on critical conversations for the whole faculty will be challenging, but results are consistent with the participants’ experiences. Teachers need help, and they will work through discomfort to apply improved practices.

Recommendation Two: Become a Culturally Relevant Leader

Acosta and Ackerman-Barger (2017) found that “An effective force of anti-racist leaders can foster real equity transformation in America’s schools and districts” (p. 240). Preparing principals and teachers to teach and lead with racial competence, rather than colorblindness has been proven to help students of color achieve (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). These understandings narrow the achievement gaps between White students and students of color (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Kafilia, Gooden and Davis, 2016), and they provide improved learning achievements for the whole school.

Effective instructional leaders must commit to understanding their own awareness of how race and culture shape society and schools (Horsford, 2011). These leaders need to begin with their own learning, first, before reaching out to assist teacher-leaders and the faculty. Ms. Jemma Nichols summarized part of the reason principals should lead the culturally relevant learning, because “they get paid the big bucks.” Also, research suggests that when change begins with instructional leaders and teachers, it spreads quickly (Raskin et al., 2015).

Recommendation Three: Offer Whole-school Culturally Relevant or Anti-racist PD

Precisely because of the importance the role of students’ races and teachers’ cultural awareness play in predicting students of color’s academic success, principals must take the time to address these phenomena in their schools (Mahatmya et al., 2016; Muhammad, 2018). Culturally relevant teaching professional development must be offered to help educators confront the inequities that exist between the diverse cultural and racial student populations we serve (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1994, 1995a; Nieto, 1999, 2013).

Participants' stories told tales of fear and silence when it came time to discuss taboo topics. Fear of making mistakes, saying the wrong thing, of being judged and of negative consequences were prevalent. Nevertheless, teachers must be willing to discuss race, ethnicity, language, gender, social class, sexual orientation and other elements of culture if we are to begin to challenge inequitable practices (Hawley & Nieto, 2010). Offering school-wide PD creates a shared opportunity for all members to extend grace and assume positive intentions, like the participants did in our cohort. School-wide PD also generates moments for whole-faculty openness as well as that we-were-all-in-the-same-place-in-our-learning feeling that Ms. Ott described.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study explored the lived experiences seven, White female teachers had with trust, through and after participating in a culturally relevant teaching professional development cohort. While there is an abundance of research on many tangential components of this study, trust in education, urban educational reform, effective school leadership and even the stories teachers tell as they undergo culturally relevant teaching professional learning have been probed. This is the only study that explored the storied experiences with trust while and after culturally relevant learning. I chose to study the experiences of White females because they represent the majority of educators in the United States. Culturally relevant teaching practices are both difficult and imperative when beginning to address systemic and academic inequities. I believed understanding how the majority made sense of this challenge would provide invaluable insight that could be harnessed and leveraged to make change more accessible. I obviously could not anticipate the COVID-19 pandemic, nor the repeated social

and racial justice protests that dominated the spring and summer of 2020. More research must be done to continue to understand how best to narrow the gap between White educators and their culturally diverse students. The following are recommendations for further research:

- Conduct the same study without the contextual influence of a pandemic.
- Conduct the heuristic narrative study with participants who are unknown to the researcher.
- Conduct the same heuristic narrative study with a White researcher.
- Identify schools with similar 5Essentials scores, and conduct a case study of the teachers' experiences with trust after undertaking culturally relevant teaching professional learning.
- Conduct a comparative analysis or case study of teachers with increased variation (level of education, content, years in education, age, gender identity, race) in the sample.
- Examine educators' trust relationships with their principals to explore if and how the relationship differs depending on if the principal is facilitating or only participating in the culturally relevant teaching PD.
- Examine secondary-level teacher-to-student or teacher-to-parent trust relationships with White teachers who have undergone culturally relevant teaching PD.

These recommendations for future research suggest ways to increase a focus on developing teacher-to-teacher trust for having courageous conversations about race (Singelton, 2015) and bridging the gap between White teachers and increasing numbers of minoritized youth in our schools. I closed this narrative of seven White women who took this journey with me as co-researchers with final reflections of my heuristic experience.

Final Reflections

Five years ago, I was livid. I stood shoveling trail mix into my mouth, angrily in the back of a learning common. I was disgusted by my school's 5Essentials data, and that inciting incident forced me to act. Throughout the years I have changed roles, I suffered the personal loss of my mother (my original Nice White Lady), and I struggled to find

motivation to keep asking questions about trust and culturally relevant teaching. Surely, starting over in a more successful school would be easier. But, Jordan Jewell is my home. I tell coworkers, parents and friends, “It hits differently when the students are your biological kids, your neighbors and your hairdresser’s kids.”

Last year, only 56% of African American students graduated from Jordan Jewell. The disparity between our students’ of color discipline referrals and their White classmates’ were impossible to ignore. These data coupled with the racial turmoil of the summer greeted each masked teacher at the beginning of the 20-21 school year. District leadership is beginning to push the Jordan Jewell school board to fund culturally relevant trainings. Building leaders are setting expectations for teachers to discuss race, culture and student diversity in relation to achievement data and instructional practices. Cohort teachers and participants from the study are pushing through the discomfort and silence to find like-minded colleagues. Articles are shared via email, and the list of supporters is growing.

Resistance is in plain view. Teachers reply all in bold statements of disagreement. I have already been called a person who is “pushing leftist propaganda” when I shared resources about Whiteness in education. Other colleagues have openly shared their problematic practices and mistaken beliefs. One teacher told me and a room full of educators that Latinex student discipline statistics were low due to “language barriers.” Taking time to calmly educate the teacher that just because students speak Spanish, they are not necessarily English language learners takes an intentionally nonjudgmental approach. These instances let me know that the journey has only just begun.

In both of the mentioned incidents, former cohort members and the study's participants rushed to support me and the equitable resources I was sharing. Unexpected educators and staff members rallied in support – the front office secretary told me she was “shocked” that a teacher would reply all in a statement that “made him look like a racist ass.” Another teacher who I only spoke with casually stopped me in the parking lot to tell me I was “the picture of a respectful challenge,” and that the offending teacher was “hanging himself with his own rope.” He went on to tell me he read the email correspondence to his fiancé and his mother.

The summer culturally relevant cohort members have requested informal TGIFs via Zoom, with drinks and snacks. Members of the cohort wrote a collective grant requesting critical conversations training for all district leadership and teachers (and I was informed it will be funded in full). They also sent individual letters to board members, the superintendents, and the principals of their buildings demanding that Jordan Jewell take an anti-racist stand in word and deed. I take great pleasure in seeing participants in the hallways and in their classrooms. Knowing that we all are supporting each other, and that we all trust each other more than we did last September when the cohort began makes me smile. Instead of Lucy's “glimmers of hope” I see bright beams of possibility in Jordan Jewell High School as well as the district. Huge rays of sunshine are bursting forth to grow our seeds of trust and culturally relevant practices.

Little did I know five years ago that my frustrations would be the catalyst for a heuristic inquiry into trust at Jordan Jewell. When I began this process, I knew nothing about trust, school culture, and I knew even less about culturally relevant teaching. I thought of

myself as reflective and introspective. However, I had to think so much more deeply than I was accustomed to, to sort through my own experiences with the phenomena; everything was entangled with my childhood experiences, my early teaching years, and my colleagues at JJHS. Nothing was linear or simple. Like Jemma, I wanted a clear, step by step process to make sense of everything – trust, society’s influences on my perceptions, racial injustice, school reform.... Often, I was overwhelmed and frustrated.

The loss of my mother two years before the study began helped me build trust relationships with teachers who later joined the culturally relevant cohort. Lucy and Liz lost their mothers a few months after me. Even though I barely knew either, we gave each other teary-eyed hugs. I am not a hugger nor am I a crier; Like Jan, I am usually intentionally reserved. However, the situations demanded reciprocal vulnerability. I battled a deep depression that forced me to ask myself, should I be teaching at all? When my life was darkest, it was my relationships with the teachers at JJHS who pleaded with me to help them teach and reach more students, more equitably. Jemma and Laura, specifically attended my mother’s funeral, organized the luncheon after, and then they went on to become co-researchers.

COVID-19 and the Summer of 2020’s intense racial and civil unrest heaped stress on all educators. I began to understand how different my own interpretations of inequities and racism were when compared to the co-researchers. However, the differences did not diminish our trust; we were kind, vulnerable, open and honest with each other – even when it was uncomfortable. Each co-researcher was hungry to learn, listen, understand and change to become their best teacher-self, especially me.

The co-researchers shared so much more than their experiences with teacher-to-teacher trust within the cohort. We discussed alcoholic parents, racist grandparents, first loves, college experiences, frustrating spouses, crazy and loved children, God, church, writing and updating our wills and our own mortalities (which were in constant play because of the pandemic). Truly, exploring our teacher-selves is also an exploration of our most sacred selves. The months of interviews and data analysis served as a powerful ongoing example of trust: the participants were radically open with me and I was recapitulating. As Lucy said in our third interview, “This. Right here. This is trust.” Afraid that the co-researchers would not be honest or open with me, I proactively coded their experiences for secret stories. Dozens of examples populated the study. We talked about our mistakes, our fears, and our inadequacies. Again, I was astonished by our mutual openness. I never expected that their openness would trigger other cohort member’s sharing, nor my own.

I am genuinely grateful for the experiences this inquiry has allowed. In true narrative and heuristic fashion, although the study formally ends with the submission of this dissertation, the co-researchers' lives and my own are still very much on-going. Our experiences with trust will continue to grow and change beyond Jordan Jewell High School. Please know that you the reader were presented with a mere glimpse of trust between teachers. By the time you read this, everything will have already changed. Knowing that change is imminent gives me renewed hope and trust that JJHS’ teachers will be better

APPENDIX

A. Consent to Participate in Research



Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title:

Telling Stories of Teacher to Teacher Trust Throughout Culturally Relevant Professional Development

Authorized Study Personnel

Principal Investigator: Loyce Caruthers office: (816) 235-1044 caruthersl@umkc.edu

Student Investigator: Chaurice Jacobson home: (913) 449-5497 cjvx8@mail.umkc.edu

KEY INFORMATION

You are being asked to take part in this research study because you are a self-identified White, female teacher who has undergone culturally relevant professional development in a school deemed Not Yet Ready for Improvement by 5Essentials survey data. Research studies are voluntary and only include people who choose to take part. The purpose of this research is to explore the stories of teacher-to-teacher trust educators have throughout and after culturally relevant professional development. The total amount of time you would be in this study is 5-7 hours split over 5-7 weeks. During your participation you will be involved in four one-hour interviews with the primary researcher. Taking part in this research involves minimal risks. That means that the risks of taking part in this research are not expected to be more than the risks in your daily life. Taking part in this study includes the following benefits: a deeper understanding of your own experiences with teacher-to-teacher trust throughout the culturally relevant teaching professional development sessions; influencing other teachers and policy-makers with the information you provide; offering deeper meaning to the minimal research and literature available regarding teacher-to-teacher trust in culturally relevant teaching professional development.

You have the alternative of not taking part in this study.

Please read this consent form carefully and take your time making your decision. As the researcher(s) discusses this consent form with you, please ask him/her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. Please talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?

The purpose of this study is to explore the stories of teacher-to-teacher trust educators have throughout and after culturally relevant professional development. The goal of this research is to understand how trust may be accounted for in White, female educators who work with diverse student populations in a school deemed Not Yet Ready for Improvement by the 5Essentials survey.

There is one central question guiding this research and the first central question is supported by three sub-questions.

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- 1) What are the stories teachers tell of teacher-to-teacher trust when asked to participate in culturally relevant teaching professional development?
 - a) How do teachers feel about their colleagues in the professional development cohort?
 - b) How do teachers navigate teacher-to-teacher trust relationships when there is a school history of failed reform initiatives?
 - c) To what extent do teachers apply strategies learned through the culturally relevant teaching professional development to teacher-to-teacher relationships?

Explain succinctly and simplistically why the prospective subject is eligible to participate. As appropriate, major eligibility criteria may be included in this section.

The study team is asking you to take part in this research study because you are a self-identified White, female teacher who has undergone culturally relevant professional development in a school deemed Not Yet Ready for Improvement by the 5Essentials survey.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

Approximately 6 people will take part in this study at UMKC.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE STUDY?

This study includes 4 one-hour sessions of interview interaction between you and the researcher over the course of 5-7 weeks.

1st session: Biographical introductory interview lasting approximately one hour. The purpose of this interview is to allow you to describe your earliest experiences in education, reasons for choosing to work as a teacher and to work within a diverse school. The interview will be conducted as a dialogue and you will be encouraged to ask questions of the researcher as they arise. A complete list of planned questions will be provided to you at least three days prior to the scheduled interview. All interviews will take place in a local library, within a reserved private study room. During this first session, you will also be asked to choose a pseudonym that will represent you in the research study. The interview audio will be digitally recorded and a complete transcription provided to you for updating and corrections if needed. The digital audio file will be deleted after the transcription has been confirmed.

2nd session: Interview lasting approximately one hour. The purpose of this interview is to allow you to describe your relationships with colleagues within and outside of the culturally relevant professional development cohort. You may be asked to identify and bring artifacts from your professional development sessions, and/or participate in journal writing as a way to generate your feelings and

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thoughts around the interview topics. The interview will be conducted as a dialogue and you will be encouraged to ask questions of the researcher as they arise. A complete list of planned questions will be provided to you at least three days prior to the scheduled interview. All interviews will take place in a local library, within a reserved private study room. The interview audio will be digitally recorded and a complete transcription provided to you for updating and corrections if needed. The digital audio file will be deleted after the transcription has been confirmed.

3rd session: Interview lasting approximately one hour. The purpose of this interview is to allow you to describe your experiences with the strategies taught in the culturally relevant teaching professional development. You may be asked to identify and bring artifacts from your professional development sessions, and/or participate in journal writing as a way to generate your feelings and thoughts around the interview topics. The interview will be conducted as a dialogue and you will be encouraged to ask questions of the researcher as they arise. A complete list of planned questions will be provided to you at least three days prior to the scheduled interview. All interviews will take place in a local library, within a reserved private study room. The interview audio will be digitally recorded and a complete transcription provided to you for updating and corrections if needed. The digital audio file will be deleted after the transcription has been confirmed.

4th session: Final interview lasting approximately one hour. Prior to this interview, you will be provided a preliminary analysis of the previous interviews and observations. During this final interview, you will be asked to confirm or correct the narrative findings. You may also be asked follow-up questions related to the observations, gathered documents or relevant data. The interview will be conducted as a dialogue and you will be encouraged to ask questions of the researcher as they arise. A complete list of planned questions will be provided to you at least three days prior to the scheduled interview. All interviews will take place in a local library, within a reserved private study room. The interview audio will be digitally recorded and a complete transcription provided to you for updating and corrections if needed. The digital audio file will be deleted after the transcription has been confirmed.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THIS STUDY?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be involved in this study for approximately 5 hours over a period of no less than 5 weeks and no more than 7 weeks. The sessions will be scheduled at your convenience.

When you are done taking part in this study, you will still have access to the interview transcriptions and preliminary analysis that have been provided to you. You will also be provided with an electronic copy of the final dissertation project if you request one.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THE STUDY?

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks of taking part in this research are not expected to be more than the risks in your daily life. You will be asked questions about your own

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experiences as a teacher who participated in culturally relevant teaching professional development, within a school deemed Not Yet Ready for Improvement by the 5Essentials survey. You are the most knowledgeable source of this information. You may feel uncomfortable talking about some parts of your educational history or teaching experiences. You are not required to share any information that you consider private or that you would be uncomfortable sharing with a colleague. You will be encouraged to select the dates and times of these interviews when you will feel most at ease. You may stop your participation in this study at any time.

ARE THERE BENEFITS TO TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?

As a participant in this study, you will have the opportunity to reflect on your own experiences as a teacher who underwent culturally relevant teaching professional development. You may benefit from a deeper understanding of your own experiences with teacher-to-teacher trust throughout the culturally relevant teaching professional development sessions.

On a broader level, other teachers and policy-makers may benefit in the future from the information you provide. Examining trust while working in a difficult school, and while undergoing culturally relevant teaching professional development can be a difficult and complex endeavor, and many people are interested in understanding how it is done. Your personal experiences will provide stories that give deeper meaning to the minimal research and literature available regarding teacher-to-teacher trust in culturally relevant teaching professional development.

However, you may not get any benefit from being in this research study.

WILL MY INFORMATION BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data.

While we will do our best to keep the information you share with us confidential, it cannot be absolutely guaranteed. Individuals from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies), Research Protections Program, and Federal regulatory agencies may look at records related to this study to make sure we are doing proper, safe research and protecting human subjects. The results of this research may be published or presented to others. You will not be named in any reports of the results.

As previously described, you will be asked to select a pseudonym during the first interview session. This name only will be used on all written transcriptions, notes, and in the final dissertation write-up. Fictitious names for the school and district will also be substituted to protect your confidentiality. The state name will be stricken from record; instead the location will be identified as a Midwestern state in the final written dissertation.

Paper documents and study data will be scanned and uploaded to the researcher's password-protected computer. Electronic versions of study data such as interview transcriptions, observation notes, and

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analyses will be stored on a password-protected computer. This data will not be retained for future research. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you may request that your data will not be kept or used. Personally identifiable information will not be shared with any third party unless in the case of mandatory reporting of child abuse. The data will be stored electronically through a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study and for 7 years after the study is complete.

The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

The University of Missouri System, Authorization No. 00-018 requires research data to be retained for 7 years after the final report.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS TO YOU?

There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

WHAT ABOUT COMPENSATION?

There is no payment for taking part in this study.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM DURING THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

Your well-being is a concern of every member of the research team. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact the Office of UMKC's Institutional Review Board at 816-235-5927 if you have any questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research subject. You may call the researcher, Chaurice Jacobson at 913-449-5497 if you have any questions about this study. You may also call her if any problems come up.

WHAT ABOUT MY RIGHTS TO DECLINE PARTICIPATION OR WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

You can choose to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of any benefits to which you are entitled. However, if you decide to stop participating in the study, we encourage you to talk to the researcher first to make sure it is safe to do so.

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study ("withdraw") at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the researcher(s) or with the University of Missouri Kansas City, Chaurice Jacobson and/or Loyce Caruthers. You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

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WHOM DO I CALL IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS?

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study.

For study related questions, please contact the researcher(s) listed at the beginning of this form.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, or to discuss problems, concerns or suggestions related to your participation in the research, or to obtain information about research participant's rights, contact the UMKC Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office

- Phone: (816) 235-5927
- Email: umkcirb@umkc.edu

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

The purpose of this study, procedures to be followed, risks and benefits have been explained to me. I have been allowed to ask questions, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been told whom to contact if I have questions, to discuss problems, concerns, or suggestions related to the research, or to obtain information. I have read or had read to me this consent form and agree to be in this study, with the understanding that I may withdraw at any time. I have been given a copy of this consent form. By participating in the interview procedures, I agree to be in this research study.

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APPENDIX

B. Email Invitation to Recruit Potential Participants

Email Invitation to Recruit Potential Participants

Hello NAME,

You are being asked to take part in this research study because you are a self-identified White, female educator who participated in culturally relevant professional development in our school deemed Not Yet Ready for Improvement by 5Essentials survey data.

Research studies are voluntary and only include people who choose to take part.

The purpose of this research is to explore the stories of teacher-to-teacher trust educators have throughout and after culturally relevant professional development. The total amount of time you would be in this study is 5-7 hours split over 5-7 weeks. During your participation you will be involved in four one-hour interviews with me, the primary researcher. Taking part in this research involves minimal risks. That means that the risks of taking part in this research are not expected to be more than the risks in your daily life. Taking part in this study may include the following benefits: a deeper understanding of your own experiences with teacher-to-teacher trust throughout the culturally relevant teaching professional development sessions; influencing other teachers and policy-makers with the information you provide; offering deeper meaning to the minimal research and literature available regarding teacher-to-teacher trust in culturally relevant teaching professional development.

Of course, you have the alternative of not taking part in this study.

Please read the attached consent form carefully and take your time making your decision. Feel free to contact me if you have questions about any words or information you do not clearly understand. Please talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. Please let me know if you will or will not participate in the study by DATE.

Thank you,
Chaur Jacobson

APPENDIX

C: Interview Protocols 1-4

Interview 1: Biographical Experiences in Education

Introduction: I would like to ask some questions about your childhood, experiences in education, from your first memories of school to the time you came to work here in this school. There are no right or wrong answers. Your unique experiences and your stories will help others better understand the complex work you do. As a co-researcher in this study, I would like to offer to share my own experiences with you. At any time during our interviews, please feel free to ask me questions about my own experiences.

1. Describe your childhood family, home, and where you grew up. Possible follow-up questions:
 - a. Do you have a favorite or meaningful memory of your childhood home or family that you would like to share?
2. Describe the diversity in the schools you attended. Possible follow-up questions:
 - a. Who influenced your beliefs during that time?
3. How did you decide to become a teacher? Possible follow-up questions:
 1. Was there a particular subject or age level you were most excited about teaching?
 2. Were there any other meaningful influences in your life that affected this career decision?
4. Describe your path to become a teacher. Possible follow-up questions:
5. Did you take a traditional route? Why or why not?
6. Please tell me about the pre-service courses you feel best prepared you to be a teacher.
Possible follow up questions:
 1. Was this an elective or mandated course?
 2. What type of learning opportunities did you like the best and why?
 3. What skills, topics or learning opportunities were most applicable?

7. How many years have you been in education?
8. What roles have you served in a school? Follow up question:
 1. Why have you chosen to remain in the same position?
 2. Or Why did you choose to switch roles?
9. Please share your certifications and degrees earned. Follow up question:
 1. Why did you choose to seek advanced degrees or additional certifications?
10. How many years have you been working in this school district, and in this school?
11. Is there anything personally meaningful to you about working in this school?
12. Tell me about your first experiences in a diverse urban school such as this one.
13. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your family and education background or about how you came to work in this current position?

Thank you so much for sharing your experiences and stories. I will send you a copy of the transcription of this interview so that you can review your responses and make any additions or changes necessary. I am really looking forward to our next visit.

Interview 2: Relationships with Cohort Members and Teachers

Introduction: Today I would like to ask some questions about your experiences with your colleagues – those in the culturally relevant teaching cohort, and those not. There are no right or wrong answers. Your unique experiences and your stories will help others better understand the complex work you do. As in the first interview, I would like to offer to share my own experiences with you. At any time, please feel free to ask me questions about my own experiences.

1. What are your experiences during a typical day of working with other teachers?

- a. What are your preferred ways to work with other teachers?
 - b. Describe the level of importance the school's systems play in helping or hindering your work with other teachers.
2. Please tell me how you chose to participate in the culturally relevant PD cohort?
 - a. Did the cohort format matter? Why or why not?
3. What were you most excited about with the cohort?
4. Please describe any fears or concerns you had when you signed up for the cohort.
5. Remember back to the very first cohort meeting. How did you feel about the other members of the cohort?
 - a. Did any participants surprise/concern/excite you? Why?
6. In the cohort meetings we participated in many group and collaborative activities. Which ones did you learn the most from?
 - a. What did you learn/gain from this interaction?
 - b. What did you learn about/from the participants in the cohort?
7. Occasionally, cohort participants may have shared ideas, used words, or asked questions in ways you may have found controversial, offensive, ill-informed or just plain wrong. Please think of a time you disagreed with a cohort member. How did you handle those feelings and the situation?
8. Did your relationships with cohort participants change over the course of the year?
 - a. What do you attribute these changes to?
 - b. Why do you think your relationships did not change?

9. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your participation or thoughts about the members of the cohort, or your relationship with the educators?

Thank you so much for sharing your experiences and stories. I will send you a copy of the transcription of this interview so that you can review your responses and make any additions or changes necessary. I am really looking forward to our next visit.

Interview 3: Relationships with Teachers at JJHS and Culturally Relevant Practices

Introduction: Today I would like to ask some questions about your experiences with your colleagues in our school, and the strategies you learned in the culturally relevant teaching cohort. There are no right or wrong answers. Your unique experiences and your stories will help others better understand the complex work you do. As in the previous interviews, I would like to offer to share my own experiences with you. At any time, please feel free to ask me questions about my own experiences.

1. Tell me about one experience with a teacher you trust *from our school* that stands out as meaningful to you.
 - a. What types of activities did you work on together?
 - b. How was your relationship built?
 - c. Describe any tough issues or challenges you worked through in this relationship.
2. Tell me about one experience with a teacher you do not trust or who broke your trust that stands out as meaningful to you.
 - a. How was your relationship built?
 - b. Describe any interactions you may still have with this teacher.

- c. What would the teacher need to do to re-earn your trust?
3. The results of the 5Essentials survey identify JJHS as a school where a lot of initiatives come and go. How do you believe this affects your relationships with colleagues?
 - a. Describe any systems our school uses or has in place that you believe helps you work well with colleagues.
 - b. Describe any systems our school uses or has in place that you believe prevent you from working well with colleagues.
4. In our last interview, you described what you learned from the culturally relevant PD. To what extent have you used those learnings?
 - a. Please tell me about a time you used the learnings with someone outside the cohort.
 - b. Please tell me about a time you wanted to use the learnings with someone outside the cohort but did not.

Thank you so much for sharing your experiences and stories. I will send you a copy of the transcript of this interview so that you can review your responses and make any additions or changes necessary. I am really looking forward to our next visit.

Interview 4: Member-Check and Follow-Up

Introduction: Today in our final interview, I would like to ask you about the themes and stories I have written about based on our previous interviews and observations. The goal of today's interview is to ensure that I have portrayed your experiences accurately and to allow you as a co-researcher to make corrections or add any further ideas or interpretations that I may have missed.

1. Are there any additions or corrections you would like to make regarding the transcriptions of the first interview including your biographical experiences and the stories of how you became a teacher at JJHS?
2. Are there any additions or corrections you would like to make regarding the transcription of our second interview about your relationships with cohort members and teachers?
3. Are there any additions or corrections you would like to make regarding the transcription of our third interview about your relationships with teachers at JJHS and your culturally relevant practices?
4. Are there any additions or corrections you would like to make regarding the stories of experiences I created from your submitted documents?
5. Is there anything else you would like to know from me about the research process?

Thank you again for sharing your experiences and stories.

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VITA

Chaurice Jacobson is a Secondary-Level Instructional Coach. She graduated from Blue Valley Northwest in 1995 then went on to earn her Bachelor's degree in English Literature from the University of Kansas, in 2002. She received her teaching certificate and Master's of Education: Curriculum and Instruction from Avila University. Mrs. Jacobson gained an ESOL certification from Emporia State University as part of the Project Estrellas grant. She earned an Educational Specialist degree in K-12 Urban Leadership and Administration from the University of Missouri: Kansas City in 2017.

Mrs. Jacobson has worked as a paraeducator, substitute teacher, 9-12 ELA teacher, school librarian and instructional coach, all within the Turner School District. She taught English Language Arts to freshmen for a decade, which allows her to boast that she taught half a generation of Turner Bears to write a five-paragraph essay and find a love of reading. Chaurice Jacobson also taught Young Adult Literature at Avila University and Culturally Responsive Strategies for Teaching Diverse Learners at the University of Missouri: Kansas City, both in the School of Education.

Chaurice Jacobson has attended school since 1982; most recently she has been a doctoral student at the University of Missouri: Kansas City. She and her wife of 21 years have two beautiful daughters and one ornery dog. She enjoys gardening, reading YA Literature and eating Cheeze-Its with her teacher-friends. Upon completion of her degree, Chaurice hopes to continue teaching as adjunct faculty while continuing her passions for narrative research and race and equity within the field of education.