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Make It Make Sense: An Exploratory Examination of Teacher Sense Making Around Culturally Responsive Classroom Management

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MAKE IT MAKE SENSE: AN EXPLORATORY EXAMINATION OF TEACHER SENSE MAKING AROUND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study takes place at a middle school in Charleston County, South Carolina. The study examines how White women educators make sense of being exposed to the content in *Don't Let Them Be Misunderstood,* a *professional* development about Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM). Guided by sensemaking theory and the dispositions of culturally responsive pedagogy, this exploratory study documents White women teachers' responses to *Don't Let Them Be Misunderstood* using multiple sources of data including semi-structured interviews, transcripts from the session, and transcripts from a post-exposure focus group. These data illustrate teacher's sense-making around and includes thoughts around how to improve the sessions for other White women educators. The study revealed three learning problems: grappling with White fragility, shifting the conversation away from race, and avoiding the work of becoming more culturally.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to:

My academic mother, mentor, and inspiration - Dr. Gloria Swindler Boutte who instilled in me a passion for culturally responsive teaching and fostered my love for teaching Black children. Dr. Boutte made me a part of her and Dr. George Johnson's family. Being a part of her legacy is the proudest part of my academic journey. Other members of our academic family who have had a profound impact on my journey include Bro. Dr. Anthony Broughton, Bro. Dr. Walter Lee, Bro. Dr. Lamar Johnson, Bro. Dr. JarvaisJackson, Dr. Dywanna Smith, Janice, Julia, Bro. President Dr. Ronnie Hopkins, Dr. Damara Hightower-Mitchell, and Dr. Gwenda Greene.

#WeBeLovinBlackChildren

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF STUDY

Black students are overrepresented in school discipline and punishment data (Skiba et al., 2002; Milner et al., 2019; United States Department of Education [USDOE] Office for Civil Rights, 2014). In one of the first significant studies looking at the demographics of teachers writing referrals that contribute to the overrepresentation, Lui et al. (2023) found that many referrals are written by White educators who are early in their careers. Classroom management beliefs and practices influence this phenomenon; therefore, one way to address such overrepresentation may include changing teachers' classroom management beliefs and practices (Milner et al., 2019; Weinstein et al., 2004; Caldera et al.,2020). Discipline referrals for Black students may include cultural misunderstandings or tend to be subjective in nature (Milner et al., 2019). Implementing culturally responsive classroom management (CRCM) could support teachers' development of classroom management strategies that honor the cultural backgrounds of all students and reduce the overrepresentation of Black students' office referrals. This chapter introduces the context surrounding the problem of practice.

Classroom management remains among the most significant challenges facing schoolteachers and administrators (Oliver & Reschly, 2007). Previous data presented by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE Office for Civil Rights, 2014) shows that schools suspend or expel Black students at a rate three times greater than their White counterparts. Twenty percent of Black boys and 12% of Black girls receive out-of-school suspensions. A study by Losen and Martinez (2013) sheds light on the impact the intersection of race, disability, and gender has on middle school students' suspensions. It

showed that middle school authorities suspended 36% of Black male students with disabilities at least once. Despite the six years between these two studies, the school exclusion rates for Black students remain disproportionately high.

Racial Disproportionality in School Discipline

From a historical lens, school discipline policies have resulted in high, and oftentimes disproportionate, rates of application among racially minoritized students attending U.S. schools (Losen, 2015). The difference in the rates of suspension and expulsion for students of color has prompted a great deal of study by those who seek to understand why the disparity exists in the hopes of eliminating the discipline gap. That research primarily focuses on how systems target and punish Black students (Okilwa & Robert, 2017).

While keeping students safe in school to maintain orderly educational environments is a critical objective, there is a question about how these policies perpetuate educational inequity. The evidence collected from those studies suggests that systems discipline Black students for minor infractions such as dress code violations, tardiness, cell phone use, loitering, and being disruptive (Skiba et al., 2002; Milner et al., 2019). While this trend holds for Black students, regardless of gender, Black boys tend to represent a disproportionate percentage of all school discipline actions (Skiba et al., 2002). Moreover, Black boys suffer this disproportionality across every level of K-12 education—elementary, middle, and high school.

School discipline policies, particularly exclusionary ones, link to inequity in access to educational opportunities. Exclusionary disciplinary practices remove students

from the educational environment because of a behavioral infraction (Welsh & Little, 2018). Removing a student from the learning environment impacts a host of student outcomes, including student achievement (Blake et al., 2016; Welsh, 2017; Skiba et al., 1997; Milner et al., 2019). The use of culturally responsive classroom management strategies offers one solution to disrupt the disproportionality in school discipline for Black students.

Factors Contributing to Racial Disproportionality in School Discipline

The overrepresentation of children of color in exclusionary school discipline has been identified as a significant problem in K-12 education. This disproportionality has impacted Black students more than any other racially minoritized group. This section reviews the factors that contribute to disproportionality in school discipline.

Impersonal school culture has been identified as contributing to racial disproportionality in school discipline (Nguyen et al., 2019). Gregory et al. (2011) found that schools that did not have warm, culturally welcome environments for students experienced higher rates of disproportionate school discipline. These authors also suggested that teachers play a significant role in the targeting of Black students. Skiba et al. (2002) confirmed that with their finding that discipline referrals were influenced by teachers' recommendations instead of being determined by administrators alone. They also found that Black students were written up for more subjective reasons than their white peers, primarily for subjective offenses such as excessive noise and disrespect. This idea prompts researchers to look more closely at how discipline decisions are made.

Vavrus and Cole (2002) examined the sociocultural factors that influenced teachers' decisions to write students up. They found that most teachers either intentionally or unintentionally singled Black students out; this was an important discovery because it provided evidence that discipline decisions are not solely based on violence or violation of zero-tolerance policies. Instead, the most consistent singling out of Black students happened in classrooms with a racial and gender mismatch between the student and the teacher. Because of that, the authors concluded that "this subtle, often unconscious process may be one of the reasons students of color often experience suspension in the absence of violent behavior" (p. 109).

Implicit and other unconscious forms of bias have been found to play a role in the disproportionate discipline of Black students. However, it is not a factor that educators readily name when reflecting on why discipline issues occur at higher rates among Black students. In their study of teachers' perceptions of disproportionality in discipline, Gregory, and Mosely (2004) found that most teacher participants failed to name the connection between race and culture and school discipline. The authors reflected, saying that the teachers offered "theories [that] were 'colorblind' such that they could not account for the gap across racial and ethnic groups in the application of discipline sanctions'' (p. 26). Carter et al. (2017) called out this dangerous kind of unconscious decision-making because it allows implicit bias regarding students to take over, leading to real, adverse effects for Black students.

Milner (2006) says one of the most significant differences between Black and White educators is Black teachers' ability to build culturally informed relationships. On

the other hand, Milner also found that the key to White educators' success in teaching Black Children is in (re)focusing teacher training on a way that builds off the success of Black teachers and others who successfully teach Black children.

Effects of Racial Disproportionality on School Discipline

Regardless of why Black students are overrepresented in the discipline data, the disproportionality in school discipline has a harmful effect on them. For one, it reduces their access to the curriculum and their teacher as an educational facilitator (Girvan et al., 2019). In addition to losing instructional time, students who are consistently excluded due to discipline are more likely to have persistent behavior issues (Noltemeyer et al., 2015). They are also more likely to drop out of school and have experience in the juvenile justice system than students who are not excluded due to discipline issues (Gion et al., 2014). Exclusionary discipline practices may also experience the reinforcement of their behaviors because it becomes a way for them to avoid unwanted tasks.

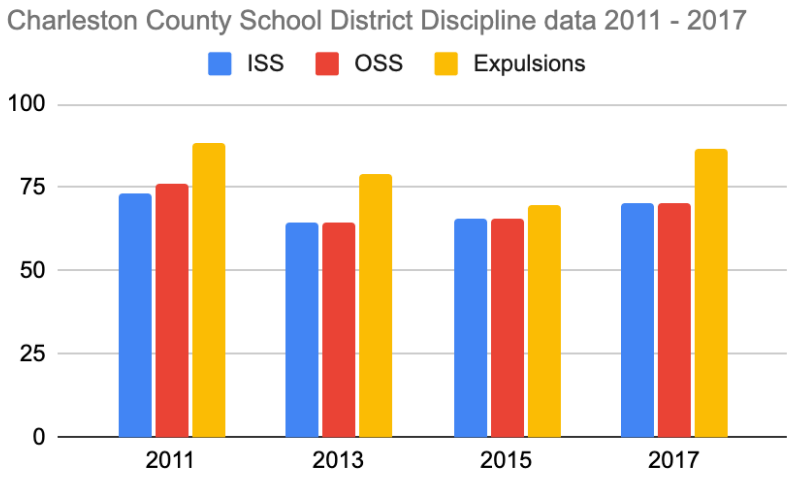
Racial disproportionality in school discipline also impacts Black students when they are not in trouble. Those who experience high rates of discipline also tend to have lower school attendance, higher rates of course failure, and increased instances of disengagement in the classroom (Balfanz et al., 2015). These factors work together to create diminished academic achievement for Black students who are disciplined at disproportionate rates (Toldson et al., 2015). Reduced academic achievement or capacity also has long-term effects on Black students, such as lowered earnings once they enter the labor market (Marchbanks et al., 2015). Black students may also experience mental health issues due to being targeted by school discipline policies (Perryman et al., 2022).

Alignment to the Current Study

This study aims to build upon work that examines the connection between white women educators and classroom management with Black students (Milner et al., 2019; Weinstein, 2004; Caldera et al., 2020). Understanding this link could help make white women educators more culturally responsive and build stronger and more genuine relationships with Black students. All these factors can, in turn, lead to better academic and social outcomes for Black students whom white women educators teach.

Data from the USDOE Office for Civil Rights (2011, 2013, 2015, 2017) shows that Black students have been historically excluded from the instructional environment at alarming rates. From 2011 to 2017, they represented no less than 60% of the district's In School suspensions, 75% of the district's out-of-school suspensions, and no less than 70% of its students expelled. Black students were never more than 45% of the population during this period.

Table 1.1



A study by Gottfredson et al. (1989), on behalf of the Johns Hopkins University Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools with the School District, highlighted the historical nature of the impact that classroom management has on the disproportionate discipline data for Black students in the County's Schools. More than three decades ago, they found that, in a single school year, students from six middle schools in the suburban SC district lost 7,932 instructional days, or the equivalent of 44 years, to in-school and out-of-school suspensions. Their study did not disaggregate this data by race. This study, funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, remains significant because it marks the last time a large-scale study was conducted addressing discipline disparities in school district.

The behavior data at the middle school, where participants taught, (Table 1.2) mimics the nationwide data and racial disparities in school discipline. The school serves 454 sixth through eighth grade students; fifty-five percent of the students are Black. Teachers and other school personnel refer Black and Hispanic/LatinX at much higher

rates than their peers in other racial groups. The school's data is slightly more promising than that of LatinX students. Black students' referral rates are gradually decreasing, while Hispanic/ LatinX students' referrals are increasing, nearly doubling between the last two years.

Table 1.2

Referrals by Race

Year	Black or African American	Hispanic/Latinx	Two or More Races	White	Total Incidents
2020 - 2021	68.6%	20.6%	1.5%	9.3%	204
2019 - 2020	79.3%	10.1%	1.7%	9.0%	964
2018 - 2019	80.9%	9.7%	0.9%	8.5%	1719
2017 - 2018	84.3%	4.3%	1.8%	9.6%	1243
2016 - 2017	78.4%	1.4%	4.3%	15.9 %	352

Such discipline and school exclusion data could be the result of ineffective classroom management techniques or newer initiatives designed to address positive behavior interventions and support or student-teacher relationships (Katz-Amey, 2019). In their study, Gottfredson et al. (1989) suggested the following ways to increase classroom management effectiveness in the school district:

1. Revising discipline policy to increase rule clarity and specify each infraction consequence.

2. Ensuring discipline policies contain provisions for systematically rewarding desired student behavior.
3. Developing behavior tracking systems to store all positive and negative office referrals and improve home-school communication and encourage home-based reinforcement programs.
4. They suggested parent reinforcers such as special meals, family outings, extra time with parents, extra privileges, etc.
5. Improving and observing classroom organization and management effectively communicating rules and procedures, carefully monitoring student behavior and follow-through with consequences for breaking the rules, maintaining student responsibility for academic work, instructional clarity, and organizing instruction and transitions. And
6. Positive reinforcement strategies and antecedent interventions could help to reduce undesired student behaviors. (Gottfredson et al., 1989)

Duke (1992) published a study where his findings on managing school climate aligned with Gottfredson's earlier work: schools with fewer discipline problems usually balanced clearly established and communicated rules with a climate of concern for students as individuals. Duke (1992) also stated that schools wishing to lower the frequency of discipline issues could decrease negative behaviors by:

1. Clearly communicating rules and consequences for breaking them to staff, students, and parents.

2. Periodically restating rules, especially after returning from extended breaks such as winter or summer vacation.
3. Ensuring fair and consistent enforcement of rules.
4. Assign fewer individuals to be responsible for enforcing rules.
5. Provide a hearing process where students can tell their side of the story and establish an appeal process to increase students' and parents' perception of fairness.
6. Develop categories to distinguish between categories of offenses.
7. Emphasize flexibility with handling minor offenses and save nonnegotiable consequences of severe offenses. (Gaustad, 1992)

The School District's Progressive Discipline Plan (CCSD PDP, n.d.) and Code of Conduct (CCSD Code of Conduct, n.d.) incorporate many of the strategies suggested by Gottfredson et al. (1989) and Duke (1992). These procedural and systematic strategies do not offer culturally responsive strategies for any student group, including Black students.

Research Question

This study was designed to answer the following Research Question: How do White women educators process (make sense of) in-service professional development on culturally responsive teaching and classroom management?

Despite the research question stating 'white women' it is important to highlight the fact that white women, nor any other group is a monolith. The term 'white women' was used for simplicity of not overcomplicating the research question and is not intended to generalize the findings to all white women, only the small group of white women

participants. Sense-making is an active process of constructing meaning from present stimuli, mediated by prior knowledge, experiences, beliefs, and values embedded in the social context within which people work (Ganon & Schechter, 2016; p.684). Understanding how white women educators construct meaning of the information gained from the professional development sessions will offer valuable insights to school leaders, teacher educators, professional development coordinators, and other stakeholders. This understanding is crucial because although these educators represent almost 80% of the teaching force, their professional learning experiences in cultural responsiveness have yet to move the needle for Black students. Ultimately, the findings of this study can inform the redesign of professional development opportunities for white female educators, considering how they make sense of cultural responsiveness for Black students.

Rationale for Research

Several studies (Bondy et al., 2007; Gaias et al., 2019; Hubbard, 2005; Kwok et al., 2020; Patish, 2016) have investigated the impact of using culturally responsive classroom management strategies on the referral and discipline rates of Black and Brown students. Overall, these studies (Bondy, 2007; Hubbard, 2005; Kwok et al., 2020; Milner, 2009; Patish, 2016; Siwatu et al., 2017) tend to focus on the use of culturally responsive practices by teachers in classroom settings. The results from these studies (Bondy, 2007; Hubbard, 2005; Kwok et al., 2020; Milner, 2009; Patish, 2016; Siwatu et al., 2017) have found that the use of culturally responsive classroom management strategies has a positive impact on decreasing the referral rates of racially minoritized students in schools.

I conducted my literature synthesis using Clemson University's JSTOR, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. In my initial searches, I used terms such as "classroom management strategies for Black students," "Classroom management strategies for African American students," and "social justice and classroom management strategies" and specified a three-to-five-year recent publication limit. Eventually, I came across articles that used the term *culturally responsive classroom management* and used that term for the remainder of my search. At the same time, I also expanded the limits for publication dates from a maximum of five to a maximum of eight years.

The three main types of literature that emerged in my literature synthesis include (a) multiple theoretical perspectives regarding CRCM (Davis, 2017; Lustick, 2017; Milner, 2019), (b) empirical studies about CRCM and teachers (Bondy, 2007; Hubbard, 2005; Kwok et al., 2020; Milner, 2009; Patish, 2016; Siwatu et al., 2017), and (c) empirical studies about CRCM in classrooms (Bondy et al., 2007; Gaias et al., 2019; Hubbard, 2005; Kwok et al., 2020; Patish, 2016).

The first section of this synthesis includes an overview of the most salient studies and what those researchers found in their exploration of the topic. The concluding section includes a summary of the context and existing literature through the lens of the current study. There were six studies left out of the literature review because they were not germane to the topic of this study, even though they showed up in the literature search.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM)

With a team of colleagues (2004), Weinstein developed the concept of culturally responsive classroom management (CRCM) from culturally responsive pedagogy,

multicultural counseling, and caring. The goal of CRCM is to encourage students to behave appropriately out of a sense of personal responsibility instead of simply meeting behavior standards due to fear of punishment or a desire for reward (Weinstein et al., 2004). CRCM is comprised of five components: (1) recognition of the teacher's ethnocentrism and biases; (2) knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds; (3) understanding of the broader social, economic, and political context of our educational system; (4) ability and willingness to use culturally appropriate classroom management strategies; and (5) commitment to building caring classroom communities (Siwatu et al., 2017; Weinstein et al., 2004).

Weinstein, working with colleagues (2004), suggested that using culturally responsive classroom management strategies increases equitable learning opportunities by reducing the use of discipline practices that typically occur when teachers misinterpret marginalized students' behaviors. The use of CRCM also encourages making learning more contextual to activate students' knowledge in areas of their classroom experience (Caldera et al., 2020; Davis, 2017). To successfully use these strategies in classrooms, researchers (Caldera et al., 2020; Dahlgren, 2015) urge teachers to reconsider their classroom setups in favor of arranging students to encourage positive behaviors and better relationships. A change as minor as a teacher's classroom organization can encourage students and teachers as facilitators to build better relationships to leverage in their social, school, and classroom lives.

Milner (2019) conducted a thematic analysis on CRCM using the relevant literature as data, paying particular attention to justice-centered issues. Three primary

trends emerged in Milner's review of the literature: (1) a variety of terms used to study and describe classroom management and broader disciplinary strategies amid student diversity, (2) previous studies examined classroom management strategies for racial and ethnic groups beyond Black and White students, and (3) a variety of locations offered different contexts.

Differing terms. As Milner (2019) noted, various terms have been used to describe the same phenomenon. Weinstein et al. (2004) used the term *culturally responsive classroom management* to describe the need for diversity in classroom management. Similarly, Hammond et al. (2004) used the term *culturally relevant classroom management strategies*. Monroe (2006) approached this work through conceptualizing the *discipline gap* - the idea that some schools punish students disproportionately. In her work, Monroe referred to the need for diversity in classroom management as *culturally specific disciplinary techniques*. Despite the differences in the terms used, these authors emphasized the need for diversifying strategies in how teachers and school leaders approach classroom management.

In this DiP, I will use cultural responsiveness. Though the theories in use are referred to as culturally responsive teaching and culturally responsive classroom management, the term cultural relevance may show up throughout this DiP. Despite the intentionality behind using CRCM, both approaches emphasize similar ideas with comparable goals (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017). Because of this using them interchangeably is acceptable and does not impact the framing of this, or any other work concerned with liberatory teaching.

Differing populations and contexts. Previous research around diversity in classroom management explored the phenomenon with different populations. McCarthy and Benally (2003) explored classroom management with Navajo students, while Hammond et al. (2004) focused on any students who identified as American Indian—in their study of classroom management, Shin, and Koh (2007) compared the classroom management experiences of American and Korean students.

One of the challenges teachers face when attempting to use research findings to inform their classroom management practices is that assigning a particular set of strategies to each racial and ethnic subgroup does not work. Milner (2019) warned against creating generalized lists based on race and ethnicity. Instead, teachers should be reflective about the students they teach and what their local contexts require from a classroom management standpoint. Taking a reflective approach also means that teachers may have to modify their classroom management strategies yearly based on who is in their classroom.

Milner's findings. The literature synthesis's main focus was on (1) the disproportionate office disciplinary referrals among students of color, those living below the poverty line, and those with learning difficulties; (2) the disproportionate suspension or expulsion of these students; (3) the lack of practical learning experiences for educators to be aware and respond to students' needs; and (4) the low percentage of students of color referred to talented and gifted programs as well as the over-referral of students living below the poverty line and students of color to special education. Milner (2019) pursued these topics due to emphasis on the literature. Through his analysis of the

relevant literature, Milner found that educators worked to establish relationships, develop expectations, and communicate in a culturally responsive manner. School personnel's deliberate attention to relationship development and creating caring learning environments began with the demonstration of a genuine interest in every student. Teachers and other staff earned students' cooperation by using clearly stated expectations for academic growth and appropriate student behavior (Milner, 2019).

CRCM and Teachers. Weinstein et al. (2004) introduced the theory of CRCM, and it included at least five principles: (1) teachers' recognition of their ethnocentrism; (2) awareness of students' culture; (3) awareness of the all-inclusive social, political, and economic systems in education; (4) proper management strategies; and (5) fostering caring classrooms. Patish (2016) argued for the introduction of these concepts to aspiring teachers in their undergraduate teacher preparation programs and reinforced through their professional learning communities once they begin teaching.

Through their study, Kwok et al. (2020) answered the following two research questions: (1) What do teacher candidates believe about the impact of student demographic characteristics on classroom management? and (2) How are these beliefs different throughout teacher preparation (p.2)? To answer these questions, Kwok et al. developed and distributed a belief survey to 226 teacher education students at a Research I institution. Of that 226, 114 students completed the survey. Using grounded theory to analyze the results, Kwok et al. found that most aspiring teachers, nearly 75%, believed that demographics impacted how a classroom is managed. In response to their second research question, Kwok et al. found that, over time, the students in the teacher

preparation program developed a deeper understanding of diversity and inclusion, as evidenced by changes in their open-ended survey responses.

Hubbard (2005) investigated the managerial practices of 12 selected early career teachers who taught in ethnically diverse classrooms to understand the strategies participants used to manage Black students' behaviors. The school site's demographics indicated that 85% of students were Black, 9.3% were White, and 5.2% were Hispanic. These 12 teachers had at least three years of teaching experience, and Hubbard selected them due to a record of sending very few behavior referrals to the office. The number of behavior referrals was part of Hubbard's selection criteria because sparse numbers of behavior referrals indicate the implementation of successful classroom management strategies.

Hubbard (2005) used interviews, focus groups, and observations to answer his research questions about the teacher's classroom behavior management strategies. Upon finishing data collection, Hubbard used the constant comparative method to make connections between all the data until he had developed an accurate picture of the teachers' beliefs about and experiences with classroom management strategies. Through his analysis, Hubbard found three primary strategies commonly used across teachers and classrooms. First, there was a deliberate effort to develop relationships with students based on care, trust, and respect. For example, Hubbard described the way that one of the teachers focused on students during conversations. In his vignette about this teacher, Hubbard noted that she would actively listen to students, showing interest in whatever, they were sharing with her. She would encourage conversation through both nonverbal

and verbal cues (nodding, asking clarifying questions, or other means of active listening) to develop relationships with her students. Second, teachers were confident in their ability to manage their students' behaviors effectively. Hubbard measured such confidence based on how teacher participants responded to his interview questions. Hubbard was careful to note that this confidence was not associated with conceit or gain but was associated with the teachers' strong passion for teaching. Finally, teachers were also deliberate in guiding, mediating, and scaffolding students' behavior, taking a proactive approach to behavior management instead of a reactive one. While Hubbard did not define terms explicitly, he gave examples of how they showed up in teacher-student interactions. For example, Hubbard (2005) described the way that a teacher participant described how she mediated student behavior. In her own words:

> If I can get them to the side and talk to them in a calm voice, I am much more successful. If I stay calm and have a very calming tone when I am talking to them, then I feel they respect that, and then they can come down to where I am and tell me what is going on with them. (p. 168)

In this example, Hubbard noted that the teacher considered culturally based explanations for behavior before mediating negative student behaviors. In short, the teacher modified her culturally based tendencies to those that suited the students' culturally based behaviors and reactions.

Bondy et al. (2007) explored the practices used by three effective novice teachers in urban elementary classrooms during their first day of school. The teachers' effectiveness was determined by characterizations of respectful interactions with

students, having a calm tone when interacting with students, and keeping a tight focus on academic work and expectations. These authors determined teachers' effectiveness through observations of the teachers' classroom management strategies during a previous study. When approached by the research team, all three teachers agreed to participate in the follow-up study.

Bondy et al. (2007) collected their data using videos and interview data. Teachers wore remote microphones and recorded the first two hours of their school day. Bondy's team focused their analysis of the recordings on the teachers' activities instead of the students. The team conducted interviews later in the day. The open-ended interview questions allowed teachers to share their thoughts about the day. After analyzing the data, the researchers found that the teacher participants were able to identify when they were using CRCM to create psychologically safe learning environments for all students. Bondy et al. found that the teachers developed relationships with students and established high expectations using insistence and a culturally responsive communication style. Bondy and colleagues reviewed previous literature that identified insistence as a critical trait of effective classroom managers. In practice, insistence means that teachers are respectfully and insistently repeating requests, and if students do not respond to the requests, then the teacher calmly delivers consequences. In practice, culturally responsive communication styles rely on using terms of endearment and humor when talking to students. These teachers may also use one of the discourse styles identified by Bondy et al., i.e., familiar words and expressions, use of popular culture, call-and-response patterns, and straightforward directives. This level of intentionality made the teachers think more

carefully about the safest ways to engage with their students, leading to the development of deeper relationships and fewer behavior problems.

In addition to a positive impact on the teacher/student relationship, Bondy et al. (2007) also found that the use of CRCM strategies created a classroom environment that was mutually respectful, orderly, culturally welcoming, and caring. In these environments, students appeared far more engaged and resilient than those students in classrooms that did not feel psychologically safe. Teachers affirmed and encouraged students to reach their full academic potential in that environment.

Siwatu, with several colleagues (2017), conducted a study that developed initial validation for the Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy Scale (CRCMSE). Siwatu et al. developed the scale based on culturally responsive classroom management and social cognitive theories. They primarily relied on Weinstein et al. (2004)'s work, realizing a need for classroom management strategies that honor the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students. When using culturally responsive classroom management strategies, teachers must be mindful of the ways that students' cultural backgrounds influence the ways that they behave in school before responding with consequences. In the development of the CRCMSE scale, Siwatu's research team emphasized the self-efficacy aspect of social cognitive theory. According to Bandura's (2001) definition of self-efficacy, people learn behaviors with human agency as an essential part of reinforcing those behaviors. For classroom management, Siwatu et al. suggested that teachers need agency to believe that they can manage students from

differing cultural backgrounds. However, when they cannot, their human agency enables them to locate help from others.

In their study to develop and validate the Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy Scale, Siwatu et al. (2017) administered various scales to 380 preservice and in-service teachers in North Carolina and Texas. As the authors worked at universities in either of those two states, they used a convenience sample among prospective participants. Most participants were undergraduate elementary education majors, while the remaining were in-service teachers. The authors administered the Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy (CRCMSE), Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy (CRTSE) and Teacher Sense of Efficacy (TSE) scales to both groups of participants. The CRCMSE scale consisted of 35 items that allowed participants to rate their confidence in performing specific CRCM tasks. Siwatu (2007) designed the 41-item CRTSE to measure the teachers' self-efficacy to perform specific tasks as demonstrated by teachers who adopted a culturally responsive pedagogy. Siwatu et al. used the TSE scale to measure the teachers' perceptions of their capabilities to perform general teaching tasks. The researchers found the tool reliable for measuring teacher efficacy when it comes to culturally responsive classroom management strategies.

CRCM and Teachers Summary

Kwok and colleagues (2020) found that students' demographics affect how teachers manage classrooms and thus support the importance of CRCM strategies. Bondy, with three colleagues (2007) and Hubbard (2005), argued that relationships play an important role in teachers successfully implementing CRCM. Finally, Siwatu and

colleagues (2017) developed a self-efficacy scale to measure teachers' confidence, or self-efficacy, in instituting CRCM strategies (Hubbard, 2005). In addition, Gaias et al. 2019 provided more insights into classroom management practices.

Gaias et al. (2019) conducted an experimental study to examine how 103 teachers' classroom management practices, including control, anticipation and responsiveness, monitoring, proactive behavior management, meaningful participation, and cultural responsiveness, co-occur in middle school classrooms. These teachers were part of a more extensive study exploring the impact of a cultural professional development intervention. The study also sought to explore whether teacher factors like race or years of experience and classroom characteristics predicted membership in the various profiles of teacher practices. More simply put, the researchers were attempting to formulate an explanation for why teachers engage in culturally responsive classroom management. The study also examined whether the average level of negative student classroom behaviors differed across the classroom management profiles.

To identify control, anticipation and responsiveness, monitoring, proactive behavior management, meaningful participation, and cultural responsiveness during teacher observations, Gaias et al. (2019) used what they called, Assessing Schools Settings, which looks at the interactions of student and teachers that they based on an observational system for PBIS developed by Rusby et al. (2011). Gaias and the research team measured teacher control with five items (i.e., "There is evidence of classroom routines" and "Students know what they are supposed to be doing", p. 14). Teacher anticipation and responsiveness were measured by six items (i.e., "Teacher is responsive

to students' behavioral and academic needs, p. 14). Teacher monitoring was associated with the ways that teachers kept an eye on their students and the instrument included four items as measures. Four items showed teachers' proactive behavior by identifying consistency in holding students to behavioral standards. The researchers used nine items to measure meaningful interactions, such as encouraging students to share their thoughts and ideas in class. The final instrument included seven items to measure cultural responsiveness the researchers defined as ways that teachers incorporated cultural references and norms into their instruction.

Gaias et al. (2019) noted that cultural responsiveness could work in conjunction with other classroom management strategies such as insistence and teacher-student interactions. Using latent profile analysis of the observation data collected, Gaias et al. suggested that some educators need comprehensive professional development related to classroom management techniques and that all educators could enhance their practices to promote cultural responsiveness and meaningful participation. Latent profile analysis (LPA) requires analysis of results for similarities across responses to build individual profiles. These researchers used several rounds of LPA to create their final model for analyzing the teachers' classroom management strategies.

Summary

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM) strategies recognize the importance of developing a positive classroom for both the teacher and student and considering the cultural preferences, social, ethnicity, and well-being of a student. While there is a universal adoption of various CRCM approaches, no one distinctive method

provides a complete solution. However, the strategies discussed appear to be best practices regardless of the setting.

Theoretical Framework

Sensemaking theory and Dispositions for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (DCRP) will guide the data collection, data analysis, organization of findings, and discussion for this study. Used frequently in policy implementation literature, sensemaking theory is used to understand what inhibits the implementation of changes in education policy. Spillane and associates (2002) explain policymakers often view educators as willfully sabotaging or modifying a policy directive (practice or change), when in reality even those willing often fail to implement as intended. In their sensemaking framework, they explain, "what is understood from a new message depends critically on the knowledge one already has" (p. 395) and the sensemaking process is "the active attempt to bring one's past organization of knowledge and beliefs to bear in the construction of meaning from the present stimuli" (p. 349). In this definition, there are two things at play—both knowledge and belief; in a white supremacist, capitalist society, educators are not immune from being socialized (and hence believing) in deficit scripts about poor and minoritized children (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017) and those understandings and beliefs play a role in how they come to understand calls for culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive classroom management.

Leadership literature is clear that one of the goals of an equity-centric leader is to induct novice teachers and design ongoing professional learning opportunities for in-service teachers that increase their cultural competence (Khalifa, 2018, Khalifa, et al.,

2016; Hinnant-Crawford, 2019).Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) asks the question-- why is so little of it happening in classrooms with Black students?(p. 159). Neri and associates (2019) describe the resistance on the part of educators to cultural relevance as a multilevel learning problem. Specifically examining the teacher level (as they define resistance at the teacher level, organization level, and institutional level), Neri and colleagues explain resistance stems from "(a) limited understanding and belief in the efficacy of CRE and (b) a lack of know-how needed to execute it" (p.197). Furthermore, they explain resistance begins with questions such as "Is this my responsibility?" and "Is this important enough for me to revise my practice?" (p. 204). They introduce a resistance to change framework (which encapsulates sensemaking) with five steps: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. Sensemaking about cultural relevance happens throughout this process—as one is exposed to knowledge (or in many cases professional learning), they determine if they are persuaded (or not), they decide to adopt or resist a change, they implement the change (or modify), and they seek confirmation for their decision. As leaders seek to cultivate cultural responsiveness; they must be aware that professional learning does not simply translate to changed praxis; it provides stimuli that are negotiated with prior knowledge and beliefs. This complexity is why instruments designed to capture teachers' beliefs about cultural responsiveness include measuring their outcome expectancy (whether or not they believe it makes a difference) (Siwatu), their efficacy (belief in their ability to enact culturally responsive practices), their knowledge (Spanierman et al., 2011), their behaviors (Spanierman et al.,

2011; Hinnant-Crawford et al., 2023), and their dispositions (Whitaker & Valtierra, 2019).

Dispositions are a relatively new area of focus in teacher development and educational research, which was first introduced in the early 2000s (Whitaker & Valtierra, 2019). While defining dispositions can be a challenging task (Whitaker & Valtierra, 2019; Choi et al., 2016; Warren, 2018), the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (Choi et al., 2016) describes them as professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Warren (2018, p.169) defines dispositions as "efficacious physical habits, tendencies, and trends in observable behaviors. Truscott and Stenhouse (2022) describe dispositions as being associated with professional attributes such as personal qualities, dress, thought processes, traits, attitudes, and habits of the mind.

Teachers who practice culturally responsive teaching are described to have certain skills and attributes. Comstock and colleagues (2023, p.1) have identified a specific set of Culturally Responsive Dispositions which consist of teachers' beliefs about teaching, students, and cultural diversity, as well as their self-efficacy for culturally responsive teaching. Warren (2018) posits that these dispositions include a teacher's beliefs about cultural diversity, race, students, and teaching, as well as their self-efficacy for engaging in such pedagogy. Whitaker and Valtierra (2018) introduced the Dispositions for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (DCRP), which includes three dispositions: praxis, community, and social justice.

Disposition for praxis focuses on teacher self-reflection through a synthesis of knowing themselves, their students, and their practices (Guajardo et al., 2011; Gutierrez & Vossoughi, 2010). Ultimately, having a disposition for praxis guides teachers to a deeper understanding of the question: how does my identity impact my practices? (Badia & Iglesias, 2019; Colliander, 2018; Golzar, 2020; Kayi-Aydar, 2019; Noonan, 2018; Titu, 2019). The disposition for community deals primarily with how teachers develop and leverage relationships with others, including students, their families, other teachers, and community members (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Teachers who possess a disposition for community teach through students' cultural frames and become a part of students' communities (Whitaker & Valtierra, 2018). Whitaker and Valtierra (2018) grounded the disposition for social justice in the idea that education is a civil right. Teachers who possess this disposition consider the goal of culturally responsive teaching to liberate and empower marginalized students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). These teachers help students become critically conscious and understand that social systems primarily protect and maintain Whiteness, rather than solely through isolated acts of racial oppression (Whitaker & Valtierra, 2018).

Whitaker & Valtierra (2018, 2019) acknowledge that their list of dispositions only represents three characteristics of multicultural teaching and acknowledge the co-construction of knowledge as a missing key component. Using social justice strategies in addressing student interactions. Behavior is a component of culturally responsive classroom management. Having teacher-participants examine their classroom management practices through the framework of the dispositions of culturally responsive

pedagogy (Whitaker & Valtierra, 2018; Whitaker & Valtierra, 2019) could lead to a transformative praxis of applying social justice strategies (Zamudio et al., 2011).

Research says that an educator that is culturally responsive would show evidence of dispositions that are associated with cultural responsiveness. In the case of D*on't Let Them Be Misunderstoo*d, the Disposition of Culturally Responsive Classroom Management reflects the dispositions that professional learning hopes to catalyze in teachers. Grounding the data analysis in the dispositions for social justice, community, and praxis will pinpoint specific dispositions that we want to observe throughout the study; using the pre-interviews as a base line, then using the transcripts from the sessions and post-exposure focus group to pinpoint any changes in participant's beliefs around the need for CRCM or any anticipated change in practice after the intervention.

The Resistance to Change Sensemaking Framework (Neri et al., 2019) provides a structured approach to analyze how participants make sense of new learning around cultural responsiveness. The three phases of their framework that I will focus on are knowledge, persuasion, and decision. This framework enables me to identify indications of acquisition of new knowledge, whether they developed a positive or negative attitude toward the new knowledge, and whether they were persuaded to accept or oppose the CRCM practices.

Research Site

This exploratory study occurred at a middle school in a suburban city in South Carolina. The school serves 454 students in sixth through eighth grades. Fifty-five percent of the 454 scholars are black, and over 70% of the school's teachers are white,

making it an ideal site for this study. The school was also chosen because of my long-standing working relationship with the administration and staff. If the study has positive results, it could significantly impact the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional disparities resulting from the student-teacher racial mismatch.

I secured initial approval through the school's principal and Executive Director. Upon obtaining their approval, I submitted a Request to Conduct Research form to the Research Officer in the Office of Assessment & Evaluation, which approves research. Per district policy, the research request would be evaluated by a committee composed of district staff. The committee considered the proposal based on the following guidelines: (1) The study should not cause harm to participants; (2) The study should afford a direct benefit to the district, our students, staff, etc.; (3) Study benefits should outweigh any costs such as loss of instructional time; (4) The study should align with district initiatives or priorities and should not interfere with ongoing instructional programs; and (5) The study should employ a sound research design such as providing ample details about data collection, using valid and reliable instruments, conducting analyses that are appropriate to the research question(s), etc. (Charleston County School District, 2021). After a few minor revisions, approval to conduct my research was granted. The Chief Academic Officer and Superintendent granted final approval.

The Exposure

The aim of this study was to explore the sensemaking and subsequent emerging dispositions towards cultural responsiveness of White women educators exposed to the content in *Don't Let Them Be Misunderstood*. *Don't Let Them Be Misunderstood* is a

three-part professional development designed to be facilitated over a six-weeks aligned with one of the learning outcomes from the culturally responsive classroom management strategies unit proposed by Caldera et al. (2020). The designed sessions are each guided by the following learning outcomes:

1. Learning Outcome 1: Teachers will reflect on and identify their cultural assumptions, biases, and perspectives.
2. Learning Outcome 2: Teachers will demonstrate the understanding that classroom management is not culturally neutral by exploring and identifying instances of cultural miscommunication.
3. Learning Outcome 3: Teachers will design culturally responsive classroom management strategies that foster a safe, culturally centered, and inclusive environment. (p. 353)

This work was guided by an improvement science methodological framework. In *Learning to Improve*, Bryk et al. (2017, p. 203) discuss the value of beginning with small cycles to drive rapid improvement. They argue that early PDSA cycles can establish a foundation of knowledge and expertise to speed up future efforts and make widespread improvement more likely (Bryk et al., p. 204). The study participants, a group of White women educators who volunteered to participate, gave me an unexpected advantage. By starting with a small and familiar group, I was more likely to have candid and open dialogue. This openness and honesty provided me with a valuable set of data that I can use to inform and improve my design of *Don't Let Them Be Misunderstood* professional development and its implementation over time.

An advantage of piloting the PD content on a smaller scale prior to full implementation would be having the ability to learn how white women educators process (make sense of) the professional development on culturally responsive teaching and classroom management. I introduced Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM) (Weinstein et al., 2004; Milner et al., 2019) by conducting three professional development sessions. CRCM is a set of classroom management strategies developed around the following five components: (1) recognition of one's ethnocentrism and biases; (2) knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds; (3) understanding of the broader social, economic, and political context of our educational system; (4) ability and willingness to use culturally appropriate classroom management strategies; and (5) commitment to building caring classroom communities (Weinstein et al., 2004; Milner et al., 2019.

At the time of my proposal, I planned for three PD sessions over three weeks, then three more weeks for participants to test and refine the CRCM checklist. Because of timing and logistics, this implementation was truncated, and all three sessions took place in one day. At the end of the third session, participants worked to develop a walkthrough observation tool that could be used to measure teachers' culturally responsive classroom management practices. Over the next two weeks, participants conducted observations and reflections using the observation checklist they had developed during the professional development session.

Summary

Chapter One provided context around the background of the problem and outlined the specific components of the current study. The literature synthesis included a

discussion of the theories serving as the study's foundation. Additionally, the literature review focused heavily on the role that CRCM has played in past research. Chapter 2 will include a discussion of the methods for this study.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODS

My Dissertation in Practice (DiP) will attempt to answer the following research question:

(1) How do White women educator process (make sense of) professional development on culturally responsive teaching and classroom management?

I collected four data sources to describe any change that may have occurred throughout the study: (a) pre-exposure semi-structured interviews, (b) post-exposure focus group, (c) transcripts from professional development sessions, and (d) the CRCM checklist developed by the participants.

Improvement Science Approach

Improvement Science is "a data-driven change process that aims to systematically design, test, implement, and scale change toward systemic improvement, as informed and defined by the experience and knowledge of subject matter experts" (Lemire et al. 2017, p. 25). A standard Improvement Science methodology used in educational settings is the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle. The PDSA cycle is an improvement science tool designed to improve problems of practice (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020) through an iterative series of cycles where observed outcomes are compared to predictions and discrepancies between the two become a major source of learning (Bryk et al., 2015). The PDSA cycle consists of four steps: (1) Plan, (2) Do, (3) Study, and (4) Act. These steps need repetition to develop and test a change idea that genuinely works (Bryk et al., 2015).

Finally, the PDSA aims to answer the following three questions: (1) What are we trying to accomplish? (2) How will we know that a change is an improvement? and (3) What change can be introduced in our system to move us closer to our aim? (Bryk et al., 2015; Hinnant-Crawford, 2020). My study sought to examine the way a small group of white women educators made sense of "*Don't Let them Be Misunderstood*", a professional development series I developed to support White women educators' adoption of CRCM strategies. The exposure occurred over a three-hour period, during a morning where the three participants did not have a class. The study also sought to co-generate a CRCM walk-through instrument that teachers can use to support their implementation of CRCM strategies. The findings are presented in Chapter Three. It is important to note that the findings of this study are not generalizable to the larger population due to the small population size.

Evidence of participants' sensemaking will inform the changes needed that could result in professional development sessions that increase the culturally responsiveness of White women educators and ultimately move the needle in disproportionate discipline data for Black students.

Plan

For this DiP, I reviewed national data about the overidentification of Black students for disciplinary practices. I also looked at districts and school's disciplinary statistics. I conducted a root cause analysis captured in an Ishikawa (fishbone) diagram (Appendix A). I also reviewed the literature to find potential research-based remedies for the problem of practice. I identified Culturally Responsive Classroom Management as a

potential strategy for classroom teachers to use to change the disproportionate data of Black students being referred to the office. I identified tools to document and describe the change. These are described in the data collection section of this chapter.

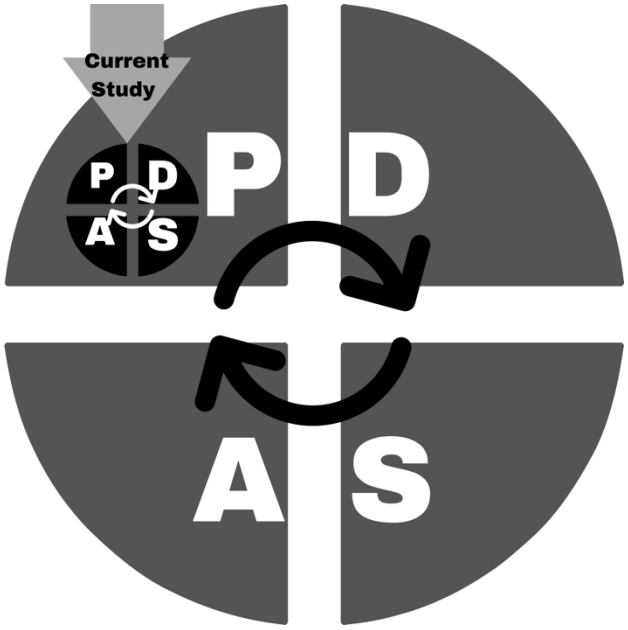
After identifying a set of objectives that I thought would support my goal, I began identifying ideas and concepts that I thought would be pertinent. Many of the concepts were ideas that I'd be introduced to throughout my years of graduate school research, strategies that I used throughout my career (especially during my time abroad), and through my passion for researching and developing conference workshops around liberatory pedagogies.

Prior to exposing participants to the material and content, I consulted with my network of school leaders, teachers, professional development professionals, and scholars with expertise that align with this work. As an educator who loves to incorporate music into my lessons, I could not pass up an opportunity to incorporate Nina Simone's *Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood* in my conversations around the ways that Black girls are misunderstood. The song touched me so much, I decided to name the professional development session *Don't Let Them Be Misunderstood.*

This DiP primarily documents what happened in the plan phase of a PDSA on the impact of *Don't Let Them Be Misunderstood*. In essence, this pilot did not test the intervention as designed (as was planned in the proposal), but instead it allowed me to refine the design before full implementation by learning about how teachers make sense of the materials as presented. Therefore, this becomes a miniature or infra-PDSA, within the larger PDSA (see figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1

Intra PDSA



Don’t Let Them Be Misunderstood

Session I

Three White women educators participated in the study. Mrs. Touhy was a veteran teacher with 28 years of experience teaching math. Mrs. Johnson was a first-year teacher who moved to the middle school in January from Texas, and Ms. Gruwell was an instructional coach with 20 years of experience teaching English. Each of the participants self-identified, during their pre interview as both white and female.

Table 2.1

Participant Demographics

Participant Name	Racial Identity	Gender identity	Years of teaching Experience
Mrs. Touhy	White	Women	29 years
Ms. Gruwell	White	Women	20 years
Mrs. Johnson	White	Women	1year

I met the participants in the coach's office at the school. We had four hours to go through the three workshops. I spent about twenty minutes catching up with each of them, former colleagues, and meeting Mrs. Johnson for the first time. I had known Ms. Gruwell for nearly ten years, and we had worked together for two. Mrs. Tuohy and I worked together for a year and created an extremely close bond.

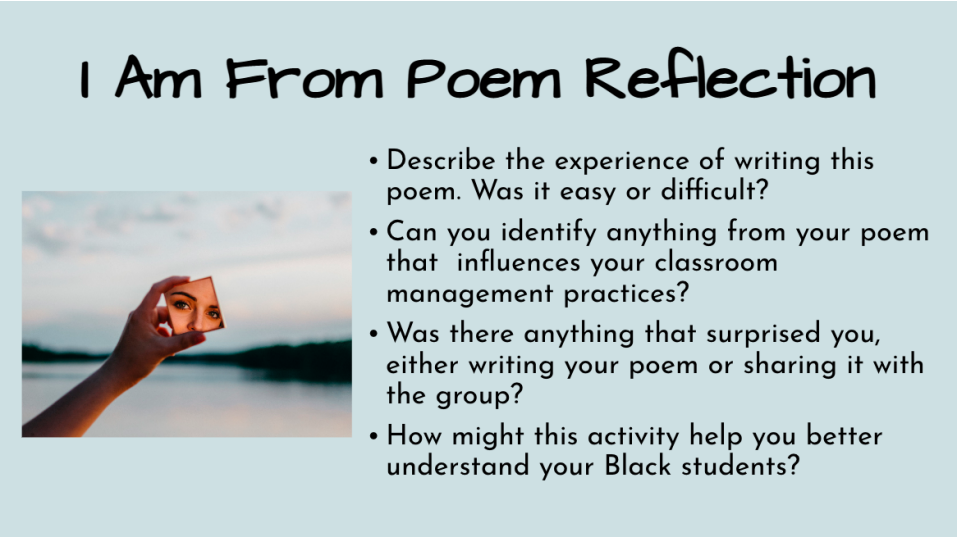
After setting up, catching up, and greeting, we settled in and began session I. I thanked each participant for participating and verbally reviewed the informed consent. We immediately moved into the first session. The objective was to reflect on and identify their cultural assumptions, biases, and perspectives. I began by going into the definition of culturally responsive classroom management, and sharing CRCM practices, then shared the norms and session I agenda. Participants were quiet and seemingly tuned into what I was sharing.

Before the session, I asked participants to complete the *I am from* poem (Appendix B). The *I am from* poem is a template that encourages writers to examine who they are critically and the memories that shape their identity. Participants were also asked

to have three to five students complete the poem. To refrain from singling students out, I had suggested they could ask a diverse group of students to write poems, but we would only focus on the poems of students who identify as Black. I shared my poem (Appendix C) and modeled reflecting on my poem using a set of reflection questions (see Figure 3.1). Participants were then given time to reflect on their students' poems. Even though each teacher brought many student poems, the participants went through them as a group due to their collective familiarity with all the students in the school.

Figure 2.1

I am From Reflection Slide



One of the first events that I journaled about was the difficulty getting participants to provide what I thought were deep, introspective reflections. I remember pinning a quick note in my researcher's journal that read, "Pulling teeth. poem reflection." During this conversation, participants did not start off saying much. When asked about their experience writing the poem, Mrs. Tuohy shared that, being a "math person," she was not thrilled about the poetry but did it anyway. I shared vulnerable moments, such as the emotional toll of recalling past experiences with relatives who were no longer with us. I shared examples of personal biases that I became aware of, as well as how my life experiences shaped those biases and how naming my biases plays a role in how I managed my classroom. Finally, I spoke about how my experiences as a Black boy shaped my desire to become a teacher. I turned my attention back to the participants and asked if they had any examples of life experiences that impacted the way they managed

their classroom. There were over five seconds of silence before Ms. Gruwell commented on how she was raised, always to be kind. Mrs. Johnson talked about encouraging students to try their best, and Mrs. Tuohy connected to Ms. Gruwell's lessons about always being kind. Before asking the final question on the slide, I redirected the conversation by reminding participants that cultural responsiveness could apply to any race. However, for my study, I am focusing specifically on Black students. Participants gave very general responses before I made a second attempt to bring the conversation back to Black students. Despite the redirection and reminders, I remember feeling like participants were skirting around race, despite the overall purpose of the session, which focuses on race, and despite me being vulnerable and evoking my own racialized experiences as examples.

After using our *I am from* Poems to reflect, I introduced participants to White Supremacy Cultural Characteristics (Appendix D). Because of the climate around Critical Race Theory, and to avoid any pushback, I referred to the list as School/society Cultural Characteristics (see Figure 2.2). As we went through the reflection questions, one participant began talking about the challenges of dealing with Black girls but quickly self-corrected by saying, “All girls. Girls, in general. I would teach a group of boys first.”

Figure 2.2

School/Society Culture Characteristics Slide

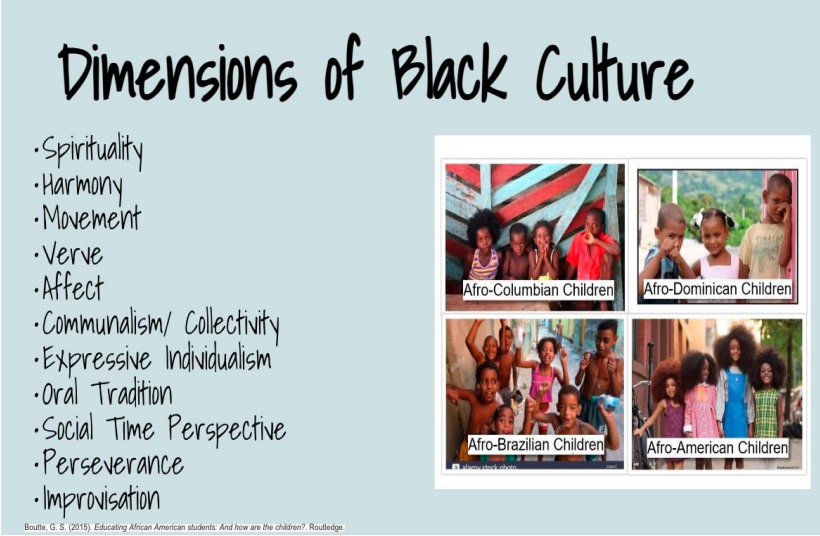
I asked, "Let us take what we know about the Black students we have served, now or in the past. Do any of these appear as characteristics that might be comfortable, natural, unnatural, or uncomfortable to them?" This was one of the first times a participant spoke specifically about Black students. Mrs. Tuohy talked about Black students identifying with paternalism and how many Black students are taking on the role of caregiver at home. She also talked about how many of her Black students are protectors, even in the classroom. She showed how they would stand up to other students and say things like, "Do not mess with Mrs. Tuohy!" The other two participants agreed and gave their examples. Immediately after this exchange, participants went back to speaking about all students. I tried to push the conversation back to Black students by discussing objectivity and how teachers can be very objective with Black students. However, Black girls would like teachers to be more subjective and understand them

holistically when engaging with them. Throughout the remainder of this conversation, I noticed that participants kept using “they” and “them.” In my researcher’s journal, I reflected on how I assumed they were defaulting to all students; however, I never pressed participants to be more specific about whom they were referring to when saying “they” and “them.” When I failed to ask participants to name the "they" or "them," I unintentionally allowed them to group all students together without considering race and culture. This did not help my credibility.

After reflecting on School/Society Cultural Characteristics, I introduced participants to the Dimensions of Black Culture (see Figure 2.3). I prefaced this conversation with the idea that Black people are not a monolith, but some characteristics show up across the African diaspora; these things unite us and connect us back to our shared African ancestry. I asked whether anything jumped out at them, but after about ten seconds, I told them it was ok if none of the characteristics jumped out because we would be doing something else with the list later. In reflecting, I felt like I pulled a typical teacher move of not giving enough wait time, which gave them an out or a pass for not responding. After a few more seconds, I gave teachers three examples of social time perspective.

Figure 2.3

Dimensions of Black Culture Slide



Teachers were asked to compare their poems to their students' poems to wrap up the session. They were also asked to identify connections between their students' poems and the two frameworks that were introduced. All three participants are familiar with all the students, so for the sake of time, I had them work together and use the three questions on the Student Reflection Activity slide. There were about three minutes of silence. I broke the silence by pointing out a connection between one student's poem and the dimension of oral tradition. I pushed the conversation toward Black culture by pointing out that the lines in the poem template that ask about family traditions and tendencies could be a good point of reference for identifying dimensions of Black culture. One participant shared where she learned what "GYBAITH" or "get your Black ass in the house" meant. This led to a conversation about the similarity in some phrases they have

heard in the homes of other Black friends or associates. We wrapped up the session and took a five-minute break.

Session II

After settling back into our spaces, I introduced the learning objective and shared the agenda for the second session. I began the session by showing two videos. The first was Proctor & Gamble | Widen the Screen (Proctor & Gamble [P&G], 2021), a two-minute video that showed three different scenarios: (1) three black boys walking into a corner store and a white store owner glancing up at them. (2) a pregnant mother pushing a grocery buggy outside a store and waiting in front of the store. and (3) A Black man with dreads speeding, then pulling up to a suburban house. The narrator asks the viewer, "If you think you know what happens next, ask yourself why." He continues his narration by explaining that what we saw were the black stories that have informed society's narrow view of Black stories, and there is so much more to see. This is followed by: (1) three boys, full of black boy joy, picking up a few items and checking out at the register, (2) the Black father pulling up to the front of the store, hugging his wife, then loading the groceries, and (3) the black man walking into the house, presenting a beautiful black girl with a birthday gift, then them dancing in the middle of the floor as the family watches and records with their phones. The video ends with the message, "Let us widen the screen so we can widen our view." In planning for this session focused on cultural miscommunication, I wanted participants to grapple with the idea of having preconceived notions or expectations not just from their perspective but from the perspective of the individual whom the notions are about. This video was also a significant way of

incorporating counter-storytelling. I also told a story about how a teacher claimed I did something I did not do, so I did it since I knew I would have a consequence for it anyway. This story was a precursor to the Pygmalion effect, which I would introduce later in the session.

The second clip, *Miscommunication* (Stav, 2013), was from the sitcom Frasier, where Niles walked in on his dad, Martin, trying to oil the squeaky recliner to rid it of the noise that has been aggravating Frasier. Martin accidentally squirted oil onto the carpet just as Frasier walked in. They got into a shouting match because Frasier accused him of purposely destroying the carpet, while Miles insisted it was an accident. Eventually, Miles intentionally squirted oil on Frasier to distinguish between an accident and on purpose. After viewing the clip, I asked participants three questions: (1) what was each character attempting to communicate? (2) What was miscommunicated? and (3) What was the result? This video and questions were meant to introduce the definition of cultural misunderstanding I shared on the next slide. After sharing the definition of cultural misunderstanding, I asked participants for examples that may have shown up in their classroom. Then, I asked how these could impact classroom management and school discipline.

On the next slide, I related cultural misunderstanding to subjective discipline (see Figure 2.4). Each participant provided an example. Mrs. Tuohy talked about how she thought students cursing in the classroom was a big deal until she called a student's home and realized how much profanity was a part of that family's everyday conversation. Ms. Gruwell talked about students getting into power struggles with adults, and Mrs. Johnson

talked about how teachers argue with students to express the importance of work after students ask why they must do certain things.

After talking about their examples of subjective behaviors, I explained that we would be focusing more specifically on the adultification of black girls, an area of research that is very startling and overshadowed by the narratives and conversations about Black boys and school discipline. We watched a four-minute “Adultification Bias” (PUSHOUT Film, 2019) clip from the Pushout Documentary inspired by Monique Morris’s book *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*. In this clip, Rebecca Epstein from the Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality talked about a study she took part in that examined adult perceptions of Black girls’ childhood. With no additional context, the study asked educators whether black girls needed protection and nurturing. They found that adults viewed black girls as less innocent and more adult-like, starting at five years old. She explained that the result is that when adults with authority view Black girls, they are more punitive than White girls. Rebecca presented solutions, including working collaboratively with Black girls, allowing them to lead in finding ways to change. She also proposed training for educators to overcome their biases. On the slide with the video, I included the quote, "subjective discipline”—imparted by teachers and motivated by implicit bias. For example, the concept of “disrespect” is inherently subjective (Martin & Smith, 2017) to highlight the connection between teachers’ perception of disrespect and subjective discipline.

When I asked participants about their thoughts, the only participant who spoke was Mrs. Tuohy. She asked, “So, did you think they were more mature?” I asked for

clarification to understand whether she was asking if I thought Black girls were more mature than other girls. She clarified and added that she thought it was weird that people consider Black girls more mature. I journaled about my thoughts on her motivation behind this question and wondered if she had missed the point, was attempting to deflect, or if she would go in the direction of blaming the Black girls. I responded to her question by saying I thought it could be a combination of their bodies appearing to be more mature or developed and the idea that if they are taking on adult roles such as caretaker at home and not being able to turn it off when they are in the classroom.

After responding, I immediately cringed inside. I realized I had taken two ideas that people use to justify the adultification of Black girls and used them to support the mentality I was working to change. I journaled extensively about how disappointed I was in myself for not echoing the argument so eloquently made by Epstein in the video, then putting the question back to the group of participants to bring out their voices. I also reflected on how I fell into the default response of reflection/ deflection. During this conversation, Ms. Gruwell shared the following thoughts:

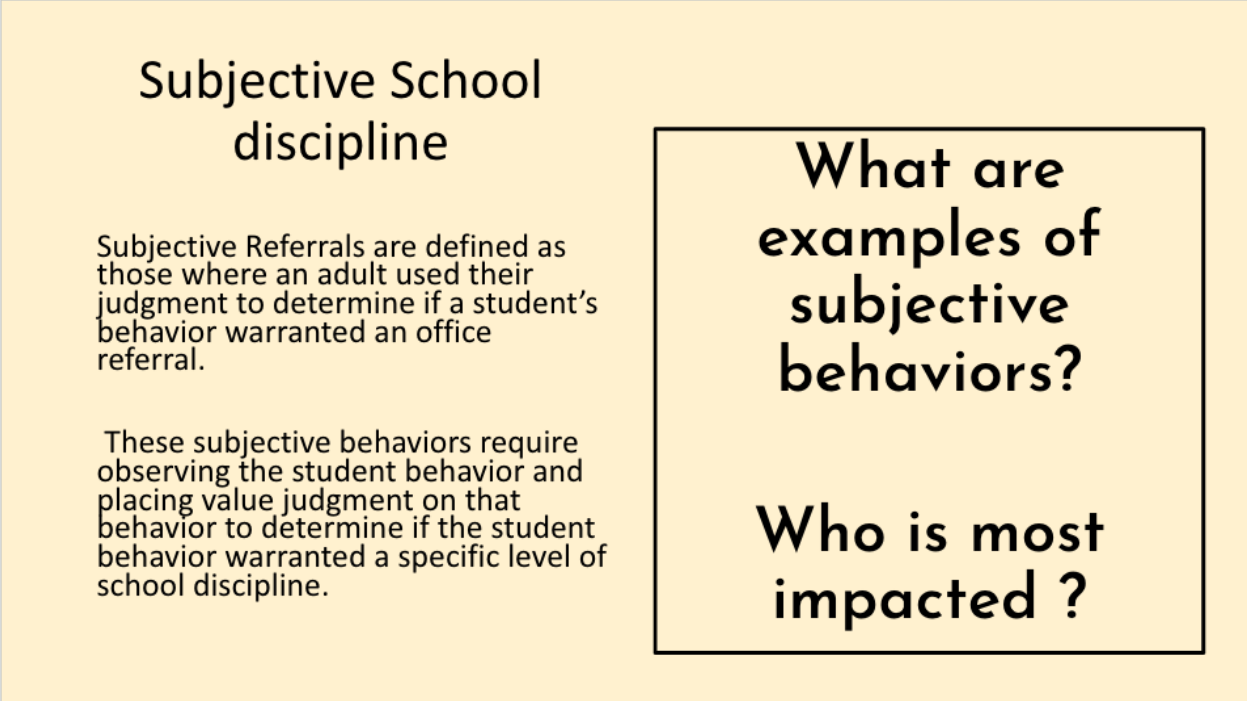
> I can see this in the way I may approach or address the discipline with a white female versus an African American female because I am coming in with my own biased experiences. … with that sense of perfectionism and either-or-thinking … when you address a behavior … I remember how devastating it was to be told you did something wrong and how destructive that could be … I think it is the same emotions, just the responses are different. White females tend to cry and

withdraw… African American females may rage and lash out. It is just a different response.

I noted that this was the first response that reflected the level of reflection and realization I hoped to see. I had not allowed Ms. Gruwell to complete her thoughts; I'd cut her off and moved the conversation along instead of giving her wait time or time to sit and reflect on her thoughts.

Figure 2.4

Subjective School Discipline Slide



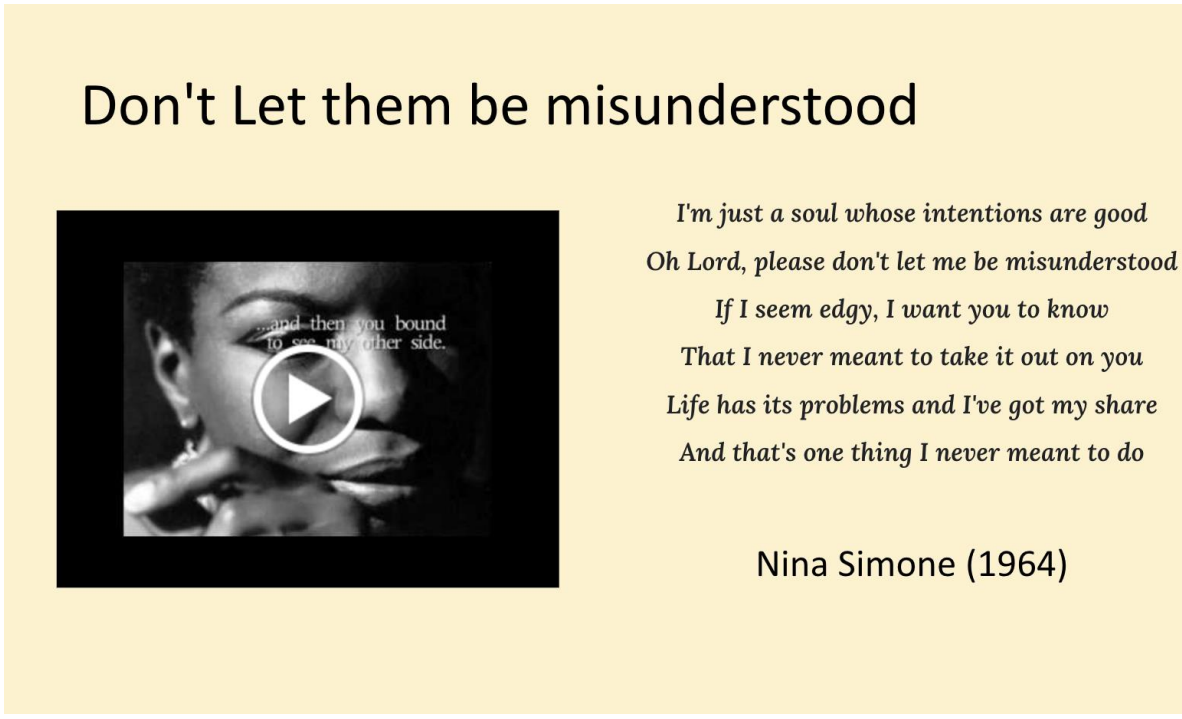
After the adultification conversation, I moved to the main idea I intended to convey: Pay closer attention to the voices of Black girls and avoid reinforcing stereotypes about their communication style. I connected the idea of cultural miscommunication and the adultification of Black girls. I shared that the greatest lesson I took away from my

research on adultification was the need to just listen to Black girls and not be distracted by the movement and verve. I flipped to the next slide and shared my astonishment that Black girls were still fighting to be heard over fifty years after Nina Simone sang *Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood*. I challenged participants to focus on intent, not communication style, when working with Black girls.

I held up the list of Dimensions of Black culture as a reminder to refer to them in their reflection. As I reflected on this part of the session, I know I rushed through the Nina Simone slide, I did not play the song, nor did I make time for participants to analyze it and come to any new learning. In my researcher's journal, I had a section titled "Things I would do differently." One of the notes in that section was that I would have had participants listen to the song as I had planned, then I would ask them to make connections between the song, cultural miscommunication, and the adultification of Black girls.

Figure 2.5

Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood excerpt



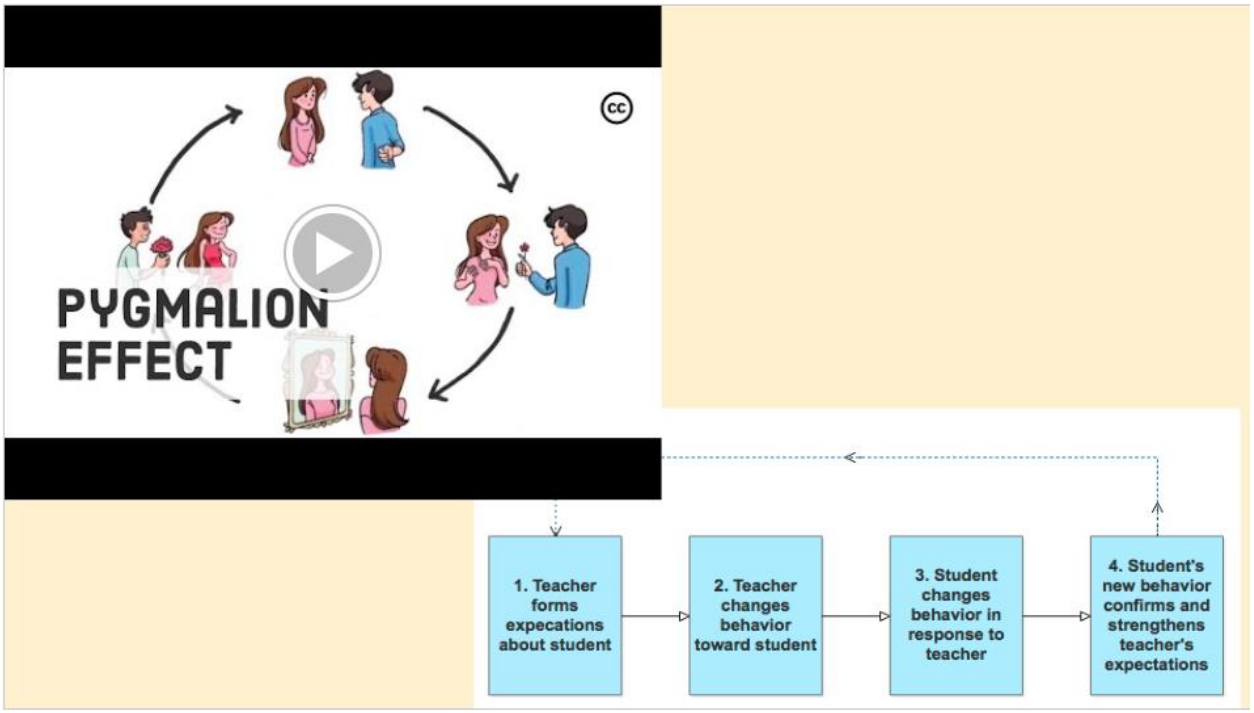
Next, I displayed a slide with the question: “Have you experienced a cultural miscommunication with a student or their family?” The room was silent for about twenty seconds. I wanted to be intentional about not interrupting the silence and taking away the opportunity for participants to reflect. Ms. Gruwell was the only person to speak, and she shared a story about a time when a parent was upset because her child was denied an opportunity to use the restroom. Ms. Gruwell shared that from her perspective, the student was allowed to go but played, and in doing so, she had forfeited her restroom break.

After listening to Ms. Gruwell's story, I advanced to the next slide (see Figure 2.6), which had a video and visual representation of the Pygmalion effect. I showed about a minute of the video clip (Sprouts, 2019) that described the Pygmalion effect, then shared that I wanted them to use this idea to be more intentional about communicating

their expectations for Black girls in their classroom. I did not go into too much detail because of time, and in reading the room, I could see the participants losing interest. At this point, we had less than thirty minutes before teachers needed to report back to their students. I closed out Session II and went directly into Session III.

Figure 2.6

The Pygmalion Effect Slide



Session III

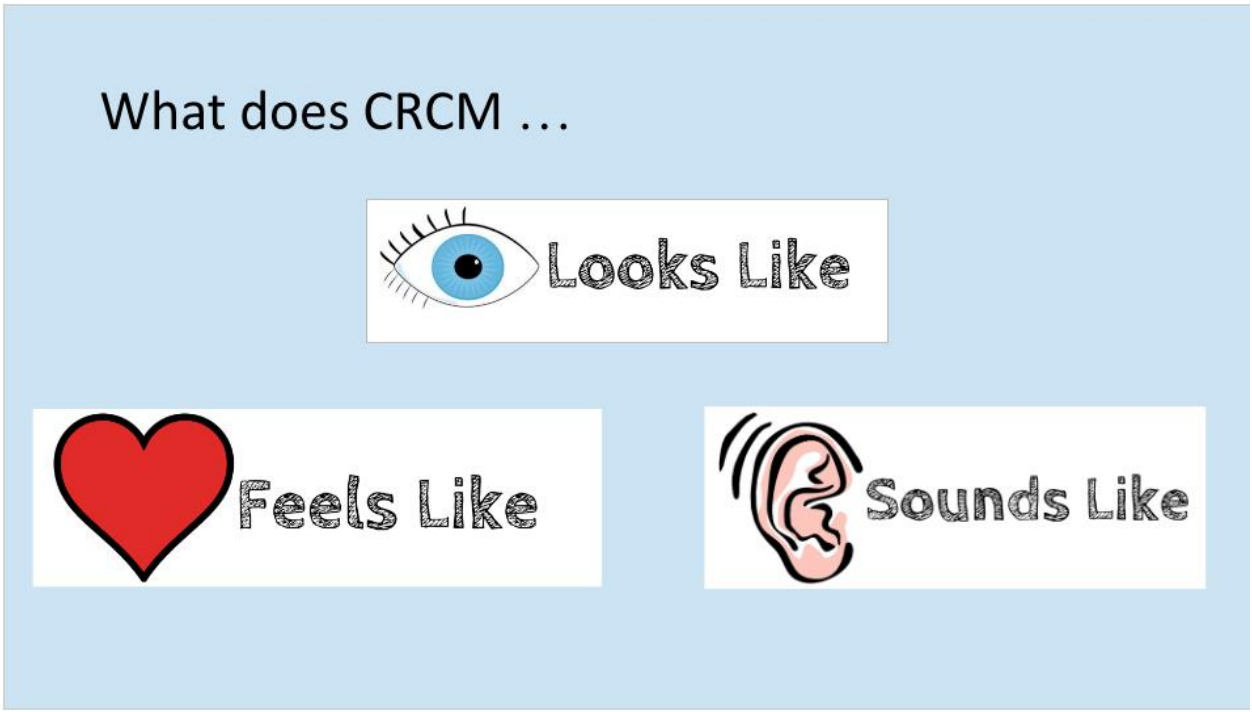
In session three, we provided teachers with big post-it notes and displayed a slide (see Figure 2.7) to help them think about how Culturally responsive classroom management could look. At this point, we had less than fifteen minutes left together. I remember feeling defeated and like I failed at "getting through." This feeling was

exacerbated by the ideas that they contributed to the checklist. As they called out ideas, I desperately wanted to hear evidence of deeply introspective, culturally responsive, observable, groundbreaking reflections. The final checklist ended up being a general list that did not look any different than a typical observation checklist that measures classroom environment or culture. Two factors stopped me from taking over and throwing out my thoughts. (1) I saw the checklist development as somewhat of a summative assessment. I wanted to hear participants' responses to see if there was any evidence of them walking away with a general understanding of CRCM or any shifts in their mindset about working with Black students. The second factor was time.

I noted in the Things I would do differently section of my researcher's journal, I should have pulled examples of observable teacher behaviors from the literature and had them available for participants to use as resources. Milner et al. (2019) listed eighteen recommendations in their charge to teachers and other educators that could have given many ideas; this would have been perfect use.

Figure 2.7

Checklist Development Slide



After developing the checklist, and in the final three minutes, I explained the process of evaluation of the checklist. For the final stage, participants used the checklist to conduct three thirty-minute observations of each other. They were supposed to meet and reflect on their observations between each walkthrough. Reflections should have included discussions about how the checklist items reflected CRCM and whether any revisions needed to be made. I reminded them that this was not about a right or wrong way but a cyclical process to develop and revise the CRCM checklist. By this point, my honest feelings were that this portion of the study would not be as informative as I had intended. Because there were only two weeks left, I could not meet with them between each set of observations to discuss suggested revisions based on their observations. I also remember walking away, thinking it was not a good idea to attempt to validate a CRCM

checklist created by a group of teachers who had not shown evidence of proficiency or a deep understanding of CRCM.

Wrap up - Final Session

Two weeks after the half-day professional development session, I met with the participants to complete the data collection. We discussed the checklist and shared observations and thoughts about things I wanted to clarify. I began this session by thanking them, then sharing that I thought time and burnout played a significant role in what we could accomplish. I shared that I noticed the checklist was not informed by the material I presented. Ms. Gruwell quickly shared her agreement and added that she thought we engaged a little deeper than surface level, but there was not enough time to wrestle with the content in a way that would allow them to come to a new conclusion. Mrs. Johnson agreed.

The second observation I shared was that I noticed a "strong reluctance" in centering Black students despite them being the core of the work that I presented. I asked, "What makes white women who work with Black students reluctant to center, focus on, and discuss race?" I thought it was important to ask this question because, by this time, I had begun the data analysis process, and pivoting away from or avoiding race all together was beginning to emerge as a major theme. I followed up by asking how we could eliminate or lessen the fear of being called or labeled racist. Participants shared their ideas, which boiled down to not wanting to be perceived as racist or offensive.

When I walked away from professional development sessions, I was sure none of the participants engaged in deep reflection about their identity and how it impacted their

classroom management practices. I shared the identity wheel (see Figure 2.8) and asked participants if they had reflected on their identity and whether that reflection impacted their classroom management. This was the same identity wheel presented during pre-interviews when they were asked how they identified themselves. Participants' responses confirmed this.

Figure 2.8

Identity Wheel

I then conducted a quick check for understanding to help me gauge how close we came to achieving the three learning objectives. All three participants admitted to not being able to try anything new. I followed up by asking whether this was due to the limitations I shared at the beginning or whether other factors prevented them from trying anything new. Ms. Gruwell shared that she did not have enough time to internalize the

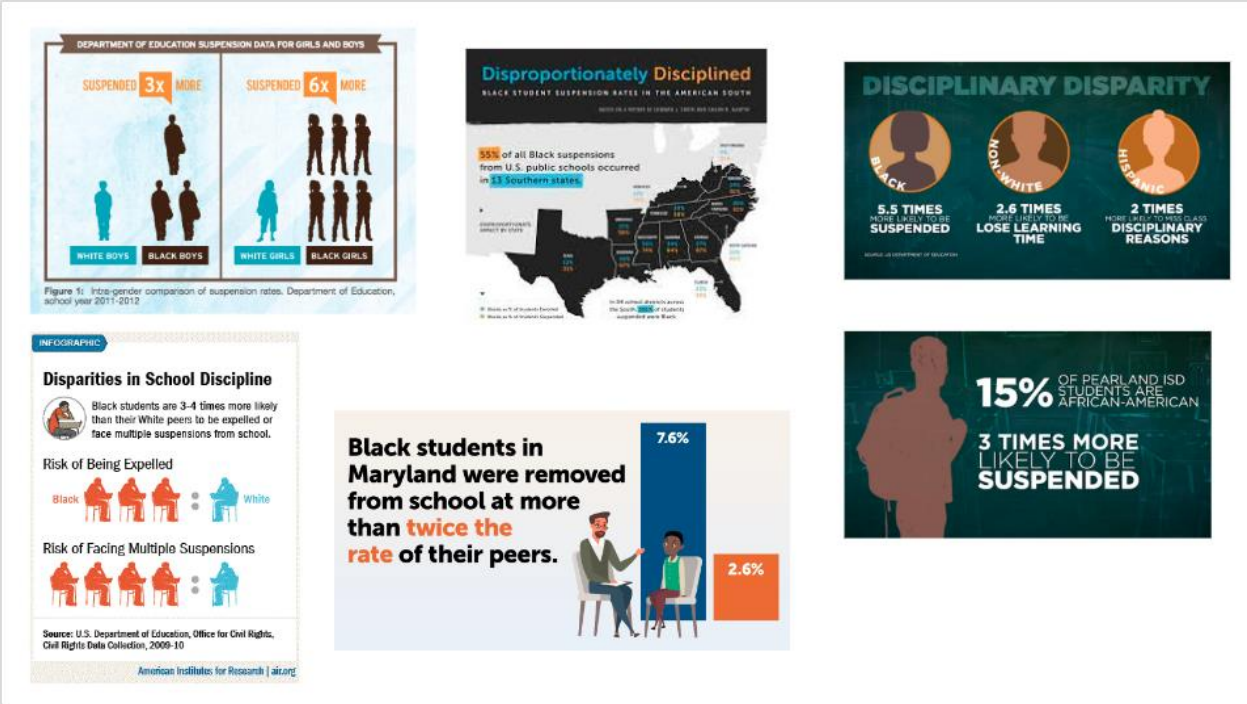
information to act beyond the superficial thoughts that crossed her mind as she continued to process the information.

The next discussion item during this session focused on defining a successful teacher. Each teacher shared that they felt effective and successful in their roles. I asked them to define a successful teacher. I hoped they would at least mention it after the three PD sessions and the ongoing conversation about race. They did not mention any element of culture, let alone cultural responsiveness. After this discussion, I displayed a slide (see Figure 2.9) with statistics highlighting racial disproportionality in discipline and academic success. I asked, “Despite your practices/ perceived success, research shows that Black students are disciplined at a higher rate and given less rigor. My goal as a researcher is to contribute to the solution to this. What insight/ suggestions do you have? and how can these sessions have been done differently to help white women educators under this idea and learn strategies to eradicate disproportionately?” When laying out the sessions and thinking about what I wanted to accomplish, asking these questions made sense, but after my initial reflections and the beginning stages of data analysis. At that moment, I realized a few things. First, I realized that the three participants had so much more work to do. They have not scratched the surface of cultural responsiveness or CRCM; their identification as strong and effective teaching was rooted in a paradigm and actions that was dismissive of Black culture. My initial thought, which was grounded in my positionality and far from my role as a researcher, was that these women could not possibly offer suggestions to other white women educators on how to be better teachers for Black students.

Nevertheless, I went on with the line of questioning, and what I heard was eye-opening and would end up being some of the most honest and eye-opening thoughts I had heard. Right off the bat, one participant responded, “They need mentors badly. They also need anger management because they jump to the defensive before they even know what is going on.” I immediately melted inside and felt like, “Damn! Did anything I said stick? Did the weeks of planning and freedom dreaming go out of the window?” The comments went into teenage pregnancy, welfare, and comparisons to the participant’s white family members who live the same way - so to say, it is not just a Black problem. The last slide and questions for this session asked whether anyone’s classroom management styles changed during the study. If so, how? If not, why did they think this was? I felt like evidence of this was sprinkled throughout the session and specifically when I asked if anyone had tried anything new. I skipped that slide, thanked participants, wished them well, and ended the session.

Figure 2.9

Disproportionality Data Slide



Do

The do phase combines implementation and documentation (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020). This phase will be where I implement *Don't Let Them be Misunderstood* over a six-week time period. I will use the findings of this study to make improvements that could lead to a higher likelihood of changes occurring in participants' practices around CRCM.

I will document this change using semi-structured interviews, transcripts from the session, my researcher's journal, and the co-generated observation checklist, and samples of artifacts such as participant's I am from poem.

Study

The study phase is an opportunity to reflect on what happened during the Do stage and to compare predictions to what actually happened (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020). During

the study stage, I will analyze the data to determine if the six weeks implementation of *"Don't Let them Be Misunderstood"* affected participants' dispositions for culturally responsive pedagogy or their culturally responsive classroom management practices.

Act

In the act phase, researchers use the study phase's results to determine the next steps (Bryk et al., 2015). Typical next steps in a PDSA cycle are to adopt, adapt, expand, abandon, or test again under different conditions (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020). Based on the data analysis, from the six-weeks implementation, I will make additional improvements to the PD sessions.

Research Method and Design

The research documented in this DiP could be classified as exploratory qualitative research. Stebbins (2011) characterizes exploratory qualitative research as: "broad-ranging, purposive, systematic, prearranged undertaking designed to maximize the discovery of generalizations leading to description and understanding of an area of social or psychological life" (p. 3). While often viewed negatively and compared to a researcher fishing, Stebbins (2011) explains:

> A more appropriate metaphor for illuminating the process of exploration is setting and realizing an agenda for a meeting. Agendas are normally established in advance of the get-together and consist of a number of points to be considered there, each of which can potentially generate discussion and new ideas not previously weighed.

While guided by theories that help identify *sensitizing concepts*, this exploratory qualitative study allowed me to explore the responses, reactions, and resistance of White women teachers to the content in *Don't Let Us Be Misunderstood.* The study documented within this DiP consisted of four stages: a pre-exposure phase—where I explored the preexisting worldviews of participates, the exposure phase—the delivery and interaction with the professional development sessions from *Don't Let Them be Misunderstood*, peer observations in the third phase, and post-exposure activities, which included post-exposure focus group (See Appendix F for the DiP timeline).

During Stage I, the pre-intervention phase, participants participated in a 60-minute semi-structured interview (Appendix G). Stage two, the professional development sessions, took place at the school over the course of one morning. After Sessions one through three, they developed a checklist of what should have been observable actions of CRCM that could be used to conduct a classroom observation. During stage three, participants used the checklist they developed to conduct peer observation cycles. In the final phase, Stage Four, I conducted a post-intervention focus group.

Participant Selection

From the onset, I wanted to focus my study on a small group of white women educators because that is the demographic makeup of the teachers at the middle school site. I recruited participants by having the principal send an email (Appendix I) to all the teachers in the building on my behalf. The email was also included in a weekly reminder email sent to teachers weekly. Within a week, three teachers from the middle school volunteered to participate in the study.

I was worried that the COVID-19 pandemic could significantly impact participants' willingness to participate. The pandemic put extensive stress on teachers attempting to learn and embrace a new normal. Teachers were working on tasks they may not feel competent in, shifting their delivery of instruction, learning new instructional platforms while trying to manage their personal lives, and worrying about struggling students (Hart & Nash, 2020). I designed the study to balance its impact on participants and encourage their commitment to participate throughout the study (Cook et al., 2015). Before beginning the sessions, I asked participants what would work best for them regarding time. I considered participants' requests and the short timeline before settling on the date and time for the sessions.

Data Collection

I used three instruments to collect data that would help me answer the research question: (a) semi-structured pre-exposure interview, (Appendices H and I) and post-exposure focus group (Appendices L and M), (b) transcripts from the PD sessions. This set of data sources provides multiple ways to track the project and its results.

I conducted two rounds of coding for the analysis of the semi-structured interviews. I triangulated the multiple data sources and used member checking to ensure trustworthiness and validity through the data analysis process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). triangulating, these multiple data sources would help demonstrate changes due to the intervention.

Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with each participant. Semi-structured interviews blend closed and open-ended questions with why or how questions as follow-up probes (Adams, 2015). Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to pursue a detailed inquiry into existing opinions, obtain reactions to new ideas, and delve into unforeseen issues. (Adams, 2015; Aydarova, 2018).

To develop questions for the interview protocol (See Appendix H & I), I identified key concepts associated with Culturally Responsive Classroom Management from the literature to create questions that would allow me to gain insight into teachers' perceptions of the changes brought about by the study's interventions (see Appendix G).

The remaining interview questions focused on probing participants to think more about their dispositions for culturally responsive pedagogy, as defined by Whitaker and Valtierra (2018).

I conducted initial pre-exposure interviews before the first professional development session. Participants were given the option of where they wanted to conduct their interviews. Interviews could occur in my office, the participants' classroom, or their choice of a neutral place (Miles et al., 2014). All participants were more comfortable interviewing virtually, so all three interviews were conducted over Zoom call. I aimed to keep interviews close to 30 minutes and under 45 minutes. They were all less than an hour, about fifty minutes long. Even though Zoom allows you to record meetings, I was concerned about technology failure. I used a digital recorder as backup, then transcribed

the interviews using a secure online transcription service, with permission from the participants.

Positionality and Researcher's Journal

My personal experiences and curiosity led to this exploration of the experiences of middle school teachers who make office referrals for Black children. My identity as a Black male who has experienced the education system as a student, teacher, administrator, and aspiring scholar has shaped my position as a practitioner and researcher. My position is very personal. While positionality cannot be separated entirely from research such as this, I was careful not to let my personal or emotional attachment lead to researchers' bias. I used a research journal to address my personal feelings and reactions throughout the study.

My race and gender as a Black male resulted in many negative experiences as an elementary and middle school student. I vividly remember my teacher dragging me to the principal's office during my second year of fifth grade because I ran when it was time to line up after recess. The teacher punished me during recess by insisting I stand against the wall, effectively losing my recess, while my peers played and exhausted their built-up energy. The teacher explained that she dragged me to the office because I would be "nothing but trouble" when we returned to class for the afternoon. When I chose to enter the teaching profession, I vowed to do everything in my power to prevent my Black students from having the same experiences I had as a student. This situation is only one of many that underscore the sometimes-rocky relationship between Black boys and White women educators. Discussing this dynamic is uncomfortable but necessary. In the next

section, I will discuss the advantages and disadvantages and how I navigated the study objectively and professionally.

The advantages to teachers who participate are varied. First, due to participating in the study, teachers may become aware of how they respond to Black students. According to Weinstein et al. (2004), CRCM can help teachers become more cognizant of Black students' culture, encourage proper classroom management strategies, and foster caring classrooms. For this study, the theory of action focused on teachers' self-awareness, leading to their consciousness about their biases before engaging in classroom management with Black students. Patish (2016) argued for introducing CRCM concepts for current teachers to support their professional development. Another advantage is that participants who strongly desire to grow professionally could be given a safe space to do this work with colleagues.

Among the ways I had to acknowledge my position and how it affected this study is a reflection on how participants may perceive disadvantages to their personal and professional well-being based on participation in this study. According to Bayrak et al. (2014), participants may be reluctant to participate in a study that addresses racial issues in schools because of the degree of racial sensitivity in most US (United States) communities and the ways that principals could use their authority over subordinate teachers. Also, some participants may be reluctant to verbalize their experiences making referrals for Black students due to the presence of an administrator, particularly a Black male, who leads the sessions. Finally, teachers who participate may feel stigmatized by

peers due to the politicized nature of addressing racial issues in schools during the current era.

It is acknowledged that there are many cultural obstacles to Black men and White women trusting each other and being open and honest. Also, I know that seeking White women educators to participate in this study will influence the participants and me; therefore, establishing trust is critical. According to Gregory (2017), establishing trust is vital to developing positive school culture and strong school leadership. Gregory further asserted that disparities in power exist and influence the trust relationships in schools.

Gregory (2017) argued that establishing trust is essential to creating a supportive school environment. Since the study involves White women educators acknowledging or addressing their implicit bias about Black students, I worked to create a non-threatening, trusting environment by assuring participants that their participation would be used to help combat the issue of disproportionality in behavior data for Black students. If this project works for them, these teachers also could become leaders for their colleagues as they design and test a classroom approach to improving classroom management.

During the study, I kept a researcher's journal. This journal captured observations and personal thoughts during professional development sessions. I also recorded my intuitive observations (Morrow & Smith, 2000), experiences, and emotions (Chan et al., 2018). I used the bracketing techniques as an additional tool to control and manage my potential bias due to prior personal experiences and knowledge of the topic and subjective opinions (Gearing, 2004; Snelgrove, 2014). Tufford and Newman (2010) explained bracketing through journaling, where the researcher documents personal

thoughts during data collection. The researcher can refer to those personal thoughts when analyzing the data and documenting results to ensure those written personal thoughts and feelings do not enter the documentation. I bracketed in my researcher's journal at each stage of the study, including data collection, interpretation, analysis, and presentation of the data. According to Lichtman (2014), bracketing enables a researcher to suspend prior insights and judgments about the topic to better focus on and record participants' experiences (Lichtman, 2014).

Creswell (2013) further recommended using bracketing to identify personal experiences with the phenomenon yet suspend judgment so the researcher can concentrate on the participant's experiences in the study. For example, I hold prior knowledge about teachers who make office referrals for Black students, and I need to bracket, that is, set aside that knowledge before engaging in the interview process and its analysis. Bracketing helped me acknowledge any reactions I may have had based on my school experiences as an elementary and middle school student. Recording my reactions in the journal helped me focus on specific participant views and opinions about the topic to avoid interjecting my personal beliefs or letting my emotions lessen my attention to the participants' views or voices (Tufford & Newman, 2010).

Although I had built relationships with my participants over the years, I acknowledge the perception of power and influence that could be at play based on serving as the assistant principal for two of the three participants. Bayrak et al. (2014) reported that school principals could use their authority over subordinate teachers and were more likely to use coercive power the least towards subordinate teachers. Gregory

(2017) posited that trust is a significant factor in developing positive school culture and strong leadership in schools and reported disparities in power. While I was no longer serving as their assistant principal, I thought it was important to acknowledge the relationship and dynamic that existed when I held that role. I ensured that participants understood that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, either verbally or in writing. I created a sense of equality and community, so participants answered interview questions honestly.

Trustworthiness and Validity

I implored triangulation and member checking to ensure trustworthiness in analyzing my data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Morrow & Smith, 2000). While this work is not phenomenological, I also use bracketing (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to acknowledge my positionality and biases throughout my interaction with participants, the content, and data analysis.

Transferability

Qualitative research has been criticized for not being able to meet the generalizability test, due to the small sample size used in some studies. In my own study, I only had three participants. However, Shenton (2004) suggests that transferability can be used to increase the validity of research with a small sample size. Transferability is the degree to which the results and conclusions of a study can be applied to other contexts. To enhance transferability, I have provided a comprehensive and detailed description of the contextual factors surrounding the study. In the previous chapter, I included as many details as possible, so that the reader can visualize the data collection process.

Triangulation

Triangulating data consists of comparing multiple sources of evidence before deciding whether there is a finding (Martinson & O'Brien, 2015). Before putting forth findings or, I will triangulate data to ensure that findings are not isolated to single forms of data, but evident throughout the pre-interview, transcripts, and post-exposure focus group.

Member Checking

Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested member checking to ensure internal validity in research. According to Thomas (2017), member checking is a technique used to strengthen a study's accuracy, credibility, and validity. I used member-checking by asking participants to review their transcripts for accuracy and whether they would like to elaborate upon their responses or add information that would clarify them (Candela, 2019; Caretta & Perez, 2019).

In member checking, the interviewee serves as a check through the analysis process. When necessary, I verified the interviewee's experiences by asking clarifying questions. During the transcription process, I took note of follow-up questions based on the need to clarify and understand participants' words. Finally, I engaged interviewees in member-checking by conducting brief follow-ups, when necessary, where I shared their transcripts and asked them to clarify or reword anything that may be confusing (Morrow & Smith, 2000).

Data Analysis

I conducted two coding rounds of data analysis for the interviews and session transcripts. Simultaneously, In the first round of interview analysis, I used the protocol coding technique (Saldaña, 2013) and in vivo coding (Miles et al., 2014) for the second round. I established trustworthiness through my analysis using data triangulation and member checking.

Round One

I used protocol coding for the first round of data analysis among the two sets of interview responses, and session transcripts. According to Saldaña (2013), protocol *coding* requires a pre-established, recommended, standardized, or prescribed system based on underlying theory or prior findings (p. 151). This study is grounded in the dispositions *for culturally responsive pedagogy,* as defined by Whitaker and Valtierra (2018) and sensemaking; specifically, the first three stage of Neri et al., (2019) *Resistance to Change Framework.* Because the dispositions and stages are well defined, I used them as pre-established codes, as presented in Table 2.2. My pre-established coding system included*: disposition for social justice,* and *praxis,* as well as *knowledge, persuasion, and decision***.**

Table 2.2

A Priori Descriptive Codes

Color	**Descriptive Code**	**Definition**
	Disposition for Social Justice	" Describes a culturally responsive educator who understands that education is a civil right [1]
	Disposition for Community	Describes a culturally responsive educator who creates a mutual learning environment by placing value on building relationships with students, students' families, other teachers, and community members.[1]

Color	Descriptive Code	Definition
	Disposition for Praxis	Describes a culturally responsive educator who possesses an understanding of how their identity affects their practice. [1]
	Knowledge	Stage where individuals become aware of CRCM, learn what it is, how to use it correctly, and the principles behind how and why it works. [2]
	Persuasion	Stage where individuals develop a positive or negative attitude toward CRCM strategies. [2]
	Decision	Stage where individuals choose to adopt or resist CRCM strategies.

[1] Definitions were adapted from Whitaker and Valtierra (2018).
[2] Definitions were adapted from Neri et. al. (2019).

Another primary consideration for conducting this coding round was the degree to which I bracketed my inclinations about each descriptive code. At several points in the data analysis process, I came across statements that puzzled or triggered me; when this happened, I turned to my researcher's journal in an attempt to neutralize my positionality and process the data so that I get back to a place where I was able to resume coding and bring out the richness of such comments. The following questions from Creswell and Poth (2018) guided my use of the researcher journal:

(1) What surprising information did you not expect to find?

(2) What information is conceptually exciting or unusual to participants and audiences?

(3) What are the dominant interpretations and alternate notions (p. 264)?

When necessary, I returned to my researcher's journal during the second coding round.

Round Two

I used *in vivo* coding for the second round of data analysis. In vivo coding uses words or phrases directly from the data (Miles et al., 2014) to identify recurring phrases

or common language in the data. In vivo is typically a first-round coding method; however, I used it to identify themes or commonalities that emerged but did not fit into the predefined categories in the first round. Bracketing during this round of in vivo coding helped me see more deeply, listen to, and honor participants' voices and apply them to the schema of this new coding round. Reviewing responses that did not easily align with the protocol coding required me to consult my researcher journal from the first coding round. Examples of In vivo codes are presented in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3

In vivo Codes

Color	Descriptive Code	Sample of Potential Statements
	"I'm not racist!"	"I do not want to be seen as racist."
	"It's not always about race"	"All my students are immature."
	"Is it my responsibility?"	"They [Black children] need positive role models and mentors." [1]

Data Representation

During data analysis, I analyzed data to learn about ways participants made sense of the materials and content after being exposed to *Don't Let Them Be Misunderstood.* The final stage of data analysis was visually representing the data. This stage consisted of diagramming, a way to represent the relationships among the concepts that emerge from the data analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I have included direct quotes and paraphrases (Creswell & Poth, 2018) to enhance the understanding of the research participants' voices. I used data from pre-interviews, transcripts, and a post- exposure focus groups to bring participants' voice into this work.

Summary

Chapter 2 included a discussion of the mixed methods design of the study. The study includes four phases. The first and last phases include pre-and post-exposure data. Chapter 3 will feature findings from the DiP study. An explanation of the execution of the PDSA cycle, data displays, qualitative data excerpts, and other evidence will be used to organize the chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

FINDINGS

In this chapter, the research question identified in Chapter 1 is examined through critical findings based on data collected from transcripts from interviews, the focus group and professional development sessions. In this study, I aimed to discover how white women educators made sense of professional development on Culturally Responsive Classroom Management. The study was grounded in the dimensions of culturally responsive teaching and sense-making.

Three educators participated in three professional development pilot, which introduced a classroom management framework that honored the cultural norms of Black students. The intended aim was for participants to develop skills in the following areas: (1) recognition of one's ethnocentrism and biases; (2) knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds; (3) understanding of the broader social, economic, and political context of our educational system; (4) ability and willingness to use culturally appropriate classroom management strategies; and (5) commitment to building caring classroom communities (Siwatu et al., 2017; Weinstein et al., 2004).

The three sessions were tied to a learning outcome that pushed teachers to examine their cultural assumptions, biases, and perspectives. As part of this work, participants were expected to demonstrate an understanding of how traditional classroom management practices can be culturally biased.

At the end of the sessions, the participants used the co-developed checklist to conduct peer observation and reflection cycles. Participants were encouraged to adjust

their classroom management approaches as they saw fit based on what they learned from this process. After the intervention and peer-observation cycles, the participants attended a final wrap-up session where they had an opportunity to discuss their experiences with the intervention and implementation.

Throughout the study, three key themes emerged:

1. Grappling with White Fragility
2. Shifting the Conversation Away from Race
3. Avoiding the Work

The findings will be presented by collection type—semi-structured interviews, three professional development sessions, and a final wrap-up session, along with my researcher journals—and the key findings will be presented as a response to the research question.

The Baseline

Prior to deploying *Don't Let Them Be Misunderstood*, the educators in this study had ideas about the intersections of race, culture, and discipline. These preconceived understandings would impact their sensemaking when exposed to *Don't Let Them Be Misunderstood*. While there was considerable diversity among the three teachers, they each considered themselves to be egalitarian when it comes to discipline and knowledgeable of the intersection of culture and disciplinary expectations.

All three teachers viewed themselves as fair and rational, and not contributing to or being complicit in the problem of practice. Mrs. Tuohy for instance, said quite clearly, "Office referrals, I think I handled them fine." Similarly, Mrs. Johnson said, "I treat everyone who is acting up the same... I'm fair." Mrs. Gruwell explained that she could

recognize and decipher between different types of behavior, and that her 20 years of experience helps her recognize "what constitutes office behavior, like office referrals and what does not." While they articulated they knew how to use the referral system in place, Mrs. Johnson found the system inadequate; she explained, "sometimes I feel like when we write students up, it seems like just a slap on the wrist to them, like it doesn't seem serious enough." All in all, the three teachers did not seem very critical of their own disciplinary practices.

Exploring their understanding of culture and behavior prior to professional development was telling. Often, they saw themselves as culture free or culture neutral and it was the children of color possessing culture while they themselves were normal. Mrs. Johnson, for instance, when talking about behavior and culture began to compare her time in teaching in Texas and South Carolina; while admitting, "it sounds bad" she said in Texas they "got rid of problem students." Unbeknownst to her, she often used carceral language to refer to students. Mrs. Johnson articulated that students seemed to perceive disciplinary infractions as influenced by culture. She said her students would often say, "Is it because I'm Black... I know students feel like they're singled out because they are one race or another, but that's not the case per se." Mrs. Tuohy stated that, "classroom management is really a personal preference" but also stated she possessed a normative "typical" expectation for behavior. After saying background did not matter (and acknowledging her own oppressed identity as an individual from a low-income family), Mrs. Tuohy stated, "You're supposed to be kind and courteous. I pulled that into my classroom, as far as trying to teach the students that kindness, respect is foremost, no

matter where you come from. I guess just a typical mama." Mrs. Gruwell was a departure from the other two, where she acknowledged, cultural conflict may lead to disciplinary disparities. Mrs. Gruwell believed that educators and students must:

> clarify […] understanding of what disrespect and disruptive tends to be, like those number one referrals. And that looks so different from every teacher's perspective and then between the teacher and the student's point of views. So that one, I think, has always been a referral aspect that really needs to be defined, because that one I think is where cultural differences really comes into play.

Mrs. Tuohy also recognized that expectations could be culturally defined. Tuohy explained, "I have taught a lot of different backgrounds and from different countries, and when they come in, they would do stuff and I'd be like, "What?" but from their culture, it was not a bad thing. A lot of times, I would dig deeper into, "Why did you do that, or how does this work at home?" Mrs. Tuohy could see how the student's culture could influence behavior, but stopped short of seeing how her culture influenced her perception of the behavior.

Sensemaking builds upon previous knowledge and beliefs. The educators participating in this pilot did not view themselves as complicit in problematic disciplinary structures. Their confidence in their own skill could inhibit their ability to see the need for CRCM or see their responsibility in adopting CRCM practices.

Knowledge: White Fragility

To set the context for the first theme, it is essential to remember that the study's objective was to analyze the way white women participants comprehended the material presented in the "Don't Let Them Be Misunderstood" professional development sessions. The purpose of this analysis was to inform the next phase of implementation, which involves presenting the professional development session over six weeks aimed at promoting positive changes in the practices of white women educators.

Throughout the session, participants grappled with White Fragility, presumably, more than they grappled with their classroom management practices and the potential impact on their Black students' experiences in their learning environments. The knowledge phase of my theoretical framework helped to illuminate this barrier and showed evidence of participants existing in the knowledge phase of the resistance to change framework. Evidence of grappling with white fragility during the knowledge stage of their individual journeys also shed light on the sensemaking around growth in the disposition for praxis.

White fragility is a phrase coined by Robin DiAngelo (2018). In the simplest terms, it refers to how a white person may feel when they participate in or observe conversations about racial injustice and inequality. White fragility may be conceptualized as a response or "condition" produced and reproduced by the continuous social and material advantages of whiteness (DiAngelo, 2018). For some white people, probing forbidden racial issues results in verbal incoherence, digressions, long pauses, repetition, and self-correction.

During a discussion about intersectionality, Ms. Gruwell talked through the ways she thought the intersection of race and gender impacted how educators responded to Black female students who may be in distress:

"I think I can see the way I might approach the discipline and how I address a white female versus an African American female because I'm coming with my own biased experiences of that sense of perfectionism, and that either or, when you address a behavior … it's crumpling … I mean how devastated it is to be told you're doing something wrong and how destructive that could be. It's the same emotions, though, just expressed differently ... the responses are different; it's just that feeling is the same. I know white females tend to cry and withdraw. I see ... generally speaking … that African American females will rage and lash out."

This is an example of Ms. Gruwell grappling with the idea of white women's emotions. After being introduced to the theory of intersectionality, she found a way to use it correctly and reflected on why and how it works; those are all actions associated with the knowledge stage of the resistance to change framework. Her statements also show evidence of reflection grounded in disposition for praxis, which is related to understanding how one's identity impacts their practice.

Three weeks after the professional development sessions, checklist development, and peer-observation cycles, I held a final session with the three participants to wrap up and reflect. During this session, I asked each participant what pedagogical strategies they could share to help a novice or veteran teacher interested in learning about Culturally Responsive Classroom Management. Mrs. Johnson, a brand-new teacher, both to the

school and the profession responded with, "I think it would have been nice to have a little seminar, … like what we had but like in advance … before I started seeing the kids in the classroom and was like they are just all thinking I'm racist. When ... we come from two different backgrounds, and we are not understanding each other…"

Mrs. Johnson's comments were the first-time racism, or being racist, was brought up explicitly, by any of the participants. Her comments showed her grappling with the idea of being perceived as a racist which is an effect of white fragility. What she was asking for was more knowledge around the new learning to build her praxis.

During the final session, I shared my observation with the participants: "I…found that...there was just a strong reluctance…and I felt… there was a void in the data …it wasn't rich in necessarily being specific in reference to Black students." I followed this by asking what makes white people reluctant to center and discuss race, even in spaces where race is the topic. The other two participants shared that they avoided conversations about race to avoid putting themselves in a situation where people could consider them racist. Ms. Touhy shared her thoughts:

> I feel like a lot of people… don't want to…because…they don't want to hurt anybody's feelings. Or you don't want to say it's the Black man causing da da da…because you don't want to seem racist. Instead of…you are always worried about the interpretation…at least…that is my feeling.

Ms. Gruwell shared that she agreed with Ms. Touhy, and added:

what is fine and comfortable to say within one group…and it is a word choice… doesn't connect the same. And then again…when you are not trying to be harmful in any way

…then you are perceived as racist…um…simply from a choice of words or two but not from any actions or anything that you have done but just the words you have chosen to use."

The exchange between Ms. Touhy and Mrs. Gruwell show them grappling collectively with the idea of being perceived as racist, just as Ms. Johnson had. They were still operating in the knowledge stage. When the participants were met with new knowledge, their world views and comfort in their existing practices made it difficult for them to get beyond white fragility and to a place where I was able to begin cultivating their disposition for praxis where they could examine how their identities influence how they show up in their classrooms. Despite experiencing the three-part professional learning experience, where they were introduced to cultural miscommunication and performed an analysis of Nina Simone's *Don't Let Them Be Misunderstood,* they still could not apply the knowledge to their professional practice. White fragility acted as a barrier to the work needed to shift the needle on participant's being able to get beyond the knowledge stage or cultivating their disposition for praxis.

The participants' inclination to seek quick fixes, evade discomfort, and ask for more strategies before allowing themselves to fully understand the ones given during the session underscores the pervasive influence of White fragility in hindering their ability to move beyond the knowledge stage or cultivate their disposition for praxis.

Persuasion: Shifting the Conversation Away from Race

Each participant was well respected in the school, considered highly successful, had strong relationships, and was well-liked by their students. It is important to note that none of these factors consider cultural responsiveness. In many cases, these measures are exceptionally culturally biased; nevertheless, this is the reputation that preceded the three participants. Throughout the study, I found that participants frequently shifted the conversation away from race and on to other ideas. Shifting the conversation away from race could be considered a response to experiencing white fragility, however this theme was not always directly correlated to grappling with white fragility, in fact, when participants shifted the conversation, they exhibited signs of development around disposition for social justice in general, but not specifically regarding Black students.

After I commented on the level of success the participants had with their students and asked how that can translate to other white women educators experiencing the success they've seen. Mrs. Tuohy responded with:

> "They call it poverty seminars and stuff like that, which I don't like the word, but I understand…but it is very demeaning to me. Ummm…even a trip around the neighborhood to see where they live, and I've done that before in other districts."

In this moment Mrs. Tuohy acknowledge that there could be a social justice issue at play, poverty. She was able to describe potential strategies to address the social justice issue: workshops or neighborhood tours. This put her at the beginning of the persuasion stage of the framework, where learners develop a positive or negative attitude toward the new learning. Although Mrs. Touhy experienced the *Don't Let them be Mi*sunderstood PD and

was introduced to intersectionality, or the idea that when race is combined with any other factor, race is going to have the most impact on Black students, she still could not be persuaded.

After showing a slide (see Figure 2.10) displaying statistics about Black students' discipline disparities. I challenged participants' ideas of being successful teachers when these disparities existed and explained that my position as a practitioner and researcher is to find solutions to these disparities. I asked what insight they could offer other white female teachers to help them understand this phenomenon and begin doing things differently to help eradicate racial disparities in student discipline data. Ms. Gruwell responded:

> …and I will say one of the things like people will always say, Oh, well, you know, it's those private, Christian schools that wear uniforms. But I notice in our public schools only our Title I schools or schools in poverty, primarily African American, are the schools in uniforms, and in our county, I…I don't know of a middle-class or … Upper-middle class public school that enforces a uniform dress code. We have…I have witnessed over the years that is a lot of discipline right there: How kids are dressed.

Ms. Gruwell's shifting the focus from race to upper-class public schools versus Title I schools and the similarities between Title I schools, and private Christian schools shows that she was aware of a social justice issue at hand but could only acknowledge it if the problem could be shaped as a socioeconomic issue - not a racial one.

Mrs. Johnson shifted the conversation away from race when she responded to being asked to define a successful teacher. Her idea of being a successful teacher was "just letting the students know they are comfortable in the class and I'm just trying to help them towards their future. And that's what I want in my class… just for the students to be comfortable."

In her response, Mrs. Johnson defined a successful teacher in the context of what they do for *"all"* students instead of Black students. After engaging in hours of professional development, conversations about strategies for working with Black students, and looking at statistics about discipline disparities, she shifted the conversation to a color-blind, "All Lives Matter" stance. By doing this she avoided developing a positive or negative attitude toward new learning from the session. Her actions created a barrier that prevented her from moving beyond the persuasion stage or situating her disposition for social justice in a way that acknowledges racial inequities.

Ms. Gruwell's and Mrs. Tuohy's responses also aligned with an all-inclusive, color-blind ideal of what makes a successful teacher. Ms. Gruwell's response didn't "actually relate to academics at all." She believed that "forming a strong community of learners that support each other and express their thinking" was a major factor in determining what makes a successful teacher. Mrs. Tuohy agreed with Ms. Gruwell but added "… mine is the love and the encouragement that they [students] can do it if they want to." She went on to say, "It may be hard…and they are not perfect…I try so hard to…they are just who they are …and love them that way instead of striving to be this perfect child. "Both participants understood the importance of acknowledging the whole

child and that being a good teacher went beyond academics. Mrs. Thuy even expressed the role of relationships and hit on the idea of love, when she said “So, I guess for me, it's just acceptance of who they are, and I want them to come to my room because I do joke with them…but I tell mine every single day. I love you, bye, and that's when you leave my class….” She also added to the conversation by adding consistently and forgiveness to conversations about what makes a successful teacher when she said:

> “And another thing that I would like to add to that is being firm and consistent. It wasn't putting them down or trying to make them feel good about it…but it is just the fact…that you messed up, and tomorrow is another day. “

Participants were able to provide very thoughtful responses to the question; many of which align with topics from *Don’t Let Them Be Misunderstood*, but they also refused to address social justice issues associated with racism despite being introduced to content and data that specifically highlighted racial disparities. They shifted to “*all”* students after learning about the need to adopt strategies that would benefit Black students. The problem was that their social justice disposition was color-blind. And another thing that I would like to add to that is being firm and consistent. very, very, good about you did this, and I got to write you up.

Decision: Shifting the Responsibility

The third theme that emerged from the data was shifting responsibility. When asked about the insight they could offer to other white female teachers working with Black students, Mrs. Tuohy's resisted the need to implement CRCM strategies and shifted

the responsibility to the community or metaphorical village when she said, “My biggest thing is that they need mentors bad. And they also need anger management.” Instead of implementing practices that were shared such as, because, a lot of times, they jump to the defensive before they even know what is going on.” Instead of thinking back to the “I am from poem” activity and finding ways to leverage Black students’ cultural capital or reflecting back to the conversation about defensiveness during the school/culture society characteristic conversation, she expressed it should be the responsibility of mentors and mental health professionals. She exhibited a strong understanding of the principles around adultification of Black girls, as well as the way it works, when she went on to say:

” (draws out) I think a lot of times for me, especially with the girls, they just (pause) they are the mom of the younger children at home, so why do they have to take orders as they see it (*said at a faster speed*) from this white woman or really any teacher or anybody in an authority situation because they run everything.”

Ms. Tuohy also acknowledged, at a faster speed, that the defensive trait that is so often attributed to them being adultified could be justified when she said “then sometimes it is warranted but then most of the ... Sometimes it could have been avoided”. Despite this acknowledgment, she chose not to discuss the trauma Black girls encounter in schools at the hands of teachers who refuse to see them as children. Mrs. Tuohy avoided the work and shifted the burden of labor onto mentors, mental health care professionals, black girls, and their families.

During the session, we focused on the adultification of Black girls. We viewed a clip *from Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*, where Rebecca Epstein

from Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequity spoke about how Black girls are disproportionately treated more punitively in schools due to the adult's perceiving them as innocent children or miniature adults. The clip concluded with her offering the following solutions: Be honest with us about our biases, work collaboratively with Black girls towards solutions, and allow them to lead the change, starting with training for educators to overcome their biases (PUSHOUT Film, 2019). We also analyzed Nina Simone's "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood." We focused on the verse in Figure 3.4, where we discussed black girls' communication style and the importance of hearing, and not misunderstanding, their message due to concentrating on their expressiveness of overhearing it. I also connected their communication style to dimensions of black culture (Swindler-Boutte & Hill, 2006) and showed how it contradicted white supremacy cultural characteristics (Okun, 1999). Despite all this, Mrs. Tuohy shifted the burden of labor onto mentors, mental health care professionals, black girls, and their families. Her sensemaking, informed by her worldview, corresponds with the decision stage where learners adopt or resist change. Not only did she resist change; she made it someone else's responsibility.

Figure 3.1

Excerpt from "Don't Let Them Be Misunderstood" Lyrics

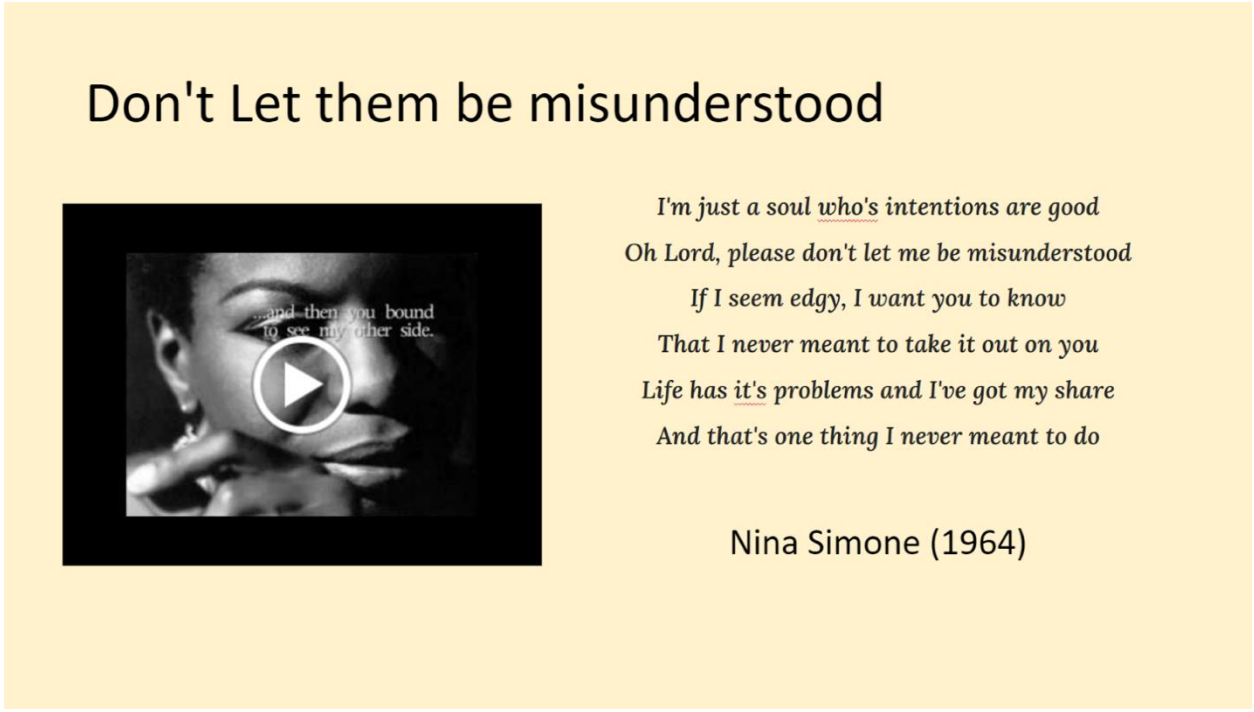


Figure 3.1 shows the slide displayed during Nina Samone's song analysis.

Mrs. Gruwell shared a story about a White colleague, SRO, who physically assaulted a Black male student, and she did not step in to help diffuse the situation when she knew she could have. She recalled:

> The kid had misbehaved in the P.E. classroom. The P.E. teacher followed the kid all the way back to my classroom, my homeroom, and started screaming and yelling at the child about what he did in his classroom but brought it to my room and then actually, you know, like, put his hand on the child's shoulder like a light push, the child had chested up to him, and so the adult lightly pushed him … I mean obviously it escalated and, in that situation, it ended up very badly for the child. I mean, he was handcuffed to a chair, waiting in the office for hours for the police officer or his parent to come to get him.

Mrs. Gruwell's story goes beyond shifting responsibility. In this case, she didn't necessarily shift the responsibility to advocate to any particular person; she avoided the responsibility altogether and left the student's fate up to the school administration and law enforcement, despite having an uneasy feeling about it. She stood in silent solidarity with the aggressor while the Black boy sat handcuffed to a chair, awaiting his judgment from the school administrator and law enforcement. Ms. Gruwell continued to reflect on the situation by saying:

> And then, myself too, as being a witness to this and me not intervening except to speak in the child's defense to the principal later, understanding my role as an adult witnessing something like that and how I could have stepped in and been a better advocate for that child at the time. …in the moment.

In her reflections, Ms. Gruwell acknowledges that she possesses the knowledge and understands the principles of the disposition for social justice, but she did not share reflections regarding what she may do if faced with that situation again.

Another example of avoiding the work shows up in the co-narrated conversation with Ms. Gruwell and Mrs. Johnson about people coming into cross-cultural discussions with an open mind. She was able to apply the principles discussed around cross-cultural conversations to build relationships with diverse individuals. However, instead of taking it upon herself, she shifted the responsibility to come with an open mind and be empathetic to her lack of cultural knowledge of those individuals.

"… if it is someone of a different culture and ethnicity to come in with an open mind, knowing that I may be coming in with an ignorance of how and what my word choices

mean…how what I am saying is actually interpreted in a different culturally dynamic. So, it's, I think, creating those types of conversations first and getting people to really feel comfortable with the idea of our preconceived notions and, um…in trying to put those off to the side and really come into it with a mindset of…that people are approaching it with the best of intentions…."

Ms. Johnson added to the conversation by saying, "Yeah, I think having that open communication and, like, I'm not trying to come across like this if you take it like this kind of thing. If that makes sense." While her comment also puts the responsibility of students and families to be empathetic, her comment is also aligned to grappling with white fragility, where she expressed concern for whether she is going to be perceived as a good white woman instead of a racist due to others' perception of her saying the wrong thing. In this conversation Ms. Johnson and Mrs. Tuohy agreed with Ms. Gruwell when she shifted the responsibility of building their cultural knowledge and adopting principles associated with cross-cultural communication to school leaders or professional development facilitators, and educational researchers to develop conversation stems.

> **Ms. Gruwell:** and I know this seems crazy because we are dealing with adults. We do this for children…we have conversation stems…are there…is that in existence… How do you have culturally relevant conversations with people? Here's a conversation stem that can help support you until you feel comfortable in these conversations. That's not something I've encountered.
>
> **Mrs. Johnson:** co-narrating Yeah:

In that moment, I expressed curiosity in the idea as if it was novice, and that it would be an effective strategy by saying:

> "That's not something that I have found, but I love it…You said that .and that's another direction that I can take my research in…. umm… that's a really good question, Ms. Gruwell. Especially if you are saying that could potentially make people more comfortable having these conversations."

I chose to prioritize the comfort of the two women over urging them to consider adopting strategies from "*Don't Let Them Be Misunderstood*." They were able to make Black students and their families responsible for their comfort, instead of me pushing them towards developing a disposition for social justice, the belief that their current practices could perpetuate harm leading them be more likely to adopt than resist during the decision stage.

> **Ms. Gruwell**: I know that you and …all of us really it is not like we are the first people trying to figure out how to have these conversations. And um … and … it's like you are walking on glass…or on eggshells…trying not to say something that is offensive for the others. Yeah, so I think a script helps.
>
> **Mrs. Johnson**: Or maybe like talking points.
>
> **Ms. Gruwell**: Yes, a conversation framework.
>
> **Mrs. Johnson:** Yes!

This conversation also leads to the idea that teachers are looking for a cheat sheet or quick and easy strategies to implement, instead of using what they learned to guide their journey into being more culturally responsive classroom managers. Ironically, a

significant component of the study was for participants to take on the work of developing a cheat sheet of sorts. Teachers were tasked with taking what they've learned to create a Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Classroom Observation Checklist. When given the task, participants seemingly grappled internally with White Fragility, skipped over race (and cultural responsiveness), and ultimately shifted the responsibility to include CRCM into the checklist to me. I will discuss this process further in the next section of this chapter.

Avoiding work, within the context of this study, unveils a complex interplay of attitudes and behaviors. The participants' inclination to shift the burden of labor, seek simplified solutions, and evade discomfort highlights the pervasive influence of white fragility and the challenges inherent in addressing deeply ingrained biases. By acknowledging and addressing avoidance tactics, educators and practitioners can embark on a more genuine and transformative journey towards embracing cultural responsiveness, actively challenging biases, and working collectively to create educational spaces that empower Black students to thrive.

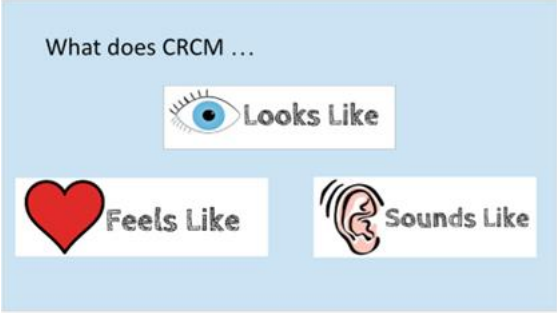
Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Classroom Observation Scale Development

After concluding the initial P.D. sessions, participants were tasked with co-developing a checklist that could be used to observe evidence of Culturally Responsive Classroom Management practices. During this period, Teachers threw out ideas of observable teacher action. Despite the topic and objectives of the P.D., the final Checklist (Figure 3.3) did not reflect any ideas shared throughout the P.D. sessions. The checklist

development stage began with a time crunch. When we started the process, teachers had approximately thirty minutes before they needed to return to their classrooms. I opened the final P.D. session with a review of the major ideas we discussed, including White Supremacy Cultural Characteristics, Dimensions of Black Culture, Adultification of Black Girls, and The Pygmalion Effect. Despite the review of concepts and reference to CRCM on the board, participants defaulted back to the neutral, color-blind items to be added to the checklist.

Figure 3.2

CRCM Slide for Checklist Development



On the one hand, as an educator, colleague, and someone positioned as an authority on the topic, I wanted to step in and guide the participants in the process by scaffolding or providing more specific examples of items that could've been added. On the other hand, this was an opportunity to authentically assess participants' understanding and knowledge of the third learning objective; Design culturally responsive classroom management strategies that foster a safe, culturally centered, and inclusive environment.

Figure 3.3

CRCM Observation Checklist

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Observation Checklist [Draft 1]

Observer: **Who is being observed** **Date:**

	Observation Notes	Checklist Revision Notes
Talking with students/ active listening/ supporting		
One-on-One time with students		
Allowing students to show what they've learned in expressive ways		
Everyone is included (no one singled out)		
Cooperative Learning Group		
Opportunities for movement		
Mutual Respect		
Welcoming		
Sense of Belonging		

Reflection Notes:

Observation Cycles

The cycle began with less than two weeks left in the school year and at a time when all teachers were focused on closing out the school year. In addition to closing the school year, two teachers were tying up loose ends as they would not return to the classroom. The observations were focused on teachers' interaction with Black students, so the inability to observe instruction would not complicate the process. I predicted it would

allow participants to focus more on CRCM strategies without being distracted by teaching strategies.

In my initial analysis of the Observation tool and cycle, I broke the checklist into three categories: (1) Mutual Respect, (2) Welcoming, and (3) Sense of Belonging. These categories happen to be the last three domains that participants listed. They also happen to be the ones that were most loosely described. The other items included verbs or action items.

Summary

Three main themes emerged from the study: (1) grappling with White Fragility, (2) shifting the conversation away from race, and (3) shifting the responsibility. Participants often struggled with White fragility, which hindered their ability to engage in praxis. This was particularly evident in the Knowledge stage. Participants also tended to shift the conversation away from race, which prevented them from developing a disposition for social justice. This was most common during the Persuasion stage. Lastly, participants often shifted the responsibility for the work they needed to do to adopt CRCM strategies. This was typically observed during the Decision stage and hindered their ability to cultivate a disposition for community.

At various times throughout the study, participants center their white fragility over empathetic reflections of their Black students' experiences. While participating in professional development sessions centered around shifting the educational experiences for black students, they found endless opportunities to shift the conversation away from

race and to other topics, such as poverty. Finally, participants avoided the work and shifted the burden from themselves, or white women, to other individuals or groups. When it came to the CRCM Observation tool, participants shifted the conversation away from race by neglecting to include elements of CRCMS in the checklist. They centered whiteness by prioritizing their comfort and shifted the burden or labor on me to ensure that the checklist reflected the learning from the professional learning sessions.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

The ultimate purpose of this study was to consider ways that white women participants might make sense of the *"Don't Let Them Be Misunderstood"* PD sessions, so that I can make revisions informed by data before conducting it in the six-week format that it was designed for. The study is grounded in sensemaking and the dispositions for culturally responsive teaching, examined how white women educators make sense of a series of professional development sessions about culturally responsive classroom management (CRCM). The PD was designed to influence the participants' classroom management strategies and ultimately shift the needle toward a more positive direction in the overrepresentation of Black students in school discipline data.

As part of the study's design, the three educators participated in a series of professional development sessions centered around CRCM for Black students. These sessions aimed to introduce a classroom management framework that honored the cultural norms of Black students. To do this, they were introduced to content rooted in CRCM: (1) recognition of one's ethnocentrism and biases; (2) knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds; (3) understanding of the broader social, economic, and political context of our educational system; (4) ability and willingness to use culturally appropriate classroom management strategies; and (5) commitment to building caring classroom communities (Siwatu et al., 2017; Weinstein et al., 2004). They also participated in peer-to-peer observations followed by reflection sessions and a final session to debrief.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, transcripts from professional development sessions, and my researcher's journal. Data analysis was grounded in sensemaking and the dimensions of culturally responsive teaching with the intent of better understanding how white women educators made sense of the material presented during the professional development sessions. In this chapter, I further discuss the themes presented in Chapter 3. The themes help frame the discussion around what should be considered when developing teachers' dispositions for culturally responsive pedagogy and helping them make sense of the content at the first three stages of the resistance to change framework. That discussion is followed up with a conceptual framework that can be used to guide teachers' CRCM development. Finally, I discuss the significance of the study's findings and name the implications and considerations for practice and future research.

Connection to the Literature

Several studies (Bondy et al., 2007; Gaias et al., 2019; Hubbard, 2005; Kwok et al., 2020; Patish, 2016) previously investigated the impact of using culturally responsive classroom management strategies on the referral and discipline rates of Black and Brown students. Overall, those studies (Bondy, 2007; Hubbard, 2005; Kwok et al., 2020; Milner, 2009; Patish, 2016; Siwatu et al., 2017) focused on teachers' use of culturally responsive practices in classroom settings. The results from these studies (Bondy, 2007; Hubbard, 2005; Kwok et al., 2020; Milner, 2009; Patish, 2016; Siwatu et al., 2017) found that the use of culturally responsive classroom management strategies had a positive impact on decreasing the referral rates of racially minoritized students in schools. However, the

current study was designed to look at how the participants made sense of the CRCM-focused professional development series.

The data collected reflected three themes: grappling with white fragility, shifting the conversation away from race, and avoiding the work. Simply speaking, the participating teachers centered themselves in CRCM conversations instead of courageously unpacking any existing biases about Black students. In our conversations, this most often sounded like participants shifting the discussion from the educational experiences of black students and how race influences those experiences to things like poverty, which is something that they had no control over. Finally, participants avoided taking responsibility for the work needing to be done by them and other white women educators. They shifted the burden of labor to other individuals, absolving themselves of ever having to endure the discomfort of acknowledging and addressing their cultural biases and prejudice. I unpack each of these themes in more detail below.

Knowledge: Grappling With White Fragility

Each participant seemed to lack awareness of the cultural nuances specific to the region and, arguably, demonstrated a limited understanding of their Black students' culture. Ms. Johnson spoke on a correlation between her understanding of Black students' culture and their perception of rather she was racist or not. While these two factors are not mutually exclusive, the lack of knowledge and understanding of Black students' culture could lead her and other racially incongruent teachers to engage in racist or xenophobic acts.

Grappling with white fragility was a significant distractor that prevented participants from achieving the objectives of the sessions. This response revealed characteristics that contradict those associated with Whitaker & Valtierra's (2019) Disposition for Praxis. Dispositions for Praxis measure teachers' commitment to self-awareness and self-improvement. These items focus on how teachers' understanding of themselves affects their practices (Whitaker & Valtierra, 2019).

The participants seemed to prioritize avoiding the label of being racist over genuinely focusing on their Black students or actively learning and embracing CRCM strategies aimed at reducing both conscious and unconscious racist behaviors among white women teachers. The idea of not being perceived as a racist by Black students came up multiple times across the PD sessions and seemed to be the top issue they grappled with as white fragility set in.

The teachers' comments demonstrated their desire to be seen as good white women based on people's perceptions of their words. At their core, they want others to acknowledge that they come with good intentions; however, they do not give themselves credit for their own good intentions or actions. With these beliefs, they are working off the premise that their intentions, words, and actions are disjointed and being perceived as good is better than doing good things that will lead to good for others. For example, *wanting to* work toward implementing culturally responsive classroom strategies for their Black students is more important, based on their descriptions, than *actually working* towards implementing culturally responsive classroom strategies for their Black students.

The participants' discussions embodied white fragility in that even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves (DiAngelo, 2011. p. 24). All three participants were triggered by the idea of being perceived as racist. According to the participants, their fear of being perceived as racist struck emotions of fear and guilt. These are examples of outwardly displayed emotions that white people tend to experience when they are in a state of white fragility (DiAngelo, 2011. p. 24). These emotional responses often reinforce the status quo (Thomas & Luba, 2018). In the case of this study, participants' fear of being considered racist prompted such an emotional response that they refused to discuss race or attempt to try culturally responsive classroom management strategies in the educational spaces they control. Their unwillingness resulted in developing a culturally responsive classroom management checklist that lacked any elements of race or culture. It prevented them from engaging in critical peer observations and feedback cycles centered on race.

During the study, even I centered whiteness and white fragility by classifying participating teachers' refusal to center Blackness as a strong reluctance instead of acknowledging it as a blatant refusal to center Blackness in a space where Blackness was the topic. In centering the participants' white fragility, I reinforced their ideas about racism and permitted them to refuse to center Blackness. As a Black man positioned as an authority on this topic, not centering race granted them the liberty to do the same. This idea I also one that Bettina Love (2023) explored in Punished for Dreaming when she talked about leaning into the comfort of her White students who were denying the fact that the Sandy Hook massacre really happened, only days after the event.

Without the Neri et al (2019) framework Grappling with White fragility appears to be a barrier or tool or resistance, however when viewed as a learning problem grappling with White fragility could be leveraged to support participant's growth and development around their disposition for praxis.

This theme emphasizes the need for sustained efforts to dismantle systemic barriers and highlights the importance of moving beyond internal struggles to concrete actions that lead to equitable educational environments. By acknowledging and actively addressing learning problem, school leaders and professional development facilitators can pave the way for authentic cultural responsiveness, fostering inclusive classrooms that empower all students to thrive while simultaneously addressing the pressing demands of racial justice.

Persuasion: Shifting the Conversation away from Race

When shifting the focus from race to various other topics, teachers showed that they had not yet developed a strong disposition for social justice. They exhibited beliefs such as believing in the importance of acknowledging how issues of power are enacted through school, the idea that schools can reproduce social inequalities, or including hot topic conversations being a part of the classroom discord, but they never applied these beliefs to Black children specifically despite that being the entire premise of the sessions.

In her response, one participating teacher shifted the conversation from race to poverty. This idea of focusing on poverty instead of race is a familiar one. In the early

2000s, Ruby Payne dominated the education world with her work, A Framework for Understanding Poverty. Payne's framework was built mainly upon understanding the "culture" of poverty. Her framework instructed educators on the values and mindsets poor students carry into classrooms and how to help develop middle-class values and culture (Gorski, p. 130). In other words, Payne capitalized on exploiting stereotypes of people in poverty and teaching teachers to assimilate those people by indoctrinating them into middle-class norms.

Teachers' conversations leaned toward a focus on school uniform policies when discussing poverty. One teacher highlighted that, in the public-school setting, she has only seen strict uniform policies in Title I schools, although she acknowledged that private schools also wore uniforms. Ms. Gruwell noted that Title I schools are composed of primarily African American students but did not elaborate further on the poverty standpoint. It is important to note that her mere mention of African American students did not constitute the centering of their experiences, nor did it align with CRCM strategies shared during the PD sessions.

The teachers' unwillingness to focus on topics other than race while discussing culture and culturally relevant classroom management could be attributed to their tendency to center white fragility, however that was not often the case. This mimicked one of Gorski's significant critiques of Ruby Payne's work: The: "It is not about Race" Card. Each topic the participants brought up was relevant and essential; however, they cannot be discussed meaningfully without discussing their impact at the intersection of race.

Participants' inability to look inward and truly reflect on how their beliefs and attitudes could influence their classroom discipline decisions caused them to focus on "safer" topics that did not require them to do any heavy lifting. By focusing the conversation on topics that had little to do with race, teachers did not feel connected to or empowered to address the factors contributing to disproportionate discipline rates. This also made it challenging to address trends in the discipline data for Black students as a research question. Participants reported no application from what was covered in the PD to their classroom practice because they never truly wrestled with the intersectionality of race, culture, and school discipline, leaving them to believe that addressing those issues in the classroom was not their responsibility.

By classifying their shifting the conversation from race, as a learning problem, that occurs most frequently during the persuasion stage, the facilitator of "*Don't Let them Be Misunderstood*" could leverage supporting growth and development around the disposition for social justice. Based on thoughts and expressions shared by participants, all three of them expressed beliefs and thoughts associated with disposition for social justice, however, their social lens could only apply in situations where all students were considered. They never expressed a need to advocate for Black students specifically.

Understanding that white women participating in PD on CRCM could potentially resort to shifting the conversation away from race, I can be more intentional about providing opportunities for participants to operationalize and define racism. Possibly engaging them in discussions about what racism is and what it isn't. Helping them to

realize that engaging in the learning process and making mistakes could potentially lead to unconscious racist acts, but it doesn't make them racist.

Decision: Avoiding the Responsibility

In each of their responses, participants shifted the responsibility of the work needing to be done away from themselves and to made it the responsibility of Black children their families and the community. This action creates a divide between themselves and the community they serve. This was primarily due to their expressions of discomfort with conflict, especially with Black girls, and their resistance to decentering themselves in conversations about race and culture. Because of that, there were critical opportunities for shifting behaviors and mindsets that were missed during the reflections and PD discussions.

At one point, Ms. Gruwell reflected on time where she avoided putting the work into advocating, protecting, and standing up for a Black male student despite knowing that experiencing violence at the hand of her colleague. Ms. Gruwell's decision not to step in during the incident was in line with the findings of a study conducted by Gaertner et al. (1982) which found that white women were more likely to offer assistance when they were the only witness to emergencies where the victim is Black. Ms. Gruwell's reflection highlighted the afterthought of being a bystander to violence toward Black children. Standing up to a colleague in defense or advocacy for a Black male student who experienced physical and psychological violence at the hand of his white male teacher. This is significant because Black students face unprecedented violence in schools

(Johnson et al., 2019). Mrs. Gruwell shed a huge spotlight onto why these incidents continue to happen.

The increased violence that Black students experience in schools creates diminished academic achievement for Black students (Toldson et al., 2015). Reduced academic achievement or capacity has long-term effects on Black students, often leading to caps on their lifetime earning potential (Marchbanks et al., 2015) later in life. Black students may also experience mental health issues due to being targeted by school discipline policies (Fadus et al., 2021).

When teachers, specifically white women teachers, refuse to hold themselves accountable for improving the classroom experiences of their Black students, they are reinforcing oppressive systems that contribute to disproportionate discipline outcomes. For teachers to feel compelled to adopt CRCM strategies, they must be able to see how they fit into the relationship between racial bias, culture, and classroom discipline. Without the ability to engage in that kind of meaningful reflection, the teachers participating in this study were unable to realize the powerful impact that implementing CRCM strategies could have on their classrooms. They also missed out on crucial opportunities to develop their disposition for community through advocating, building relationships, as well as building a strong community of learners committed to social justice for Black students.

Participants shifted the burden of labor from white women to that of the community. They expressed examples of discomfort with conflict, especially with Black girls, and separated themselves as members of the learning community. By not

committing to the work of becoming more culturally responsive, it appears that the participants do not value things such as collaborating with families and colleagues; these beliefs align with dispositions for community. Evidence of Avoiding the work, occurred most frequently during the decision stage of the resistance to change framework. Participants were right at the verge of deciding whether to adopt or resist, and in these situations, they choose to resist.

Knowing that unconsciously, shifting the burden of labor could be a barrier to effectively meeting the objectives of the PD sessions means that I would need to ensure that the subsequent implementation involves deliberate conversations, brainstorming, and recommendations regarding practical and actionable strategies that teachers can apply in their classrooms, then come back to talk through it.

Avoiding work, within the context of this study, unveils a complex interplay of attitudes and behaviors. The participants' inclination to shift the burden of labor, seek simplified solutions, and evade discomfort highlights the pervasive influence of white fragility and the challenges inherent in addressing deeply ingrained biases. By acknowledging and addressing avoidance tactics, educators and practitioners can embark on a more genuine and transformative journey towards embracing cultural responsiveness, actively challenging biases, and working collectively to create educational spaces that empower Black students to thrive.

A Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Learning Problem Framework

Neri et al., (2019) expressed the need to view teachers' resistance to implementing culturally responsive education as a learning problem where individuals are "seeking to reduce uncertainty about the advantages and disadvantages of the strategies being introduced." In the case of this study, the learning problems inhibited participants' sensemaking and made it very difficult, at times, to move from one stage to another in the resistance to change framework. The findings: grappling with white fragility, shifting the conversation, and avoiding the responsibility should be viewed as learning problems where participants were engaged in the sensemaking process to evaluate the information I shared in the *"Don't Let them Be Misunderstood"* PD session.

Another factor associated with the slow rate of culturally responsive education adoption is individuals not having the beliefs and attitudes, or dispositions associated with liberating pedagogies such as cultural responsiveness and cultural relevance. The data shows that the learning problems identified in the study also prevented participants from reflecting and engaging with the content in such a way that could develop their dispositions associated with culturally responsive pedagogy.

Knowledge, Grappling with White Fragility, and Praxis

During the knowledge stage, participants sought to make sense of the content from the session. Being introduced to new topics grounded in reflections surrounding the role they play in perpetuating racial inequities in school caused participants to grapple with White fragility. Grappling with White fragility inhibited participants' sensemaking, causing them to get stuck in the knowledge stage. Developing learning experiences and

opportunities grounded in the disposition for praxis could help, move them out of the knowledge stage by helping them to understand move beyond white guild and fragility. Grappling with white fragility as a tool to cultivate their disposition for praxis could get participants unstuck and move them from knowledge to persuasion stage.

Persuasion, Shifting the Conversation, and Social Justice

During the persuasion stage, participants begin to develop their attitudes toward change in a positive or negative way. Participants who were in the persuasion stage implored strategies that would allow them to talk about inequities, but not racial inequities. This brought to light the learning problem of shifting the conversation away from race, which inhibited their ability to move beyond persuasion. They struggled developing positive or negative attitudes about CRCM strategies and found comfort in being neutral. They did that by acknowledging social justice issues, mainly socioeconomics, to avoid race. This learning problem created a barrier to participants' cultivating their disposition for social justice centered around Blackness. Providing more intentional learning experiences where participants are asked to reflect on specific issues such as adultification of Black girls and Disproportionate discipline data for Black boys could help encourage growth around disposition for social justice grounded in justice for Black children.

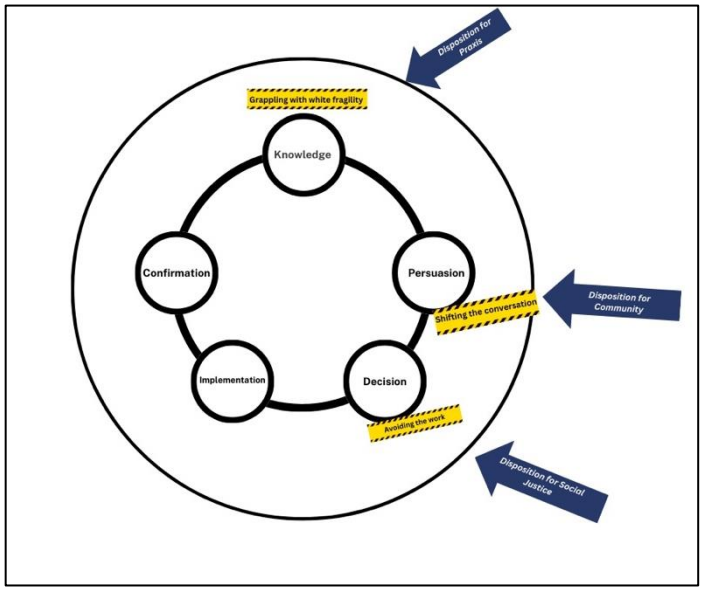
Decisions – Avoiding the Work, and Community

Participants, while in the decision stage, were on the verge of implementation. They were at a point where they were prepared to make a decision to adopt CRCM strategies or resist them. When faced with that decision, participants resisted. Their

resistance looked like them shifting the responsibility to others to do the work, causing them to be stuck and unable to move beyond this stage. In most cases, they shifted the work to community members or Black children themselves. By pushing participants to think about the cultural capital that exists in Black families, homes, and communities and building relationships through cross-cultural communication, they could move toward strengthening relationships.

The CRCM Learning Problems Framework will support with intentional planning for future implementation of "*Don't Let the be Misunderstood*". It draws a correlation between the stages of the resistance to change framework, to specific learning problems encountered during that stage and the disposition that would be cultivated by effectively addressing the learning problem.

Figure 4.1
Proposed CRCM Framework



Implications for Future Research

The next step for this study is to execute my plan for the "Do" stage and implement full six-week plan, followed by the "Study" stage where data would be analyzed to determine the impact of the implementation and make refinements before moving to the "Act" stage where I would do another six-week implementation that was informed by the data from the first.

Future research around Sensemaking and CRCM should continue to center White women educators and explore their perceptions around cultural mismatch and disproportionate school discipline. Conducting a more in-depth literature synthesis of dispositions associated with culturally responsive teaching could help shed light on a wider array of dispositions and whether developing learning experiences around them could help educators overcome learning problems encountered when learning about CRCM, or other iterations of liberatory teaching practices.

It is important to investigate the concept of providing professional development (PD) to educators on the topic of race and racism in homogeneous or affinity groups. It would be valuable to explore the ways in which learning difficulties manifest and are resolved in diverse groups versus groups consisting only of white women.

Finally, a phenomenon that surfaced in the study and is of particular interest to me is the idea of Black experts doing this work leaning into white comfort. While initially reviewing my transcripts, I realized I leaned into white comfort multiple times when I could have pushed participants in a way that could have led to significant breakthroughs in growing their dispositions for this work. I thought this was a novice mistake until

Bettina Love wrote about a time when she permitted a group of white students to deny the Sandy Hook massacre through silence. She wrote about struggling to respond and then only being able to say, “Really.” She described this moment as betraying herself. I felt as though I had betrayed myself and my people, especially the Black children whose lives depended on me doing this work.

Additional research should be a blend of qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative prompts about race and culture may increase the discomfort or white fragility that is present when teachers, specifically white women teachers, may feel in interviews and focus groups. However, quantitative research can balance that out by providing questions that prompt deep reflection and relegate responses to a scale that may feel more comfortable for teachers.

Delimitations

Although one of the strengths of this study was that all the teachers came from the same school, it does make the findings less generalizable. Even the teachers' ethnicity acts as a limitation because their views cannot be generalized to the larger profession. Would these findings have looked different if the teachers had been white teachers from different schools, counties, or states?

As mentioned above, an additional limitation of this study was the ethnic makeup of the participants. If the group had been more diverse, would there have been a greater chance that teachers would have embraced and/or implemented CRCM strategies? Would having a more diverse group change the conversation that the current participating

teachers had? Would there be a difference in the ways White men or Black women educators make sense of CRCM? Both can be addressed through future research.

Lessons Learned

There are a number of things I learned during the study that should be changed to improve the impact of *Don't Let them Be Misunderstood.* The first things I would do is ground the sessions' objectives in the dispositions for culturally responsive pedagogy. One of the most common learning problems attributed to the absence of cultural responsiveness in teachers' classroom is that they don't possess the dispositions needed to implement it. By focusing more on cultivating the dispositions, changing teachers' attitudes and beliefs we can eliminate one of the biggest barriers to implementation.

On a few occasions, I chose not to challenge comments or beliefs held by participants that contradicted participant's beliefs or comments that contradicted the principles being taught. One thing that we know about growth is that it needs to be uncomfortable. I did not push participants into discomfort, and in some cases I allowed them to experience comfort at moments where having their thoughts challenged could have resulted in valuable learning experiences. During the study, I feared pushing too hard, risking the chance of attrition. I only had three volunteers and could not imagine the consequences of one dropping out during the study.

There was no clear working definition of a racist, especially considering the prevalence of the idea in participants' self-reflection. Having, and norming, on a working definition would have been extremely beneficial to participants as they struggled heavily with the fear of being considered racist. While racism can appear in many ways, the

participants had different ideas about what makes a person racist. In *All About Love* (2001), bell hooks challenges the reader to "Imagine how much easier it would be for us to learn how to love if we began with a shared definition. While love is a significant part of working genuinely with black children, a lack of love is often overlooked when considering what makes a racist having a shared understanding of the traits a racist can embody before engaging in the study. Having a working definition of a racist could have helped clear up many misconceptions about what racism is and is not. That shared understanding could provide a frame of reference and a starting point for examining their disposition for praxis by helping participants to understand that most of the things they fear about being labeled as racist may not necessarily be tied to the definition, potentially freeing them from the discomfort of reflecting on the impact of race on their classroom discipline practices.

It is essential to acknowledge that White women who participate in the CRCM sessions may encounter moments when they struggle with white fragility. To address this, I am considering implementing changes that allow for more time to struggle productively. Without the opportunity to grapple with internal struggles resulting from white fragility, participants may find it difficult to access, let alone engage with, the learning material.

When planning and preparing for the PD, I pictured participants co-constructing a CRCM checklist, which had evidence of the material and content shared during the session. I expected that they would display an understanding of the new material by using it appropriately in this context. Because I intended this to be a check for version, I

purposely did not scaffold. In the future, I would provide more scaffolding and list some behaviors for them to add to. As much as I disagree with a list of CRCM strategies for educators to use, like a playbook, I acknowledge its role with educators who have nothing.

This study has taught me that educators, like my participants, often hold beliefs, experiences, and knowledge that require unlearning and unpacking. Engaging in critical self-reflection is crucial but takes time and guidance, especially as everyone's experiences are different. The unlearning process can take years, making it clear that six weeks is not enough time to guide people through this work. Therefore, I now believe that developing a series of sessions that will focus on critical self-reflection for six weeks before introducing any strategy or discussing cultural responsiveness. Beginning with CRCM may not be the most effective approach to this work.

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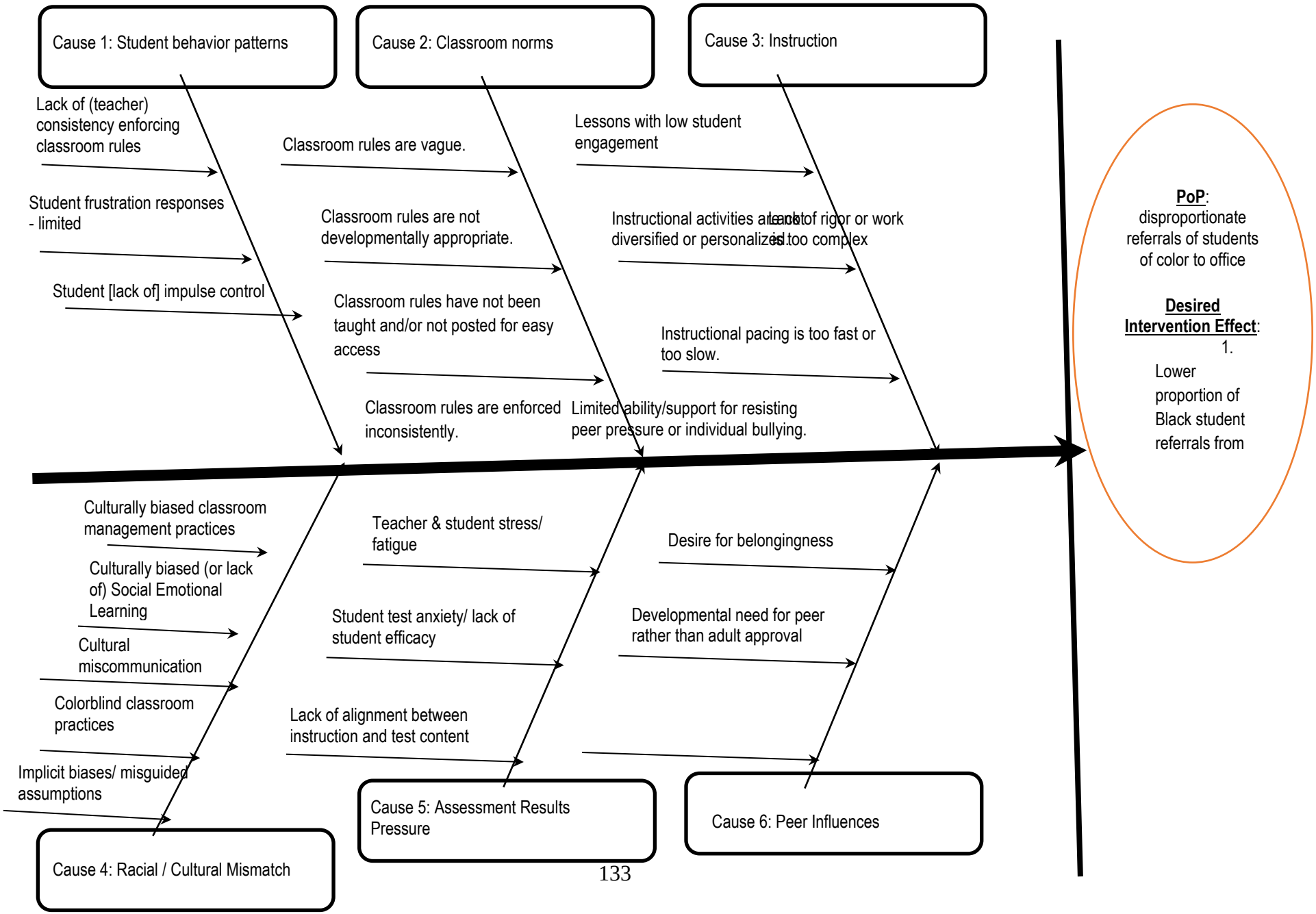
APPENDICES

Appendix A

Fishbone Protocol



Appendix B

I Am From Poem Template

I Am From Poem

Use this template to draft your poem, and then write a final draft to share on blank paper.

I am from _____
(specific ordinary item)

From _____ and _____
(product name) (product name)

I am from the _____
(home description)

_____, _____, _____
(adjective) (adjective) (sensory detail)

I am from _____,
(plant, flower, natural item)

_____
(description of above item)

I'm from _____ and _____
(family tradition) (family trait)

From _____ and _____
(name of family member) (another family name)

I'm from the _____ and _____
(description of family tendency) (another one)

From _____ and _____
(something you were told as a child) (another)

I'm from _____, _____
(representation of religion or lack of), (further description)

I'm from _____
(place of birth and family ancestry)

_____, _____
(a food item that represents your family) (another one)

From the _____
(specific family story about a specific person and detail)

Appendix C

I Am Poem

I am from …

I am from the Walkman, Nintendo 64, and Goosebump Books … but not toy guns because black boys shouldn't play with those

I am from Collard Greens, Mac & Cheese and fried chicken after church on Sunday
… from Balgonie sandwiches by the pineapple at Waterfront Park.

I am from the aroma of evergreen Christmas trees, gingerbread cookies, and cigarette smoke rolled up in one big woof
…"Merry Christmas from the Temptations"

I am from the big brick house
**** Mulberry Street
(843)556-****.

I am from TGIF on a beach towel in the living room with pizza, chips and little hugs juice … from One Saturday Morning with a mixing bowl full of fruity pebbles and a big wooden spoon.

I am from Mommy
… Granny
…Helen
… Martha Ann
…Ms. Robinson
… from her daughter – Ivah
… from the Robinson's on Johns Island
…but Kevin spit me right out.

I am from Christmas Eve moonshine and cookies for Santa
…until the divorce

I am from "You have to work twice as hard"
"Ricardo spell this & spell that"…
walks to the library – Not So Fast Songalolo
… from "I love you forever.
I love you for Always.
As long as I'm living my darling you'll be."

I am from extended family, church and stories of marching with Martin Luther King. I am from 2

years in fifth grade because I had to learn what it means to have to work twice as hard.

I am from playing school and being the principal
… not knowing I was prophesizing my future!

Appendix D

Majority Culture Characteristics

Majority Culture Characteristics

Perfectionism	• making a mistake is confused with being a mistake, doing wrong with being wrong • often internally felt, in other words the perfectionist fails to appreciate her own good work, more often pointing out his faults or 'failures,'
Sense of Urgency	• continued sense of urgency that makes it difficult to take time to be inclusive, encourage democratic and/or thoughtful decision-making, to think long-term, to consider consequences
Defensiveness	• because of either/or thinking (see below), criticism of those with power is viewed as threatening and inappropriate (or rude) • white people spend energy defending against charges of racism instead of examining how racism might actually be happening • the defensiveness of people in power creates an oppressive culture
Quantity Over Quality	• things that can be measured are more highly valued than things that cannot • little or no value attached to process • no understanding that when there is a conflict between content (the agenda of the meeting) and process (people's need to be heard or engaged), process will prevail
Only One Right Way	• the belief there is one right way to do things and once people are introduced to the right way, they will see the light and adopt it • when they do not adapt or change, then something is wrong with them (the other, those not changing), not with us (those who 'know' the right way) • similar to the missionary who does not see value in the culture of other communities, sees only value in their beliefs about what is good
Paternalism	• decision-making is clear to those with power and unclear to those without it • those with power think they are capable of making decisions for and in the interests of those without power • those with power often don't think it is important or necessary to understand the viewpoint or experience of those for whom they are making decisions • those without power understand they do not have it and understand who does • those without power do not really know how decisions get made and who makes what decisions, and yet they are completely familiar with the impact of those decisions on them
Either/or Thinking	• things are either/or — good/bad, right/wrong, with us/against us • closely linked to perfectionism in making it difficult to learn from

adapted from: https://www.dismantlingracism.org

Appendix E

PDSA Timeline

Original

Phases of Data Collection	Sessions	Learning Objective
I		Pre-Interview, and I am from poem
II	Week 1	Learning Outcome 1: Preservice teachers will reflect on and identify their cultural assumptions, biases, and perspectives.
	Week 2	Learning Outcome 2: Preservice teachers will demonstrate the understanding that classroom management is not culturally neutral by exploring and identifying instances of cultural miscommunication.
	Week 3	Learning Outcome 3: Preservice teachers will design culturally responsive classroom management strategies that foster a safe, culturally centered, and inclusive environment.
III	Week 4	Peer Observation (PDSA) and feedback cycle (protocol)
	Week 5	
	Week 6	
IV		Post Exposure Focus Group & Reflection

Revised

Phases of Data Collection	Sessions	Learning Objective
I		Pre-Interview, and I am from poem
II	Exposure 1 day	Learning Outcome 1: Preservice teachers will reflect on and identify their cultural assumptions, biases, and perspectives.
		Learning Outcome 2: Preservice teachers will demonstrate the understanding that classroom management is not culturally neutral by exploring and identifying instances of cultural miscommunication.
		Learning Outcome 3: Preservice teachers will design culturally responsive classroom management strategies that foster a safe, culturally centered, and inclusive environment.
III	Week 1	Peer Observation (PDSA) and feedback cycle (protocol)
	Week 2	
	Week 3	
IV		Post Exposure Focus Group & Reflection

Appendix F

Pre-Exposure Interview Protocol Conceptual Development

Concepts	Interview Question
Caldera, A., Whitaker, M.C., Conrad Popoya, D.A. (2020) Classroom management in urban schools: proposing a course framework. *Teaching Education,* 3(3), 343 – 361.	
Learning Outcome 1: … teachers will reflect on and identify their cultural assumptions, biases, and perspectives (p.11).	**Question #6** [Read Learning Outcome] What would you expect to learn about cultural assumptions, biases, and perspectives in this series of sessions? What impact do you want that knowledge to have on your classroom management practices?
Learning Outcome 2: … teachers will demonstrate the understanding that classroom management is not culturally neutral by exploring and identifying instances of cultural miscommunication (p.11).	**Question # 7** [Read Learning Outcome] What would you expect to learn about cultural neutrality or cultural miscommunication in this series of sessions? What impact do you want what you learn to have on your classroom management practices?
Learning Outcome 3: … teachers will design culturally responsive classroom management strategies that foster a safe, culturally centered, and inclusive environment (p.11).	**Question #8** [Read Learning Outcome] What would you expect to learn about culturally responsive classroom management strategies in this session? What impact do you want what you learn to have on your classroom management practices?
Whitaker, M.C. and Valtierra, K.M. (2018), "The dispositions for culturally responsive pedagogy scale", *Journal for Multicultural Education*, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp.10-24	
Praxis is most concerned with the extent to which teachers' understanding of themselves affects their practice. (p.17)	**Question # 1** What are your identity markers? How does your identity impact your classroom management practices?
Thus, a culturally responsive teacher creates a mutual learning environment by placing value on building relationships with students, students' families, other teachers, and community members (p.18)	**Question # 2** Describe your classroom management. **Question # 3** Describe your classroom community.
the goal of culturally responsive teaching: "the liberation and empowerment of students from the most marginalized groups in urban schools through promoting equity and social justice in education" (p. 19)	**Question # 4** How do you promote equity and social justice in your classroom management practices?
This means understanding that whiteness primarily is maintained through social systems, rather than solely through isolated acts of racism or oppression (p. 19).	**Question # 5** What are your thoughts on the role that whiteness plays in classroom management? What impact do you think this has on school discipline?

Appendix G

Pre-Exposure Interview Protocol Script

Research Information and Consent Script

KEY INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY

Along with Professor Jane Clark Lindle, PhD, I have invited you to participate in my dissertation study about culturally responsive classroom management (CRCM) practices. Professor Lindle, a faculty member in the Department of Educational and Organizational Leadership Development at Clemson University, is supervising my study.

Study Purpose: The purpose of this study is to find out more about how the high referrals of Black students, particularly boys, for office-level disciplinary consequences might be reduced through CRCM practices.

Voluntary Consent : Participation is voluntary, and the only alternative is not to participate. You will not be punished in any way if you decide not to be in the study or to stop taking part in the study.

Activities and Procedures: Your part in the study can provide a classroom-based perspective about the use of culturally responsive classroom management to lower the number of Black student referrals for administrative discipline.

Participation Time : The study will last about seven weeks, which includes three professional development sessions which are about two hours each. The pre- interview and post-project focus group could take 30 minutes or a little more. And after, you will receive a transcript of your answers to review, and that could take as much as an hour. During the project's span, you will visit other teachers' classrooms for observations at least three times for about 20 minutes each. Thus, over the seven weeks, you could spend as much as nine hours involved in this project.

Risks and Discomforts : We do not know of any risks or discomforts to you in this research study.

Possible Benefits: Your participation generates no direct benefits for you, but you will help in meeting the goal of the study, which is to provide insights into an approach that might lower the number of Black students' referrals for administrative discipline.

AUDIO-RECORDING

The interview sessions will be audio recorded for ease of notetaking and capturing the discussion, although you may choose not to allow recording. If you permit the recording, then you will receive a copy of those transcripts. These recordings require archival for five years after the publication of this research.

Protection of PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The results of this study may appear in scientific journals, professional publications, or educational presentations. Identifiable information and de-identified information (such as

your choice of pseudonyms) collected during this study will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions or concerns about your rights in this research study, please get in touch with the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (OCR) at 864-656-0636 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC's toll-free number 899-297-3071. The Clemson IRB will not be able to answer some study-specific questions. For specific study questions, you may contact Professor Lindle (jlindle@clemson.edu) or me at ricard2@g.clemson.edu However, you may contact the Clemson IRB if you wish to speak with someone other than the research staff.

CONSENT

By participating in the study, you indicate that you have read the information written above, been allowed to ask any questions, and voluntarily chose to participate in this research study.

Pre-Exposure Interview Protocol

Date of Interview:_____ **Location Type**[1]:_____

Participant ID code[2]**:**_____ **Interview Start Time:**_____

Interview End Time:

Script:

Thank you for meeting with me [*teacher's name*]. Your views matter and there are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions because few studies exist that focus on teachers' experiences in developing culturally responsive classroom management practices.

To start off, please say in a few sentences a little bit about yourself.

Since time is important, I'd like for us to go ahead and begin the interview, with your permission. Do I have permission to record our interview? ____ yes _____ no
(If no, then proceed with notetaking)

[1] Location Type = Virtual/Zoom Appointment

[2] Participant ID code = Temporary code based on selection criteria --- to be changed to selected pseudonym by end of interview/contact

I might ask clarifying questions to ensure my understanding.

Do you have any questions or concerns you would like to discuss before we start? (Answer questions and address concerns, if any.) Note such here:

First, to protect your confidentiality, what name, other than your own, may I use for you? (If you don't have a preference, I will assign you a name for the purposes of this study.)

_____

Finally, in the process of answering my questions, I may interrupt if you use a person's name. I will need to know that person's role or job title for this study. Even with that caution, it's possible that both of us will need to change those names into roles or job titles when I share the transcript with you.

Question # 1

What are your identity markers?

How does your identity impact your classroom management practices?

Question # 2

Describe your classroom management.

Question # 3

Describe your classroom community.

Question # 4

How do you promote equity and social justice in your classroom management practices?

Question #5

What are your thoughts on the role that whiteness plays in classroom management?

What impact do you think this has on school discipline?

Question #6

[Read Learning Outcome 1: teachers will reflect on and identify their cultural assumptions, biases, and perspectives]

What would you expect to learn about cultural assumptions, biases, and perspectives in this series of sessions?

What impact do you want that knowledge to have on your classroom management practices?

Question # 7

[Read Learning Outcome 2: teachers will demonstrate the understanding that classroom management is not culturally neutral by exploring and identifying instances of cultural miscommunication]

What would you expect to learn about cultural neutrality or cultural miscommunication in this series of sessions?

What impact do you want what you learn to have on your classroom management practices?

Question #8

[Read Learning Outcome3: teachers will design culturally responsive classroom management strategies that foster a safe, culturally centered, and inclusive environment]

What would you expect to learn about culturally responsive classroom management strategies in this session?

What impact do you want what you learn to have on your classroom management practices?

Appendix H

Recruitment Email Script

Dear [*teacher's name*],

I am inviting you to participate in a study about Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM). Besides my professional role as an assistant principal at Ducketts Lane Elementary, I am a doctoral student at Clemson University. I am conducting research with Clemson Distinguished Professor of Educational Leadership, Jane Clark Lindle (contact- jlindle@clemson.edu). My doctoral study looks at classroom management practices in order to lessen the number of Black students, particularly young boys, office referrals for discipline. This research could benefit the academic community by providing insight into how culturally responsive classroom management practices may reduce the behavioral issues for which a larger proportion of Black boys are referred to the office for punishment. Currently, I am preparing to collect research data and have contacted you asking for your assistance.

Should you choose to participate, your part in the data collection process would be to take part in a professional development activity that provides an overview of culturally responsive classroom management practices for which you and other teachers would develop ways to observe those practices in each other's classrooms. If this project is successful, then the sessions and the observation tool could be used schoolwide, or even across the school district.

The project will last about seven weeks during which you would take part in four professional development sessions and then spend at least three observation sessions in yours and other participants' classrooms. You would complete a pre-interview and participate in a post-exposure focus group. With your permission the interviews will be audio-recorded, and you will receive the transcripts so that you can edit or clarify anything on the transcriptions. In addition, I would observe your classroom a total of two times: once before the professional development sessions and once afterwards. And, most importantly, through your participation in this project, you and other teachers will design and test a classroom observation tool that would help in observations of culturally responsive classroom management practices.

To ensure confidentiality, you will be asked to provide a pseudonym for yourself that I will use with any of the data that you provide through the interview and other study documents. If you prefer, I can choose a pseudonym for you. Your positive reply to this email will serve as your permission to communicate with you directly regarding this research. I will then follow-up to answer any additional questions and set up the pre-project activities and confirm the professional development sessions.

I appreciate your consideration for participating in this project. I realize how valuable your time is. Thank you in advance, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

Ricardo Robinson, Doctoral Candidate Clemson University
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Appendix I

Post-Exposure Focus Group Protocol Conceptual Development

Concepts	Interview Question
Caldera, A., Whitaker, M.C., Conrad Popoya, D.A. (2020) Classroom management in urban schools: proposing a course framework. *Teaching Education*, 3(3), 343 – 361.	
Learning Outcome 1: Preservice teachers will reflect on and identify their cultural assumptions, biases, and perspectives (p.11).	**Question # 2** What did you learn about your cultural assumptions, perspectives, and biases from this series of sessions? What strategies did you attempt to implement into practice?
Learning Outcome 2: Preservice teachers will demonstrate the understanding that classroom management is not culturally neutral by exploring and identifying instances of cultural miscommunication (p.11).	**Question # 3** What did you learn about cultural miscommunication from this series of sessions? What strategies did you attempt to implement into practice?
Learning Outcome 3: Preservice teachers will design culturally responsive classroom management strategies that foster a safe, culturally centered, and inclusive environment (p.11).	**Question #4** What did you learn about culturally responsive classroom management strategies from this series of sessions? What strategies did you attempt to implement into practice?
Whitaker, M.C. and Valtierra, K.M. (2018), "The dispositions for culturally responsive pedagogy scale", *Journal for Multicultural Education*, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp.10-24	
Praxis is most concerned with the extent to which teachers' understanding of themselves affects their practice. (p.17)	**Question # 1** In your initial interview you listed [read the participants' responses back]as your identity markers. Did you reflect on this list during the project? Have you added or deleted any from this list? What impact did your identity play on the culturally responsive classroom management strategies you used?
Thus, a culturally responsive teacher creates a mutual learning environment by placing value on building relationships with students, students' families, other teachers, and community members (p.18)	**Question # 5** Did your classroom management style change during the study? If so, how? If not, why do you think that is?
the goal of culturally responsive teaching: "the liberation and empowerment of students from the most marginalized groups in urban schools through promoting equity and social justice in education" (p. 19)	
This means understanding that whiteness primarily is maintained through social systems, rather than solely through isolated acts of racism or oppression (p. 19).	

Appendix J

Post-Exposure Focus Group Protocol Script

Consent Reminder

Thank you for your participation thus far in this project. I want to remind you that you can choose to continue or end your participation at any time, with no penalty to you. I'm also reminding you that your individual information is held confidential. As with the first interview, audio recording helps with notetaking and capturing the discussion, although you may choose not to allow recording. If you permit the recording, then you will receive a copy of the transcript.

Post-Exposure Focus Group Protocol

Script:

Thank you all for meeting with me. Your views matter and there are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions because few studies exist that focus on teachers' experiences in developing culturally responsive classroom management practices.

Do I have permission to record our focus group? ____ yes _____ no
(If no, then proceed with notetaking)

Question # 1

In your initial interview you listed [read the participants' responses back]as your identity markers. Did you reflect on this list during this project?

Has have your added or deleted any part of this list?

What impact did your identity play on the culturally responsive classroom management strategies you used?

Question # 2

What did you learn about your cultural assumptions, perspectives, and biases from this series of sessions?

What strategies did you attempt to implement into practice?

Question # 3

What did you learn about cultural miscommunication from this series of sessions?

What strategies did you attempt to implement into practice?

Question #4

What did you learn about culturally responsive classroom management strategies from this series of sessions?

What strategies did you attempt to implement into practice?

Question # 5

Did your classroom management style change during the study? If so, how? If not, why do you think that is?

Appendix K

Dispositions for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Scale

Praxis

1. I value assessing my own teaching practices
2. I am aware of my cultural background
3. I am willing to take advantage of professional development opportunities focused on issues of diversity
4. I am open to feedback about my teaching practices
5. I am willing to examine my own identities
6. I am willing to be vulnerable

Community

1. I value developing personal relationships with students
2. I value collaborating with families
3. I value collaborating with colleagues
4. I value collaborative learning
5. I value student input into classroom rules
6. I value dialog as a way to learn about students' out-of-school lives
7. I value student differences
8. I view myself as a member of the learning community along with students
9. I am comfortable with conflict as an inevitable part of the teaching and learning processes

Social justice

1. I believe it is important to acknowledge how issues of power are enacted through schools
2. I believe that schools can reproduce social inequities
3. I believe that hot topic conversations (e.g., race, gender, sexuality, religion, etc.) should be had in class when necessary and relevant
4. I value equity (giving each student what they individually need) over equality (giving each student the same thing)