Enhancing Culturally Responsive Practice in a District: Understanding Culturally Responsive Practice Through Supervision & Evaluation

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ENHANCING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICE IN A DISTRICT: UNDERSTANDING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICE THROUGH SUPERVISION & EVALUATION

Dissertation
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Abstract

This qualitative case study of a medium-sized Massachusetts school district was part of a larger study exploring how educators throughout a school district make sense of and enact culturally responsive practice (CRP). This individual study focused on how school leaders and teachers incorporated their understanding of CRP into the supervision and evaluation process. Despite a growing body of literature on the effectiveness of educator evaluation standards on teacher practice, there is little on how these tools increase teachers' capacity to support the learning of historically marginalized students. Specifically, this research asks two questions: (1) How do teachers and school leaders understand CRP? (2) How does the supervision and evaluation process contribute to a shared understanding of CRP for teachers and school leaders? Data were collected from 22 semi-structured interviews of school leaders and teachers, document review, and an online survey. Incorporating a cognitive framework for policy implementation, findings revealed that school leaders and teachers understand CRP through their own identities and life experiences and through their interpretation of the district's professional environment. Findings further noted that the lack of a shared definition of CRP in the district contributed to inconsistent application and prioritization of CRP in the supervision and evaluation process. Without a shared understanding, educators often pivoted to other district initiatives to describe CRP. Implications

include the need to establish a system of reflection and practice for educators to explore the beliefs they hold about historically marginalized students and how those beliefs inform practice.

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Dedication

To my wife, Angela, my best friend and my rock throughout this journey

To Cameron, Olivia & Elena, my children who bring me nothing but boundless joy

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CHAPTER ONE[1]

Introduction

The National Center of Education Statistics found that in 2017 more than half of all U.S. public school students who identify as Black, Hispanic, and Pacific Islander attended schools whose enrollments were 75% or more students of color (de Brey et al., 2019). These same data also show that the school-aged population is becoming more racially diverse, with the population of White students dropping from 62% in 2000 to 51% in 2017.

The shifting demographic is important given the research showing the relationship between student achievement and the racial isolation of historically marginalized student populations. For example, Berends and Peñaloza (2010) used a national dataset to discover that between the years of 1972 and 2004 Black and Latino students attended schools whose student populations became increasingly racially isolated and that such isolation corresponded significantly to the increase in the achievement gap experienced by these groups during this time period. Similarly, a quasi-experimental study of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District found that the racial achievement gap in high school math scores increased after a court order prevented the district from continuing its desegregation busing program (Billings, Deming, & Rockoff, 2014). This racial achievement gap has been persistent in U.S. K-12 schools despite numerous policy efforts that have aimed to create equitable outcomes for all students (Lee, 2004; Ferguson, 2007; Hanushek et al., 2019).

Given the persistent disparities between racial groups in academic achievement as measured by assessments, the growing population of students of color, and the increased racial

[1] This chapter was jointly written by the authors listed and reflects the team approach of this project: Daniel S. Anderson, James J. Greenwood, Sarah L. McLaughlin, Jason W. Medeiros, Tina C. Rogers.

isolation of these students in school, districts face a compelling need to develop, support, and communicate an intentional strategy to support the learning of historically marginalized students. Supporting and sustaining culturally responsive practice is one such strategy.

Gay (2018) points out two facts that demonstrate the need for culturally responsive teaching. She shows that there are consistent levels of student achievement over time for various racial and ethnic groups, but at the same time, there is a wide variation of individual performances within each group. She points out that:

> Achievement patterns among ethnic groups in the United States are too persistent to be attributed only to individual limitations. The fault lies as well within the institutional structures, procedures, assumptions, and operational styles of schools, classrooms, and the society at large. (p. xxii)

In order to confront the inequities that Gay describes, districts require a coordinated, thorough approach to organizational learning in order to alter the institutional and individual dispositions and practices that contribute to these gaps. Coffin and Leithwood (2000) argue for a systemic approach that involves distributing learning throughout individuals in a district, strengthening the relationships and interactions of these individuals, and enhancing the tools and structures that support adult learning. Understanding how school districts respond to the need for their organizations to be culturally responsive is critical to reducing achievement disparities. As such, this research seeks to identify how educators throughout a school district make sense of and enact culturally responsive practice. The specific research questions that we addressed are:

1. How do district administrators, school leaders, and teachers make sense of what it means to be a culturally responsive practitioner?

2. What do those educators do in their roles to enact their understanding of culturally responsive practice?

Each member of our research team examined a unique facet of school district practice that has the potential to influence how educators understand the expectation to be culturally responsive (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1

Individual Research Topic and Level of Analysis

Daniel S. Anderson	Influencing educator CRP	District Administrators, Educators
James J. Greenwood	Understanding how educators develop CRP	School Leaders, Teachers
Sarah L. McLaughlin	Engaging families with CRP	District Administrators, School Leaders, Educators
Jason W. Medeiros	Understanding CRP through supervision & evaluation	School Leaders, Teachers
Tina C. Rogers	Supporting principals' CRLP	District Administrators, Principals

An abstract for each of the individual studies can be found in Appendices A-D.

A Note on Language

It is important to note that this paper moves between terms for asset-based and affirming practices such as culturally relevant teaching, culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and culturally responsive leadership, as well as other terms. Often related and overlapping, these terms build on one another even when using slightly varying language and concepts. We use the term "culturally responsive practice" (CRP) as an umbrella to encompass discrete elements of practice, such as culturally responsive school

leadership (Khalifa, 2018), culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018), culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 2009), and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017). When we refer to the work of specific scholars, we use their terminology, with the understanding that it fits into this broader frame. The literature review will discuss these pedagogies and literature further.

Furthermore, we feel it is important to clarify our use of certain terminology - specifically, "historically marginalized students." As Gay (2010) explains, diversity, identity, and positionality are significant and multifaceted:

> It is also important for authors and teachers to declare how they understand and engage with diversity. My priorities are race, culture, and ethnicity as they relate to underachieving students of color and marginalized groups in K-12 schools. Other authors may focus instead on gender, sexual orientation, social class, or linguistic diversity as specific contexts for actualizing general principles of culturally responsive teaching. It is not that one set of priorities is right or wrong, or that all proponents of culturally responsive teaching should endorse the same constituencies. (p. 52)

Following Gay's example, we want to clarify that our focus is on students from racially minoritized groups (i.e., students of color), students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and linguistically minoritized students. We further detail these groupings - and how we operationalized them - within the methods section. We turn now to synthesize the literature pertinent to the research questions.

Literature Review

This study seeks to understand how educators throughout a district make sense of and enact culturally responsive practice (CRP). There is a growing body of literature that explores

the skills, strategies, knowledge, and mindsets that classroom educators and leaders require to serve effectively in schools whose populations consist predominantly of historically marginalized students. In the subsequent literature review, we first describe the work defining CRP. This includes exploring literature on culturally responsive teaching, the centrality of race in culturally responsive practice, characteristics of culturally relevant pedagogy, how educators develop their CRP, culturally responsive leadership practices, and literature on culturally sustaining practice as subsidiary elements therein. We then turn to examine the literature on how districts influence changes in school practice generally. Finally, we explore literature related to our conceptual framework of sensemaking.

Culturally Responsive Practice

Culturally responsive practice exists within the larger framework and scholarship of multicultural education as originally theorized by Banks (1994) and further expanded upon over the years by Banks and several others including Banks et al. (2001), Gay (2002), and Nieto (1996). Multicultural education is a set of knowledge, attitudes, and skills that students must develop in order to interact positively with people from diverse backgrounds (Banks et al., 2001). Relatedly, the theory of culturally relevant practice is grounded in three distinct propositions for outcomes: producing students who can achieve academically, producing students who demonstrate cultural competence, and developing students who can both understand and critique the existing social order (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p.474). In her study of teachers who successfully demonstrate cultural responsiveness, Ladson-Billings concluded that "the common feature they shared was a classroom practice grounded in what they believe about the educability of the students" (p. 484). Culturally responsive practitioners believe that all students, regardless of racial and cultural backgrounds, can be educated. Gay (2013) pointed out

that this disposition is fundamentally different from the way that educational programs and practices have historically been designed for students of color.

According to Gay (2010), "Culturally responsive teaching is the behavioral expression of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognizes the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning" (p. 31). Gay (2002) goes on to further describe culturally responsive pedagogy as:

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

She emphasized the impact on student academic outcomes, explaining that, "...academic achievement of ethnically diverse students will improve when they are taught through their own cultural and experiential filters" (p. 106). In essence, culturally proficient and culturally responsive teachers must actively draw from and engage their students' cultural backgrounds in order to effectively teach them. This involves a tacit understanding of their students' backgrounds, a recognition of the inherent worth and dignity of these cultures, and active resistance to deficit model thinking by working against negative stereotypes and bias. This is especially important as Gay (2013) noted that "Culturally responsive teaching requires replacing pathological and deficient perceptions of students and communities of color with more positive ones" (p.54).

Not all teachers engage in CRP - even though they themselves might self-identify as culturally responsive practitioners. As Warren (2013) found in his research on teachers' culturally responsive interactions with Black students, it may sometimes be that "teachers who

identify themselves as culturally responsive are either not clear about what it means to be culturally responsive…[or] maintain deficit perspectives of diverse youth" (p.175). It is therefore critically important to aid educators in developing a clearer understanding of what CRP is, the characteristics of culturally responsive practitioners, and how they develop such practice.

The argument for CRP is further supported and reinforced by the changing demographics of U.S. public schools, particularly in light of the predominately White teaching body. As stated by Howard (2003), "The increasing degree of racial homogeneity among teachers and heterogeneity among students carries important implications for all educators" (p. 196). This disconnect between the racial identity of teachers (predominantly White educators) and an increasingly racially diverse student body (predominantly students of color) can result in cultural disconnects or racial mismatches that can impede successful CRP practice and further contribute to racial achievement gaps (McGrady & Reynolds, 2012). As such, the importance of racial identity in education must be considered.

Centrality of Race in Culturally Responsive Practice

The importance of considering race, particularly teachers examining their own racial identity as well as those of their students, is a key tenet of CRP. In their work applying a critical race perspective to culturally responsive teaching, Hayes and Juarez (2012) posited that culturally responsive pedagogy must talk about race and "address the sociopolitical context of White supremacy within education and society" (p. 4). Work by Milner (2017) argued that expanding conceptualizations of CRP since Ladson-Billings' initial work have tended to downplay the significance of race. While lauding the expanded definitions' attempts to encapsulate culture and ethnicity, he believes race must remain central stating, "Clearly, culture is not only about race; however, race is a central dimension of culture, and for some racial and

ethnic groups, race is the most salient feature of their cultural identity" (p.5). His adherence to the centrality of race in CRP aligns with the findings of several related educational studies.

In another study on the role of race in education, McGrady and Reynolds (2012) analyzed the relationship between teachers' race and their perceptions of students of varying races. In an analytic sample of around 9,000 students of English teachers, and around 9,500 students of math teachers, they found that the effects of racial mismatch (when teacher and students racial identities differed) were significant and often depended on the racial/ethnic statuses of both the teacher and the student. Their findings show that, "Among students with white teachers, Asian students are usually viewed more positively than white students, while black students are perceived more negatively." (p.3). Their results demonstrate that even when controlling for differences in students' test scores, family socioeconomic status, and other school characteristics, Black students evaluated by White teachers often receive more negative ratings than White students evaluated by White teachers. The study concluded that "White teachers' ratings of students' academic ability and behaviors in the classroom appear susceptible to the racial stereotypes that depict Black and Hispanic youth as having lower academic potential and Asian youth as model students" (p.14). Given the disparate evaluation by White educators, coupled with the fact that most teachers are White, White teachers especially must examine how race impacts education and their work with students. As Boucher (2016) stated in his study of White teachers working with African American students: "if we are to close the gap in achievement between white and black students, we must focus on the people who are currently teaching those students, and the vast majority of them are white" (p.88). To be clear, this is not to suggest that White teachers are incapable of successfully teaching students of color. In his work examining White teachers in urban classrooms, Goldenberg (2014) stated, "I am not inferring that racial

mismatch itself is inherently a problem...However, to be a successful White teacher in a non-White classroom, White teachers must recognize students' nondominant culture and learn how to engage with it" (p. 113).

There are frameworks like universal design for learning (UDL) which are designed to help teachers differentiate their teaching practices to reach diverse learners. However, Kieran and Anderson (2019) caution that teachers who employ frameworks like UDL, but fail to recognize the significance of factors like race and culture when doing so, run the risk of reinforcing and exacerbating disparities in achievement between students of different races.

In his work examining how White teachers maintain and enact dominant racial ideologies, Picower (2009) contended that, "...teachers' life experiences socialize them into particular understandings of race and difference" (p 197). Supporting this notion further, Howard (2006) stated in his reflective work on White teachers in multicultural schools,

> ...teachers must know about themselves before they can ever become transformative educators for diverse students...an unexamined life on the part of a White teacher [any teacher] is a danger to every student and the more I have examined my own stuff related to race, culture, and differences, the less likely it is that I will consciously or unconsciously expose students to my own assumptions of rightness...or my blind perpetuation of the legacy of White privilege. (p. 127)

In related work on the importance of race in teaching, Howard (2003) concurred stating that, "To become culturally relevant, teachers need to engage in honest, critical reflection that challenges them to see how their positionality influences their students in either positive or negative ways" (p.197). He expounded that race and culture are important concepts in teaching and learning and therefore, teachers must, "...reflect on their own racial and cultural identities

and...recognize how these identities coexist with the cultural compositions of their students" (p. 196). That is to say, education involves the interactions that occur in that interplay between teacher identity and student identity. Howard continued that, "The racial and cultural incongruence between teachers and students merits ongoing discussion, reflection, and analysis of racial identities on behalf of teachers, and is critical in developing a culturally relevant pedagogy for diverse learners" (p.196). Having defined CRP, and detailed the importance of race therein, we now outline characteristics of what culturally responsive teaching looks like in practice.

Characteristics of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Although using slightly different terminology from the previously described culturally responsive practice, Ladson-Billings provided a set of insights about culturally relevant pedagogy. Ladson-Billings (2009) identified and outlined several initial overarching characteristics of culturally relevant teachers. They "have high self-esteem and a high regard for others" (p. 37). They "see themselves as part of the community, see teaching as giving back to the community, and encourage their students to do the same" (p. 41). These teachers "see teaching as an art and themselves as artists" (p. 45). They "believe that all students can succeed" (p. 48), "help students make connections between their community, national, and global identities" (p. 52), and "see teaching as 'digging knowledge out' of students" (p. 56).

She goes on to offer several tenets of culturally relevant practice. First, in their classrooms, "Students whose educational, economic, social, political, and cultural futures are most tenuous are helped to become intellectual leaders in the classroom" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 126). Second, "Students are apprenticed in a learning community rather than taught in an isolated and unrelated way" (p. 127). Third, "Students' real-life experiences are legitimized as

they become part of the 'official' curriculum" (p. 127). Fourth, "Teachers and students participate in a broad conception of literacy that incorporates both literature and oratory" (p. 127). Fifth, "Teachers and students engage in a collective struggle against the status quo" (p. 127). And sixth, "Teachers are cognizant of themselves as political beings" (p. 128). These observed characteristics exemplify the disposition toward practice required for students' learning and empowerment.

Gay (2018) described several dimensions of different learning styles of students to which culturally relevant teachers attend: "procedural," "communicative," "substantive," "environmental," "organizational," "perceptual," "relational," and "organizational" (p. 207-208). She argued that for teachers to effectively instruct students, they must be mindful of the individual differences and variations in each of these areas.

Hammond (2015) further distilled the elements of culturally relevant teaching and frames them in the context of brain science, outlining the profile of a "warm demander" (p. 97). She used this term to describe a teacher with both the disposition of deep belief in student potential and high expectations, as well as the effective pedagogical practices that enable all students to succeed. They thus both possess high "personal warmth" and demonstrate "active demandingness" (p. 99).

Hammond (2015) offered specific examples of how teachers accomplish such dispositions and actions. She noted that in building relationships, a warm demanding teacher explicitly demonstrates a "focus on building rapport and trust. Expresses warmth through non-verbal ways like smiling, touch, warm or firm tone of voice, and good-natured teasing" (p. 99). Along with demonstrating "personal regard for students by inquiring about important people and

events in their lives" the teacher thus "[e]arns the right to demand engagement and effort" from the student (p. 99).

Meanwhile, on the instructional side, such a teacher maintains "high standards and offers emotional support and instructional scaffolding to dependent learners for reaching the standards" (p. 99). This enables the teacher to guide students to "productive struggle" (p. 99) necessary for learning. Hammond characterized the warm demander teacher who exhibits these dispositions and skills, saying they are: "Viewed by students as caring because of personal regard and 'tough love' stance" (p. 99). Having established the various traits that culturally responsive practitioners possess, we now turn to examine the research on developing such capacity.

How Teachers Develop Culturally Responsive Practice

In an early work on multicultural education, Campbell and Farrell (1985) identified five overarching categories of multicultural education. These categories were: "environmental/affective setting," "subject competency," "assessment," "reporting progress and referrals," and "learning strategy and materials" (p.139). While their study identified the various competencies in each category from a sampling of 54 teachers in the Dade County school district, they paid little attention to how these teachers developed these competencies. Subsequent studies over the ensuing years have attempted to examine the ways that teachers develop their cultural competency, many focusing on teacher education programs and how they address multicultural education with pre-service teachers (Sleeter, 2001; Garmon, 2004; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Garmon, 2005; Siwatu, 2007; Sandell & Tupy, 2015). Reviews of these programs, however, demonstrate varying levels of success. Existing literature shows that teacher education programs have struggled to effectively equip teachers with the necessary skills to effectively teach increasingly diverse student populations (Sleeter, 2001; Allen et al., 2017).

Indeed, in an examination of the nearly 1,200 teacher education programs nationwide, Cross (2005) found that very few of them are truly grounded in a social justice framework that forwards CRP. Moreover, as Ukpokodu (2011) noted in her work examining the development of teachers' cultural competence in teacher education programs, despite the quantity of research and scholarship on teaching and learning, teachers continued to struggle to teach diverse groups of students. She asserted:

> Even as the scholarship on multicultural education has become pervasive and diversity standards are required, many candidates are graduating from teacher education programs without developing the cultural competence needed to be successful teachers in today's classrooms. (p.433)

Given the struggle to develop CRP in pre-service teachers, the role of principals in developing these practices becomes even more critical.

Culturally Responsive Leadership Practice of Principals

The way principals lead a school has major effects on student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004). Most critical is the way they shape a school culture that focuses on student learning and stimulates educator improvement (Louis & Wahlstom, 2011). Furthermore, establishing a culture that is built on strong relationships with students, families, community members, and staff positively impacts students' success (Khalifa, 2013; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). Given this information and the opportunity gap that exists for historically marginalized students, Khalifa (2018) argued that principals are "best positioned to ensure that aspects of schooling […] become culturally responsive" (p. 53). It is for this reason that principals' culturally responsive leadership practice is critical.

Johnson (2006) furthered Ladson-Billings's CRP research to demonstrate the need for culturally responsive leaders who consider various historical, social, and political contexts when responding to the needs of their historically marginalized student populations. Culturally responsive leaders lead in a way that ensures equitable opportunities to learn and in doing so think "about culture differently beyond celebrating and embracing diversity, to see culture as an active force of change politically, socially, and economically" (Lopez, 2015, p. 172).

Culturally responsive principals lead with an equity lens and intentionally challenge dominant epistemologies. Khalifa (2018) described culturally responsive leadership as a set of behaviors that promotes an inclusive school community that positively impacts historically marginalized students and families. He specifically identified four behaviors: "(a) being critically self-reflective; (b) developing and sustaining culturally responsive teachers and curricula; (c) promoting inclusive, anti-oppressive school contexts; and (d) engaging students' Indigenous (or local neighborhood) community contexts" (p. 13).

This research suggests the importance for leaders of majority-minority schools to understand how to support students, families, and teachers whose dominant culture differs from their own. Though this literature focuses on culturally responsive leadership, it is worthy to note its relation to social justice leadership. Theoharis (2007) defined social justice leadership as "principals mak[ing] issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically marginalized conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership, practice and vision" (p. 223). Culturally responsive and social justice leaders make intentional decisions to eliminate oppressive behaviors and structures in schools. Several empirical studies demonstrate how culturally responsive and social justice leaders establish an inclusive culture that challenges past inequities and supports the learning and growth of others.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies and Concluding Reflection

Because we examined various aspects of cultural responsiveness, from teaching to leading, and drawing on the ideas of various thinkers, we use the term culturally responsive practice (CRP) to incorporate all of the threads above. As Paris and Alim (2017) noted, culturally sustaining pedagogy builds on previous "asset pedagogies" to further reject the "deficit approaches" of the past which "viewed the languages, literacies, and cultural ways of being of many students and communities of color as deficiencies to be overcome in learning the demanded and legitimized dominant language, literacy, and cultural ways of schooling" (p. 4).

Throughout the literature referenced above, a consistent theme was that culturally responsive educators have the capacity to reject deficit mindsets linked to the languages, cultures, and abilities of historically marginalized students, their families, and the communities in which they live. These educators embrace an inherent belief in the educability of all students, a willingness to challenge the status quo, and a willingness to reflect on how one's identity informs practice. In addition to beliefs, the literature outlines the pedagogical skills required in the classroom. These include the ability to set high expectations while offering high levels of support, the ability to scaffold instruction, and the ability to bridge students' lived experiences into classroom learning experiences.

While this literature offers valuable insight into the beliefs and skills required for closing racial achievement gaps, the focus of most of this research is at the classroom or school level. Building-level leaders and educators who have access to this knowledge base have the potential to shift school-level practice in meaningful ways, but there is little offered as to how districts can sustain this work throughout the school system. The next section describes research conducted on the ways school districts generally influence school-level practices.

District Administrators' Influence on School Practice

Districts and district leaders are responsible for building the capacity of individuals and the district, writ large (Honig, 2008). Leithwood et al., (2000) synthesized results from three qualitative multi-case study designed to identify the conditions that support (or fail to support) professional learning at various levels across school districts. They concluded that district and school leadership were most influential in fostering both individual and collective learning when districts' missions and visions prioritized continuous professional growth.

Whenever districts take on new initiatives, they benefit from building a learning infrastructure. For example, Florian et al., (2000) examined 15 districts from 13 states to evaluate the practices that contribute to successful policy implementation. The study explored both state-level and district-level strategies. They found that districts that emphasized eight specific strategies experienced a successful implementation process. Among them were practices similar to those found by Leithwood et al., (2000). These included placing an emphasis on building instructional capacity, supporting collaboration among teachers, evaluating the new practices being implemented, and aligning district finances to their goals.

A number of studies discovered similar results. Rorrer et al., (2008) further support the role districts can have in building teacher capacity throughout their organization. This study used a six-stage iterative narrative synthesis to propose a theory for districts to engage in systematic change that advances equity. They found, in part, that districts must intentionally build capacity. They noted three strategies as fundamental to building capacity: (a) communication, planning, and collaboration; (b) monitoring goals, instruction, and efforts through the use of data and accountability, and (c) acquiring and aligning resources. Similarly, Leithwood and Azah (2017) conducted a literature review and compiled a list of district characteristics linked to contributing

to student achievement. They then measured the extent to which these characteristics influenced achievement in a sample of school districts in Ontario, Canada. The characteristics with the strongest effects on student achievement were having a learning-oriented improvement process, having a clear mission, and using evidence to adjust practice.

The research above consistently highlights how districts can build capacity through a clear mission, strategic use of resources, and institution of a collaborative learning-oriented process for implementing new strategies. At the same time, some authors caution that this model of district leadership may not transfer easily into every context. For example, Rorrer and Skrla (2005) described successful leaders as policy mediators whose skill set should include relationship building, culture building (specifically, a culture of achievement), and flexibility (an ability to adapt policy to fit a local context). Trujillo (2016) extended this emphasis on the local context by warning how most district research ignores the systemic variables within communities that contribute to school outcomes: "Without also acknowledging the predictive power of contextual factors related to poverty, race, or distinctive historical realities...some of these studies shift attention away from….inequities that shape districts' capacity" (p. 37). Most of the studies referenced above focused on enacting policies and practices that implement new standards (e.g., curriculum standards, student assessment standards, and accountability standards) that arise from federal or state mandates. These policies are often broad and fail to take into consideration the unique cultural, political, and socio-economic landscape in which a school district operates.

CRP acknowledges these local identities and aims to reframe them as assets to be nurtured as contributing agents to student learning. Our study sought to understand how such

practices are enacted throughout a district. There is little research, however, exploring how to enhance high-leverage CRP throughout a school district.

Additionally, the research focused on supporting the CRP of building-level faculty and administration is lagging. In a review of empirical studies measuring the effects of in-service interventions that promote culturally responsive teaching, Bottiani et al., (2018) found only 10 studies that met their methodological criteria and thus were unable to make conclusions regarding patterns around the efficacy of such interventions. In addition to these challenges of measurement, there is little research that examines how school districts pursue a coherent and consistent application of CRP throughout their operations. Much of the literature focuses on school-level actors alone or in the context of teacher education programs.

Despite the broad array of literature on individual classroom and leadership implementation of CRP, research has not addressed how a district acts to strengthen CRP throughout its schools and classrooms. This gap in understanding how educators successfully develop their capacity, how school leaders support and evaluate CRP, and how districts broadly enact support of CRP comprehensively motivated the individual portions of our study.

Conceptual Framework

As the student population of public schools grows increasingly more diverse and increasingly different from the culture of school staff, it is critical for district and school leaders to understand how educators make sense of their responsibility to improve student outcomes for these students. As noted above, adopting a culturally responsive approach requires developing certain understandings and skills about how historically marginalized students learn and succeed. Sensemaking offers a frame through which we can examine how such understanding and skills develop within a district.

Sensemaking can be applied to a variety of sectors and organizations. It is frequently applied when analyzing an organization's experience in times of unpredictability, shifting conditions, and emerging challenges (Weick, 1995). As school districts enroll growing populations of historically marginalized students, there are changing conditions and new challenges that educators must address in order to best serve their students. How individuals understand, interpret, and respond to changes in the situated context of their school setting plays a critical role in how educators implement reform efforts (Spillane et al., 2002). The social interactions that occur as a result of these changes also inform individual sensemaking (Weick, 1995; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis; 2005; Coburn, 2006). In addition to how one's own positionality impacts their understanding and beliefs of race and culture, a change in the school's demography will alter how educators perceive the context in which they work.

Weick (1995) presented "sensemaking" as a means to understand the process of how individuals and organizations assign meaning to events. Weick's research focused largely on organizational disasters that initiate the process of people trying to make sense of unexpected events. Maitlis and Christianson (2014) examined a broad set of sensemaking literature to clarify the types of triggers that can prompt sensemaking, including "cues--such as issues, events, or situations--for which the meaning is ambiguous and/or outcomes uncertain." Such cues "interrupt people's ongoing flow, disrupting their understanding of the world and creating uncertainty about how to act" (p. 70). Weick, as well as Ancona (2012), argued that sensemaking consists of a continuous process that may be linear or nonlinear. Sensemaking "involves coming up with plausible understandings and meanings; testing them with others and via action; and then refining our understanding or abandoning them in favor of new ones that better explain a shifting

reality" (Ancona, 2012, p. 5). In this sense, sensemaking presents a cycle of understanding, enacting one's understanding, and refining that understanding through interaction with others.

Organizational actors do not simply consume and interpret new information in one static exchange. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) used one university's implementation of a strategic plan to map out the iterative process by which leaders and stakeholders live through a dynamic change process. They explained how leaders provide information and guidance to key constituents (sensegiving), which is consumed and interpreted by their audience (sensemaking), who, in turn, communicate signals back to leadership corresponding to their levels of understanding, agreement, and capacity (sensegiving). As a result, the organization enters a cycle of sensegiving and sensemaking that allows for the mutual exchange of information, the refinement of strategy, and the targeted allocation of resources.

Similarly, in her study of three British symphony orchestras, Maitlis (2005) examined the social processes of organizational sensemaking. Her framework centers on the reciprocal and dynamic process of sensemaking and sensegiving to influence others' understanding of a situation. Building on the work of Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991), Maitlis concluded that organizational sensemaking is a fundamental social process where "organization members interpret their environment in and through interactions with others, constructing accounts that allow them to comprehend the world and act collectively" (p. 21). She further asserted organizational sensemaking is informed by two distinct process characteristics: control and animation. These characteristics describe how heterogeneous groups interact throughout the sensemaking process. The amount of leader sensegiving is directly related to the degree of control exerted with the process. As such, when leaders use structured and consistent opportunities (e.g., performance evaluation, staff meetings, professional development) they can

exert a high degree of control over the sensemaking process for stakeholders. Simultaneously, the level of stakeholder sensegiving animates the sensemaking process by signaling to leaders how they understand the targeted concept. An animated stakeholder group increases the flow of information and the frequency of interactions pertaining to the targeted behavior.

Maitlis posited that the variance in both control and animation leads to four distinct forms of organizational sensemaking: guided, fragmented, restricted, and minimal. No one form of sensemaking is preferred; instead, she argues that the form rightly depends on the type of outcome sought. For instance, she described how guided organizational sensemaking is "particularly valuable in situations that require the development of a rich, multifaceted account that can be used as a resource for ongoing and spontaneous actions, such as establishing an organization's core values" (p.47). Her quadrant framework offers a structure to examine the intersection of leader and stakeholder sensegiving within a sensemaking process.

Such a lens is important for our aim at understanding how educators understand and enact culturally responsive practice, because it demands a paradigmatic shift in their professional practice. The reciprocal and countless interactions between teachers, building leaders, and district leaders are central to sensemaking. The complexities of these interactions often lead to differences in the way individuals understand and interpret information. Similarly, CRP emphasizes the need for teachers and leaders to reflect on their own cultural experiences and perspectives to understand how their bias impacts and influences others. Therefore, sensemaking provides this research team with a systematic process to evaluate how district leaders, building leaders, and teachers make sense of and enact culturally responsive practice. We now turn to Chapter Two and a full description of our research design and methods.

CHAPTER TWO[2]

Research Design, Methodology and Limitations

This chapter presents the research design and methodology for the group study. To understand how educators throughout a district make sense of and enact culturally responsive practice (CRP), we engaged in a qualitative case study. This chapter begins by outlining the study design. The site selection follows and includes a description of the process and parameters we used to identify the Massachusetts school district. Next, the data collection section details the specific information that was relevant to consider to support the research purpose. The chapter concludes by detailing the data analysis the team of researchers used.

The methodology explained here relates to the overarching group research. Specific methods for individual studies are detailed in Chapter Three.

Study Design and Site Selection

This study utilized a single site case study design in one Massachusetts school district as a bounded system (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This structure is particularly appropriate as the "boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (Yin, 2014, p. 16). As a bounded system, this district provided the context for examining the implementation of culturally responsive practice within a specific context. Specific site-selection and data-collection procedures will be detailed next.

We sought a mid-sized Massachusetts school district serving students in Kindergarten through Grade 12 for our research. Students in this state score high when compared to other U.S. states on many of the standardized testing measures used to identify domestic and international

[2] This chapter was jointly written by the authors listed and reflects the team approach of this project: Daniel S. Anderson, James J. Greenwood, Sarah L. McLaughlin, Jason W. Medeiros, Tina C. Rogers.

achievement gaps, like the National Assessments of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). For example, Massachusetts students would score first among 35 participating nations on the PISA if it registered as an independent country, but the disaggregated scores of its Black and Latino students would leave it in the bottom quarter of this same sample (Massachusetts Education Equity Partnership, 2018). This tension between overall high achievement and persistent achievement gaps makes Massachusetts an ideal site for such exploration.

We initially narrowed our site search by prioritizing districts whose student population included at least 50% of students representing a historically marginalized population. We considered three dimensions of diversity: race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, and second language learning status. We operationalized these dimensions of diversity through standardized, publicly available demographic data collected by all districts and published by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Racial, socio-economic, and linguistic definitions and indicators are defined by the state.

Further vetting of potential sites included considerations of district size (total enrollment), avoidance of potential bias, and geographic location. We sought a district with a total enrollment between 2,000 and 16,000 students to provide the critical mass to have a sufficient number of district-level administrators and likely more than one elementary school. Additionally, a district of this size allowed researchers to examine various school-level practices. To minimize bias, any districts where members of the research team currently work or had direct experience were removed from consideration. Lastly, with all five members of our team being situated in Boston or the Greater Boston area, districts were eliminated from consideration based on practical concerns.

The initial analysis and filtering process yielded 18 potential districts. We removed districts with active superintendent searches. The team then reviewed the websites of these districts to gain insight into how, if at all, CRP had been implemented or prioritized. Districts with no references to culturally responsive practice were removed, resulting in seven possible district sites. We continued vetting the finalist sites and sought the willingness of district and school leadership to participate in the study. We settled upon a mid-sized Massachusetts school district, referred to by the pseudonym Sunnyside. We turn now to detail our data collection process.

Data Collection

As qualitative researchers, we collected narrative and visual data (Mills & Gay, 2019). Being "the primary instrument" for data collection, we bring subjectivity and bias that influences this work (p. 16). Therefore, to establish validity and credibility of the study, the team of researchers "practice[d] triangulation to compare a variety of data sources and different methods with one another in order to cross-check data" (p. 560). The research team relied primarily on four data sources: documents, interviews, a survey, and observations. Individual studies used different combinations of these data sources, further detailed in Chapter Three.

Data collection began with introductory meetings with district staff to familiarize ourselves with the site and its context. We also used that opportunity to seek documents and to schedule further data collection through interviews and observations.

The team established an audit trail in the form of a process log to ensure the dependability of the data collected (Mills & Gay, 2019). The process log was maintained in a shared document. Here we created an explicit record to track our research progress. For example,

we date-stamped each entry, logged the data source, location of the work, researcher, and specific observations or reflections.

Document Review

The research team began with a document review in order to examine how the district described its efforts regarding culturally responsive school practice. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained how documents have the ability to serve a number of purposes. Most pertinent to our study are documents' ability to "furnish descriptive information," "offer historical understanding," and "track change and development" (p. 182). This initial document review provided us with a descriptive backdrop of how the district positioned its public stance on CRP.

We developed a protocol (Appendix E) that enabled us to identify and code documents that met our criteria for promoting a shared understanding of CRP. The team began by first reviewing district public websites and documents hosted there, and by requesting three years of district improvement plans, district professional development plans, and school-site plans. Specifically, we sought documents that included language referring to CRP. This included language referring to "cultural competency," "cultural proficiency," "diversity," "multi-cultural practice" or similar or related terminology. We asked the district to provide any such documents that articulated the district's stance on CRP. The team used results from this review to further the document review by requesting materials from district trainings, district-wide community meetings, school-based trainings, or school-based community meetings. Additionally, following a specific request, we received a sample of de-identified teacher evaluation documents. If the above-referenced documents did not explicitly reference CRP (or similar terms), the team asked district and school-based leaders about the existence and availability of such documents. These documents provided insight into district understanding and context of CRP, and informed

preparation and protocols for interviews as well. Individual team members sought out additional documents unique to their area of focus.

Interviews

We conducted 34 semi-structured interviews. Table 2.1 displays the list of interview respondents. Semi-structured interviews provided the team with the flexibility of the wording of interview and probing questions which enabled us to respond to interviewees (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Table 2.1

Participants Interviewed

Level of Organization	# of Respondents	School Level (Elementary)	School Level (Secondary)
District Staff	7	N/A	N/A
School Leader	8	5	3
Teacher	19	13	6
Total	34	18	9

We used nonprobability sampling, specifically purposeful sampling (Mills & Gay, 2019) to identify interview participants. Specifically, we aimed to interview district-level administrators, including, but not limited to: superintendent, assistant superintendents, and directors or coordinators who work with building administrators and/or teachers. We ultimately included all schools across the district that were richly diverse across four criteria: racial, cultural, economic, and linguistic. We interviewed building leaders and teachers from each school.

We then employed snowball sampling (Mills & Gay, 2019) to identify teachers who were identified by principals and district leaders as exhibiting CRP. In snowball sampling, "...the process begins by asking well-situated people: 'Who knows a lot about_____? Who should I talk to?'" (Patton, 1990, p.176). Specifically, we engaged building leaders first, asking them to identify teachers who they perceived to be especially competent and effective in working with diverse student populations and then requested that those participants identify further teachers. We also asked principals to send their faculty a weblink to a brief screener survey that introduced our research study and offered teachers an opportunity to connect with us directly. This approach yielded three interviews. This survey can be found in Appendix F.

The research team developed three interview protocols. We created one each for district leaders, school leaders, and teachers. To guide the semi-structured interviews, all researchers used protocols tailored to the purpose of the individual studies and to the interviewee's role. To establish a relationship with interviewees (Weiss, 1995), researchers began by introducing themselves and asking general questions about the interviewee's role and prior experience. Subsequent questions were designed to elicit participant perspectives that pertained to research questions. Protocols appear in Appendices G-I.

To refine the validity of interview questions and ensure questions elicited responses that aligned with the study's purpose, the research team used cognitive interviews (Desimone & Carlson Le Floch, 2004). We piloted the protocols with educators from other school districts. We then asked probing questions to explore the interviewee's understanding of the question's intent. This process allowed us to improve the interview protocols so that they better realized the research questions.

Prior to beginning each interview, researchers explained the purpose of the study and then asked participants to sign an IRB approved statement of informed consent (see Appendix J). To increase participants' comfort levels, administrator interviews were conducted in their offices (or other appropriate space) and teacher interviews were held in a private location in their respective buildings. While the interview duration varied slightly, most interviews spanned 30-45 minutes. Each interview was audio recorded (unless consent to record was not granted) and later transcribed. We took notes during interviews when we were not granted consent to record.

Online Survey

Educators in the district were also offered the opportunity to respond to questions offered via an online survey. This survey allowed our team to cast a wider net and reach a larger number of educators than would be possible through conducting interviews exclusively. The survey was constructed in the program *Qualtrics* and was administered to district and building leaders during a district leadership meeting. Subsequently, building leaders were asked to administer the survey to teachers in their respective buildings by distributing a link to the survey via email. Table 2.2 presents the list of respondents.

The survey focused on educator understanding and enactment of CRP. Questions included likert scale types as well as "check all that apply" questions. The survey protocol is Appendix K.

Table 2.2

Survey Respondents

Level of Organization	# of Respondents	School Level (Elementary)	School Level (Secondary)
District Staff	8	N/A	N/A

School Leader	6	4	2
Teacher	19	18	1
Total	33	22	3

Observations

The team observed district-based or school-based professional development related to CRP during the time of the research project. According to Maxwell (2009), observations can help rule out "spurious associations" drawn from interview data and provide varied data that rely less on inferences from "researcher prejudices and expectations" (p. 244). We further requested to observe two leadership meetings to examine how district leaders support principal learning. Highly descriptive field notes were collected during observations with a focus on noting early impressions, key remarks, phrases, and interactions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Observations specific to individual studies will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three. Appendix L contains the general observation protocol.

For professional development sessions, researchers functioned as observers rather than as participants, knowing that "The researcher's observer activities are known to the group; participation in the group is definitely secondary to the role of information gatherer" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 145). Depending on the format of observed community meetings, the team adopted the role of participant-observer if we deemed the context as one that would help us "gain insights and develop relationships with participants that would not be possible" if we otherwise did not engage in the program (Mills & Gay, 2019, p. 549).

Data Analysis

For the purpose of this qualitative case study, we drew on constructivist epistemology to explore how participants make sense of a common phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Constructive, or interpretive research, "assumes that reality is socially constructed; that is, there is no single, observable reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 9). Specifically, we used sensemaking theory to understand how educators and administrators within a racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse Massachusetts school district make sense of and enact CRP.

The research team employed a coding regime for all data. We considered a code to be "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 3). Coding encompassed data from all sources: document review, interviews, survey, observations, and field notes, so that patterns or contradictions were identifiable regardless of the data source.

The research team began the coding process by generating a list of codes prior to data collection. This initial process offered the opportunity for the team to begin to articulate what the sensemaking process might entail for a district's CRP. Strauss (as referenced by Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 58) suggests four categories of codes to start with: "conditions," "interactions among actors," "strategies and tactics," and "consequences." Each of these categories informed our application of the conceptual framework. For example, how actors understood the local context of the district informed the sensemaking process in the district. These variables fell under the category of "conditions," and initial codes included "change in district leadership" or "student demographic change."

Once we began to collect data, we culled a subset of the data, and team members coded discrete units of data individually. Individuals compiled initial codebooks that evolved over time. As more data was collected, more codes emerged that caused us to reflect on our established codes. Patterns emerged that allowed us to group codes into categories. We used criteria from Merriam and Tisdell (2016) to guide and check our process of categorization. Our categories

were “responsive,” “exhaustive,” “mutually exclusive,” “sensitizing,” and “conceptually congruent” (p. 212-213). These reminders served to make the process systematic and organized.

Throughout this iterative process, individuals ensured that their codebook maintained a structure. This structure was informed by our sensemaking framework as well as the relative magnitude and frequency of the codes and categories themselves. The codes were recorded in a consistent format, defining for each code: code name, description, inclusion criteria, exclusion criteria, and typical and atypical exemplars (Saldaña, 2013). We used analytic memos as tools when we conducted fieldwork and then coded them when appropriate.

We utilized several CAQDAS packages for qualitative research and coding. This provided infrastructure as well as analytic approaches such as code frequency analysis. Some coding was done by hand before entry into the database. The analysis adhered to strict ethical standards. We coded all participant data and refrained from drawing conclusions from incomplete analysis.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. As the case study focused on one specific district in Massachusetts, results may not be entirely generalizable. However, given the number of mid-sized districts within the state with substantial populations of marginalized students, we view our findings as both relevant and timely. The qualitative design of the study was subjective and bias potentially affects research findings. To minimize bias, researchers triangulated findings to ensure validity and reliability. Finally, the timeframe of our doctoral program limited the scope of our research. We maintained a deep commitment to the process, to the opportunity for learning, and to providing the selected district with useful findings.

The topic of CRP can be perceived as sensitive as it encompasses issues of race, culture, and diversity. As our interviews collected self-reported information, it is critical to consider the social desirability effect on answers provided. While the topic can be sensitive, no educator interviewed expressed or displayed discomfort with the questions.

This study faced a few limitations that arose during data collection. First, in terms of sampling, some groups had more complete and representative participation than others. While all district administrators with relevant experience and all instructional coaches were participants in the study, not all secondary department heads were interviewed. Additionally, the teacher sample was sizable, but had a particularly high concentration of educators whose content area is English as a Second Language. While their views are important, it is possible that a teacher sample that included interviews with a more proportional representation of content areas would have been different. However, none of the patterns identified in these findings emerged only from ESL teachers or with ESL teachers providing the preponderance of the evidence, so the conclusions appear not to have been skewed by their active participation.

The reciprocal and ongoing nature of sensemaking presents a challenge of researching it over a relatively short period of time. In her intensive study, Maitlis (2005) embedded herself as a researcher for a period of two years. Conversely, our research was bounded by several months and the limited availability of data collection time. The small number of observations conducted potentially limited our ability to capture the fluid and ongoing nature of sensemaking. Future research would be well served to include more observations of opportunities for sensemaking and sensegiving.

The understanding and enactment of culturally responsive practice by educators in Sunnyside, holds applicability to other districts. Beyond Sunnyside, there are 102 other districts

in the state within the 2,000 to 5,000 enrollment size range. However, the profound population shift to a majority of marginalized students over the past 20 years could be a limiting factor as few other districts have experienced this degree and pace of change. Moving forward, given the national demographic shifts occurring throughout the United States, more districts could be faced with this phenomenon that was a predominant trigger for educator sensemaking in Sunnyside.

CHAPTER THREE[3]

UNDERSTANDING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICE THROUGH SUPERVISION & EVALUATION

After *Race to the Top* launched in 2009, 39 states and Washington D.C. adopted new teacher evaluation policies within six years of the program's initiation (Doherty & Jacobs, 2015). This timeline ran parallel to the push for states to adopt 21st century learning standards, like the Common Core State Standards – which were adopted in full by 45 states and Washington D.C. by the time schools opened in the fall of 2014 (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2013).

In an ever-changing policy world, curriculum and evaluation are only two strands of policy challenging teachers to confront new learning. When educators face implementing new practices that are loosely aligned (such as curriculum practice and evaluation), teachers may prioritize one while only superficially adopting the other (Stosich, 2018). With education policy trending towards the application of tools using various standards and rubrics, there is concern that such prescription depersonalizes the teaching profession and emphasizes accountability over educator learning (Pajak, 2001; Papay, 2012).

This study seeks to understand how school leaders and teachers understand what it means to be culturally responsive and how they incorporate that understanding into the supervision and evaluation process. In pursuit of this goal, the study focuses on the following questions:

1. How do teachers and school leaders understand CRP?
2. How does the supervision and evaluation process contribute to a shared understanding of CRP for teachers and school leaders?

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[3] This chapter was individually written by Jason W. Medeiros

With an understanding of how educators and evaluators take on the work of improving CRP, we can begin to understand whether, despite their broad language, standards-based educator evaluation produces the conversations required for the reflection and growth needed to serve the country's historically marginalized students.

Conceptual Framework

This study incorporates a sensemaking framework. Sensemaking is the process by which "people organize to make sense of equivocal inputs and enact this sense back into the world to make that world more orderly" (Weick, et al., 2005, p. 410). Sensemaking is often used to understand how individuals within an organization (and organizations as a whole) respond to new information and strategic change initiatives. Some have applied sensemaking theory to educational contexts to examine policy implementation (Coburn, 2001) and institutional responses to student demographic change (Evans, 2007). These studies investigated the contextual, practical, and social variables that either facilitate or inhibit change. Each discussed how the organizational structures and personal identities of those involved played a role in how the participants negotiated the sensemaking process. Putnam & Borko (2000) argued that more attention should be paid to this relationship between organization and educator, especially as it pertains to creating environments that are conducive to teacher learning.

Sensemaking & Cognitive Frameworks

Sensemaking has been coupled with theories of cognition to help researchers understand the interplay between the individual and the organization. For example, Golann (2018) used a sensemaking framework to categorize teachers who were hired to work in "No-Excuses" charter schools. Her work classified teachers based on the individual's personal background, his or her philosophical alignment with the institution, and their pedagogical skill. While the context of this

study is not as dogmatic as a "no-excuses" environment, the work required to enact CRP is similarly challenging in that it requires one to reflect on their personal identity, the social and cultural context of the school, and the professional expectations of the district.

In this study, I used Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer's (2002) cognitive framework for policy implementation. Rooted in sensemaking, the framework identifies three dimensions that individuals negotiate in their efforts to implement new practices. Table 3.1 presents these categories and their definitions.

Table 3.1

Cognitive Framework for Policy implementation

Name	Definition
Individual Cognition	The role of "prior knowledge, beliefs, and experiences" in an individual's response to a policy change. (p. 388)
Situated Cognition	The role that the local context has in how an individual interprets the expectations of a policy.
External Representation	The acknowledgement that policies are often generated from outside the situated context and are derived from external sources of information that will contribute to local sensemaking.

Note: from *Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002)*

Individual cognition relates to social cognitive learning theory. Bandura (1986) stated that one's cognitive and personal makeup is one of the three main components to determining one's nature. Who we are is fundamental to how we interpret and respond to the world. Hammond (2015) highlighted the importance of this self-knowledge for culturally responsive educators. In order to create learning environments that are able to engage the cultural wiring of their students' brains, teachers must reflect on how their own culture has impacted their personal cognitive development.

Next, situated cognition connects to how individuals interact with their local context to make meaning. In his review of prevalent learning theories, Smylie (1995) found that the predominant theories on group learning all acknowledge the importance of the relationship between the individual and their immediate environment. Schools and school districts vary in their capacity to welcome conversations about the role students' cultures have in curriculum and instruction. As such, there are a number of models that exist to support educators in moving schools, as institutions, towards being more culturally responsive (Gay, 2018; Khalifa, 2018; Lindsey, et al., 2013).

Supervision of curriculum and practice is an important lever in building a school's capacity to both integrate CRP and improve student achievement (Khalifa, 2018). School leaders who actively plan and evaluate curriculum and instruction have a positive impact on students' academic outcomes (Robinson, et al., 2008; Hallinger, 2011). This study sought to understand how educators come to understand CRP and incorporate that work into the structure of supervision and evaluation.

Finally, Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer (2002) also acknowledged that educators work within a larger policy context that defines expectations for educator practice. These external representations may or may not align with local understanding of practice. As the subsequent literature review describes, there have been sweeping change in state policies that articulate expectations for educator evaluation. Massachusetts is one such state. This study looked at the role of CRP in the context of a Massachusetts educator evaluation policy that is less than 10 years old. It is a policy that has not been universally welcomed by practitioners throughout the state (Comstock, et al., 2015).

Concurrent with these policy changes, research literature has identified concepts, vocabulary and pedagogies for CRP (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lindsey, et al., 2013; Hammond, 2015; Gay, 2018). Much of this research, though, focused on the efficacy of school-level in-service for developing CRP and failed to examine how districts sustain such practices over time and across multiple schools (Bottiani, et al., 2018).

Literature Review

To contextualize this study, I reviewed three areas of literature. I begin by describing recent changes in the state of Massachusetts's educator evaluation system. Next, I review standards-based evaluation criteria, on which observation and performance evaluations are based, as well as the role of CRP in these evaluation standards. Finally, I describe other structures that can improve educator practice outside of evaluation.

Educator Evaluation in Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) passed a new framework for educator evaluation in 2011. Anchoring the performance rating are four rubrics of practice for various job types. This study focused on the rubric for classroom teachers. This rubric covers four broad standards of practice: curriculum, planning and assessment; teaching all students; family and community engagement; professional culture. DESE revised these rubrics in 2017 and, as currently constituted, contain 29 elements of effective practice that are rated on a four-point scale (Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education [MA DESE], 2018).

DESE's rubric has limited language describing what CRP entails. The standards do not address the nuanced skills in curriculum planning, instruction, and assessment that CRP requires. The rubric references cultural proficiency in one specific indicator of instructional practice,

defining such practice as creating and maintaining "a respectful environment." The rubric also names cultural proficiency within the standard on family and community engagement, requiring teacher to demonstrate an "understanding of and respect for different home languages, cultures, and values" (MA DESE, 2018). Despite its recent revision, the rubric does not reflect any philosophical or content shift towards a greater emphasis on CRP.

The Massachusetts framework is not unlike other frameworks in this regard. Using discourse analysis to study five sets of educator standards (including the state of California), Santoro and Kennedy (2016) found that the language in these rubrics lacked the specific terminology required to support practices for historically marginalized students.

Standards-Based Educator Evaluation & CRP

One strand of research on standards-based educator evaluation systems examines whether or not these tools alter the performance ratings of teachers – an intended policy goal. Despite their intent to help school leaders differentiate educator performance more precisely, schools that implement standards-based evaluation have not altered the percentage of educators identified as performing below expectations (Kraft & Gilmour, 2017; Ingle, et al., 2011). In each of these studies, the principals interviewed expressed similar concerns with giving low performance ratings, such as the worry about the ability to replace an educator evaluated out of the system. This finding was most prevalent in schools serving high numbers of racially diverse and socio-economically disadvantaged students.

Research also questions the consistency and validity of evaluations when using a standards-based tool. Milanowski (2004) and Kimball & Milanowski (2009) found that the fidelity of implementation of standard-based evaluation tools corresponded with the amount of training provided on the tool's application. Districts where expectations were "ambiguous or

absent" presented evaluation ratings that were less consistent (Kimball & Milanowski, 2009, p. 63). Given that CRP language is already vague within these documents, these findings heighten the need for educators to share and be trained in a common understanding of CRP.

Khalifa (2018) argues that these tools do, in fact, lack the key principles of culturally responsive school leadership. While he does not critique the tools in and of themselves, he challenges that implementers of these standards rarely consider or understand how to enact them in culturally responsive ways. For example, evaluators rarely ask educators to name their understanding of the "historical barriers minoritized students" confront in society or to demonstrate how "community epistemologies/experience" gets incorporated into lessons (p. 151). When taken in the context of Massachusetts, such behaviors may fall under the guise of meeting the needs of all students, but without the specific direction to incorporate practices targeting the needs of historically marginalized students, educators and evaluators may find other practices that fall under the language within a teaching standard.

Others also question the efficacy of these evaluations systems as equity tools. Borman & Kimball (2005) found that classrooms composed of higher percentages of poor, minority, or low-achieving students were more likely to be taught by teachers with lower evaluation scores, highlighting that the tools themselves do not necessarily bring about the needed changes in educator practice to support historically marginalized students. Similarly, these tools do not change the mindsets required of culturally responsive teachers. For example, Jiang, Sporte, & Luppescu (2015) found that Chicago teachers were worried that their ratings under a new evaluation system would be negatively impacted by the adverse environments of students' home lives – "things that a teacher cannot possibly control" (p. 112). Regardless of the effectiveness of

an evaluation tool itself, if educators lack faith in the efficacy of their own actions, their impact on student learning could be limited.

Deepening teachers' CRP repertoire is, in fact, challenging. The skills required in CRP are complex. Even with training, some teachers have shown limited capacity to incorporate more challenging elements of practice, like reflecting on one's classroom discourse and identifying the presence of cultural bias in curriculum and assessments (Brown & Crippen, 2016; Malo-Juvera, et al., 2018).

There is growing evidence, however, that clear, specific guidance on CRP has the potential to strengthen educator practice. A study by Powel, Cantrell, Malo-Juvera and Correll (2106) revealed that consistent training in the Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (CRIOP) led to increased application of culturally relevant instruction by elementary school teachers, as well as significantly higher academic performance by students whose teachers were identified as high implementers of the model. A similar study of a university-district partnership in Colorado assessed the impact of an observation tool used to evaluate teachers' CRP (Sobel, et al., 2003). Administrators and teachers valued this tool but expressed a need for deeper professional development, especially principals who felt ill equipped to offer this type of feedback. Other studies have shown that if educators feel knowledgeable, competent, and supported in CRP, they may be more likely to engage in these practices (Constantine, 2001; Siwatu, 2007; Debnam, et al., 2015).

Structures for Growing Teacher Practice

Schools that make long-term commitments to site-based professional development can grow teacher practice. For example, middle school English teachers who received consistent feedback for two years on an observation protocol linked to collaborative professional

development demonstrated deep conceptual knowledge of the learned instructional strategies. Teachers who had limited access to peer learning communities only made procedural adjustments to their practice (Cohen, et al., 2016). Systematic professional development using protocols for peer feedback can contribute to improving educators' attitudes towards historically marginalized students, as well as the teaching strategies required to support their learning (Song, 2016; Messiou, et al., 2016).

Schools require a stable leadership context for these feedback systems to thrive. Cooper, et al. (2015) found that schools with high turnovers did not realize the same instructional improvements from implementing a teacher leadership model as schools whose situated contexts were more predictable. For example, Woodland & Mazur (2018) found that teachers who were tied to a formal support network assigned to them by leadership were also likely to have greater access to their own informal support networks. Access to social capital can have a positive effect on improving practice.

Conclusion

The literature examined above indicates that it is possible to expand teachers' repertoire of culturally responsive practices. Due to the complexity of the skills involved, leaders and teachers expressed hesitation about the efficacy of their personal implementation and called for continued professional development in order to equip them to implement CRP. Given the variability that exists in districts' commitment to sustained professional development, it is critical to explore how districts can leverage supervision & evaluations to develop a common definition and implementation standard of CRP.

Research Design & Methodology

This individual study was part of a larger project examining how educators within a school district make sense of and enact CRP. Embedded within this larger study was my investigation of school leaders and teachers understand what it means to be culturally responsive and how they incorporate that understanding into the supervision and evaluation process. Our group adopted a qualitative case study of a school district, using a criterion-based selection process to identify our site (Mills & Gay, 2019). This offered a bounded system that allowed us to explore the role various stakeholders employed in order to make sense of and enact CRP.

Data Collection

To address my research questions, I drew from interviews, documentation, and a survey. Fourteen teachers and eight school leaders across all six schools in the district participated in semi-structured interviews. The interview protocols were developed with the group's sensemaking framework in mind. Questions pertinent to my individual study addressed how school leaders and teachers have come to understand CRP, as well as how they utilized supervision and evaluation to grow CRP (see Appendices H & I).

I drew upon documentation to help me understand the district's espoused expectations for CRP. This allowed me to compare information from interviews regarding educators' understanding and enactment of CRP. See Appendix E for the document analysis coding protocol. Some documents were on the district website; others were provided by either the district office or by principals (see Table 3.2). With each, I sought to identify how leaders defined and articulated expectations for CRP or offered feedback for how to improve CRP.

Table 3.2

List of Documents Collected

Level of District Issuing Document	Document Name
District	District Equity Plan (SY 19-20)
	Instructional Monitoring Tool (SY 19-20)
	Instructional Practice Guide (June, 2017)
	District Goals and Action Plan (2016-2019)
School	Secondary A School Improvement Plans (SY 16-17, 19-20)
	Secondary B School Improvement Plan (SY 17-18)
	Secondary C School Improvement Plan (SY 17-18)
	Elementary A School Improvement Plan (SY 17-18)
	Elementary B School Improvement Plans (SY 17-18, 18-19, 19-20)
	Elementary C School Improvement Plans (SY 16-17, 18-19, 19-20)
	Elementary D School Improvement Plans (SY 17-18, 19-20)
	Summative Evaluation x5
	Classroom Observation x5

The research team administered an online survey in order to understand how educators throughout the district perceived Sunnyside's definition and enactment of CRP (see Appendix J). Questions included opportunities both to self-report and offer perceptions of peers' practices.

Data Analysis

All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and uploaded into Dedoose. I engaged in two cycles of coding to develop a system of categories, codes, and themes (Saldaña, 2013). I maintained a codebook that provided definitions and examples of each code. I refined this codebook throughout the analytic process and recorded these revisions in an analytic memo.

When coding responses pertinent to my first research question, I organized excerpts based on whether the data described an effort "to give feedback" or to "receive feedback" on CRP. I then grouped these codes into themes during second cycle coding. For my second research question, I completed first cycle coding in accordance with the three levels of Spillane, Reiser and Reimer's conceptual framework for policy implementation: individual cognition, situated cognition, and external representations. The second cycle involved organizing these data and grouping them into categories. Table 3.3 presents the criteria I used to assess the magnitude of themes that emerged through participant interviews.

Table 3.3

Frequency of Interview Responses

School Leaders	# of responses out of 8	Classroom Teachers	# of responses out of 14	All Interviews	# of responses out of 22
All	8	All	14	All	22
Most	6-7	Most	10-13	Most	14-21
Some	3-5	Some	5-9	Some	8-13
Few	1-2	Few	1-4	Few	1-7
None	0	None	0	None	0

I coded documents using the same coding infrastructure used for analyzing interview data, approaching the various texts in the same manner as I would an interview transcript. I analyzed survey data through Qualtrics, the platform through which the survey was administered. Through Qualtrics, I generated descriptive statistics that I used as another means of comparison, along with documents, to the interview data.

Findings

In this section, I describe how school leaders and teachers in Sunnyside understand CRP and incorporate that understanding into the supervision and evaluation process. I start by using Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer's (2002) cognitive framework for policy implementation to explore the various contexts Sunnyside educators engage with to understand CRP. Next, to answer my second question, I show how educators utilize the supervision and evaluation process to construct a shared understanding of CRP.

Understanding CRP Across Contexts

As described earlier, the cognitive framework for policy implementation consists of three domains that influence how educators enact a policy expectation. I explain how Sunnyside educators utilize each to make sense of the expectation to be culturally responsive. This framework allowed me to explore whether and how educators sought, received, or valued the messages pertaining to CRP coming from a variety of contexts.

Individual Cognition

One key area of CRP is the ability to reflect on how one's identity and experiences influence how one relates to students and their communities. I analyzed individual cognition to determine how educators in Sunnyside engaged in such reflection (individually or communally) to improve CRP.

Most educators referenced how their individual identity or personal life experiences shaped how they have come to learn about and understand the work of educating historically marginalized students. Tables 3.4 and 3.5 display the types of individual cognition educators named as helping to grow CRP and the frequency with which each stakeholder group identified that type of experience.

Table 3.4

Examples of Individual Cognition via Identity by Educator

Reflection on Identity	*Human Intuition*	*Own Race/ Ethnicity*	*SES of Family as Child*	*Being an English Language Learner*
Classroom Teachers (n=9)	5	2	1	2
School Leaders (n=8)	6	2	1	0
Total (n=17)	**11**	**4**	**2**	**2**

Table 3.5

Examples of Individual Cognition via Experience by Educator

Reflection on Experiences	*Previous Work Environments*	*Living in a Diverse Community (Domestic)*	*Living Abroad*
Classroom Teachers (n=6)	1	2	3
School Leaders (n=8)	5	2	1
Total (n=14)	**6**	**4**	**4**

As depicted in the first column of Table 3.4, intuition was the most relied upon source Sunnyside educators utilized to understand CRP. Participants considered CRP to be something possessed by nature or acquired through personal inquiry – "asking questions" of one's own practice. Remarks of one classroom teacher illustrated this intuition well: "Some of it comes just innately if you are a human being who understands other human beings… And that's a value that you're raised with. You just have it sometimes." A similar example came from a school leader who identified individual introspection as a professional obligation: "I believe wholeheartedly

that if you're not giving children that [commitment to personal reflection], you're not being culturally responsive." Collectively, these educators placed high value on one's ability to self-reflect, emphasizing CRP could not be learned without this practice.

While not all leaders cited intuition as a means of individual cognition, they all shared an example of how their understanding of CRP developed as a result of some type of lived experience, citing previous working environments most frequently (Table 3.5, column 1). Some worked in large, U.S. cities, often under the tutelage of a principal who went on to serve as a model for their own leadership. One school leader shared such an experience:

> Everything [my principal] said resonated with what I believed, what I wanted to do. She just was all about the child…We were an inner-city school. There was a small percentage of white students. And we had to learn to work within that community. That was an amazing ten years.

In addition to these previous work experiences, some of the leaders described how their identification with a historically marginalized group in the U.S. (or their experience as a white person living internationally in an ethnically diverse setting) helped them develop CRP (Table 3.5, columns 2 and 3). As one school leader described:

> And it wasn't until I went [to live there] that I was like, "Oh, wow. All right." I think it's important to have an experience as other, whatever that other might be…And I think some people have that experience really early on, and other people don't have that experience till they're 60.

Whether it was through professional or personal experiences, all eight school leaders who were interviewed placed value on this knowledge and refer to it as a reason why they work in a district like Sunnyside.

Like school leaders, a few teachers also told narratives tied to their personal identity (Table 3.4) or living in a country where English was not the dominant language (Table 3.5). One classroom teacher shared the following description:

> I understand the struggles of how incredibly difficult it is to learn a language – to have to be immersed in a new country, learning the language, learning the new culture. And so, I just felt that it was important if I was going to teach, I felt like I could really see my teaching through that lens.

While teachers' reflections mirrored those of leaders, there were fewer of them. Compared to school leaders, teachers did not share the same perspectives of having worked and learned in other professional settings. The data suggests that, for these teachers, Sunnyside is where they had formative experiences that shape the future of their professional journeys.

Despite the prevalence of individual cognition, no one referred to opportunities for these stories to be shared as part of a strategy to grow practice in the district. Put differently, while these stories were very informative to the individual, there seemed to be no mechanism by which Sunnyside educators could learn about CRP from one another through these narratives. In fact, a few participants asserted that individual cognition was a private exercise and that one had to reflect on CRP on their own in order to reach a stage of development where they can hold an asset-based mindset for students and families in the community.

Situated Cognition

According to Spillane's framework, how individuals interpret and interact with their situated working environment will impact their understanding and implementation of a policy. These influences involve social sensemaking experiences – how and why individuals engage (or do not engage) in a desired practice based on their perceptions of organizational behaviors.

Alongside the individual cognition described above, situated sensemaking opportunities serve as critical sources for educators to understand CRP because these social experiences may or may not invite participation in CRP.

Most of the educators who were interviewed discussed how the local context of the school or district contributed to their individual capacity to grow in the area of CRP. Table 3.6 displays the themes that arose when I coded interview responses describing how the situated context of the school and/or district either positively or negatively promoted CRP.

Table 3.6

Number of Examples of Situated Sensemaking by Educator

Type of Experience	*Efforts to Change District Culture* (A)	*Barriers to CRP in District* (B)	*Professional Learning Communities* (C)	*Learning from Students* (D)	*Personal Relationships w/Colleagues* (E)	*Sources of Building Expertise* (F)
Classroom Teachers (n=13)	9	5	6	4	3	2
School Leaders (n=7)	7	6	1	2	0	0
Total (n=20)	**16**	**11**	**7**	**6**	**3**	**2**

Columns A & B display the most prominent tension within the situated context of Sunnyside: that educators observe efforts from new district leadership to change a professional culture where barriers to growing CRP exist. Many of the barriers that were referenced (column B) involved the perception of Sunnyside in the community. This sentiment was captured by one school leader: “I mean you just have to go on Facebook just to see that it's all this automatic negative perceiving of our students in in ways that are not accurate.” The perception of the

schools and the Sunnyside students weighed heavily on both school leaders and teachers, and they expressed feeling paralyzed in their ability to respond. This paralysis stemmed from another frequently discussed barrier: consistent turnover at the superintendent position. One school leader described the impact of the frequent leadership changes in the context of growing CRP:

> I feel like depending who has been the superintendent, the attempts to do any work around race and culture have had very different flavors to them, and it has been inconsistent. Some of the work was very superficial; some got very deep, very quickly, and scared people.

School leaders and teachers alike shared this sentiment, especially the feeling that previous professional development left people feeling like they had been called "racist." Now, educators are not sure how to be vulnerable talking about the intersection of race and practice.

Despite these barriers, most of the school leaders saw potential due to the messaging of the new superintendent (Table 3.6, column A). For instance, one remarked: "my impression is that [the superintendent] has that part of the vision and the plan is for that piece to happen." Another phrased the culture-building in the context of the pursuit of equity:

> The district spends a lot of time talking about equity more than necessarily cultural responsiveness. I think that's a smart move on their part. I think they differentiated out that the true reason to be culturally responsive is to provide an equitable access to an experience in the educational setting.

Most of the teachers who commented on the situated context of Sunnyside shared this sentiment. While they acknowledged that they had less direct interaction with the new district leadership, they had expressed a sense of anticipation for the shift in the district's culture. By way of example, one secondary educator shared: "I think that [the leadership] is learning how to do it

themselves. I think they're trying to figure out how to do it properly." Another secondary educator also noted: "Do I believe that [the Superintendent] understands the needs? I do." In all, both teachers and school leaders see a future in Sunnyside where the organizational culture is more conducive to supporting the growth of CRP.

Along with these tensions in the organizational culture, respondents had different perspectives as to whether or not the current peer networking structures supported CRP. Teachers referenced the importance of teaching teams or other professional communities within the district, but it was unclear if and how CRP was incorporated as a topic within these groups. Whether it was a common planning team, a departmental team, or an individual student's teaching team, many referred to the professional support that the groups encourage, allowing them to ask for help from one another and receive feedback. One elementary teacher described the importance of this network:

> And it's a group of teachers from each grade into one little cohort. And we kind of look at problems of practice. And in that committee, or group, whatever you call it, we do have the opportunity to say, "These things are a problem. We need to make sure we do this."

Not all the teachers shared this sense of community, particularly as it pertained to their perception of CRP's role in these groups. For example, when it involved talking about issues of CRP, a few educators noted that they could not talk about it openly and relied solely on specifically identified individuals. These colleagues were chosen either because of an established level of "trust" that had been built (column E in Table 3.6), or they were sought out because they were perceived as "go to" sources of expertise on the topic (column F in Table 3.6). The few teachers who referenced personal relationships or local expertise as CRP knowledge sources

within Sunnyside were the same individuals who expressed lacking the psychological safety to discuss matters of CRP openly with their colleagues.

Unlike teachers, who expressed the existence of feedback structures but were ambivalent about the role of CRP in them, school leaders did not reference such teaming opportunities to grow their CRP. They did cite the desire to calibrate what best practice looks like in terms of CRP and hope to utilize future opportunities to do so. One school leader reflected after acknowledging there was a lack of collaborative dialogue amongst school leaders on the topic:

> We're working on it; we're getting there; we're naming it; we've named it. That's what we've done. So now we've got to go after it. For it to really show up in the classrooms and just in the practices of the district, too.

A few school leaders referred to district classroom walkthroughs as a collaborative practice, but these leaders also acknowledged that given multiple changes in district leadership, the group was still trying to "feel out" how these would contribute to their collective learning.

External Representation

The third component of the cognitive framework for policy implementation considers the role that external sources of information have on an educator's ability to learn and adopt new practices. This domain was the least visible component of the framework as few teachers referenced external representations of CRP supporting their understanding. Those who acknowledged that they learned about CRP in this way sought information through their own research and professional reading. These individuals communicated genuine interest in learning about how to work with historically marginalized students. As a result of this curiosity, they looked for mentor texts that could help them gain a better understanding of CRP.

A few school leaders described how researching and implementing new curriculum materials with their faculty offered them opportunities to increase their building's CRP. Two leaders shared specific examples of their respective school's work incorporating curriculum from *engage*^{ny} (https://www.engageny.org/), a source of free curriculum maintained by the New York State Department of Education. Part of this curriculum incorporates learning about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which – in addition to bringing in curriculum materials that reflect a broader representation of races, ethnicities, and cultures – created opportunities for these schools to reflect on the unique needs of their community members. One leader explained: "It's an interesting dynamic because I have to balance a large Haitian Creole population that have expressed vocally, on frequent occasions, some very real concerns from their perspective regarding same sex marriage." In this example, the incorporation of curriculum from an external source led to an opportunity for families and school to engage in dialogue about the tension between personal and school values.

Like teachers, some school leaders also discussed how they searched for source material on CRP to improve both their own practice and that of the faculty. School leaders cited how the district lacked a specific framework for CRP, so they looked for information on their own in order to support teachers' growth. As this data surfaced largely in the context of leaders seeking resources to support supervision and evaluation, I now turn to my findings related to my second research question, showing how school leaders and teachers incorporate the understanding they have acquired through these three dimensions into the supervision and evaluation process.

How Educators Make Sense of CRP through Supervision & Evaluation

My second research question asked how supervision and evaluation contributed to a shared understanding of CRP. The data show (a) that educators lack a shared definition of what

CRP entails, (b) that educators use their understanding of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a proxy for CRP, and (c) that school leaders use planning conferences on lesson design as a means to engage teachers in reflective practice with CRP in mind.

Lack of a Shared Definition Amongst Educators

In answering this first research question, the most prominent theme that arose was that educators and evaluators across the district lacked a shared definition of CRP. The absence of a shared definition hindered educators from engaging in the supervision and evaluation process with consistent expectations for CRP. Some school leaders drew on personal knowledge and experiences to engage teachers with this content. Teachers, however, did not consistently view expectations for CRP as a priority because they did not observe consistent practices among their peers.

School Leader Improvisation. When asked what language they use with teachers to discuss CRP, some school leaders pointed out that the district does not operate with normed language on it. For example, one secondary school leader stated: “I wouldn't say I have a form that has like a checkbox, if that makes sense…I don't think we're that sophisticated yet.” An elementary school leader shared that belief and explained how developing this language is a personal goal: “[One thing] I probably need to be better about is using language explicitly around UDL, equity, MTSS. Because that's something I want to work on: being more explicit in my language.”

Absent a shared definition, school leaders relied on individual strategies to engage teachers in conversations on CRP. Some explained how they incorporate language from their own independent learning into their direct work with teachers. “I just figured I need to give these people something,” one secondary leader remarked when presenting the tool that they designed

to support the building's effort to norm expectations for classroom practice. Another leader of an elementary school shared a similar practice:

> Oftentimes, I have been known to just copy and paste the standard and explain. It's not the actual standard from the [state evaluation] rubric. I'm talking about teaching standards. So, things from some of the Fisher, the Frey stuff, and things like that that I think are good stuff.

This school leader demonstrated how they incorporated independent learning into their leadership practice by citing authors who have written extensively on a number of topics, including how to support rigorous reading instruction (e.g., Fisher, et al., 2012).

The school improvement plans included in this study also suggest that school leaders engage in a variety of sources on CRP. Of the 13 improvement plans that were analyzed, seven of them reference the building's intended effort to increase the staff's CRP. Table 3.7 provides a summary of School Improvement Plan references to CRP.

Table 3.7

Sunnyside School Improvement Plan References to CRP

School Level	Year	Plan Language
Secondary A	16-17	Focus on capacity in "communicating with our families" and "understanding of cultural nuances"
Secondary B	17-18	Staff will learn about "Jensen model of educational equity"
Elementary A	17-18	Expanding "the use of culturally diverse materials"
Secondary A	19-20	Develop "culturally relevant and engaging" curriculum

Elementary B	19-20	Self-assess "collective understanding of equity and culturally responsive teaching."
Elementary C	19-20	Plan lessons that reflect "racial/ethnic backgrounds of students – to allow deeper connection to material" Lists "webinars & book studies" to support staff learning: • "Rise to the Challenge: Designing Rigorous Learning that Maximizes Student Success" • "Success with Multicultural Newcomers and English Learners" • "Becoming the Educator they Need: Strategies, Mindsets, and Beliefs for Supporting Male Black and Latino Students."
Elementary D	19-20	Focus on "Equity + Culturally Responsive Teaching topics"

The range of examples in these plans provided further evidence that leaders improvise their approach to supporting CRP. Two plans focused on diversifying curriculum material, two indicated a need for reflection and/or self-assessment, and one explored family engagement. Only two plans cited the content that will anchor educator learning. The "Secondary A" plan from 16-17 cited the "Jensen model of educational equity," and the "Elementary C" plan from 19-20 listed three specific media titles educators were to read.

The lack of clear language provided by the state rubric further complicated the lack of a shared definition from district leadership. A few leaders referenced the limited applicability of the state evaluation rubric as another reason they turn to outside sources. These leaders citied how the language in the rubric only encompasses generic elements of CRP. "I'll refer to it" was the most specific response that described how leaders linked CRP to the evaluation standards. Such responses suggest that the rubric's broad language lacks the specific vocabulary required to help educators understand the nuances of CRP. Another leader described how CRP fits into the rubric, but the connection between the rubric and CRP was not explicitly articulated in the

evaluation process: “Most of my feedback, though, is designed around specific, good quality teaching practices that we've talked about [as a faculty.]” If neither the state nor the district offers language guiding evaluation practice, teachers may lose the opportunity to learn how certain teaching practices are particularly important for historically marginalized students.

Teacher Perceptions of CRP’s Priority. The absence of explicit connections between teaching standards and CRP created the perception amongst Sunnyside teachers that CRP is not a priority in the supervision and evaluation process. When classroom teachers described how leaders incorporate CRP into their evaluations, most of the respondents struggled to make explicit connections. The few who did described perfunctory exercises intended for compliance. For example, a few educators stated the limits of demonstrating CRP as a checklist of evidence that is incumbent on the educator to demonstrate to their evaluator. One secondary educator described this practice:

> So there is a cultural proficiency indicator where teachers can say, “Look, I get these materials translated for these families so that they can get the notices,” so it's part of the evaluation. You submit evidence for it, but that's the extent of the conversation.

Another educator echoed this sentiment: “Yes, I think in our evaluation by the district, they want to see how are you engaging the parents in your class. They want to see your phone log, emails to parents.”

Table 3.8 below illustrates the ambivalence with which educators throughout the district perceived the role of CRP in the supervision and evaluation process. Column F displays how a majority of educators perceived that CRP was only “rarely” or “sometimes” incorporated across all but one of the discrete elements of the Massachusetts state evaluation system.

Table 3.8

Perceived Role of CRP in Supervision & Evaluation

Elements of Supervision & Evaluation	*Never* (A)	*Rarely* (B)	*Sometimes* (C)	*Most of the time* (D)	*Always* (E)	*Rarely + Sometimes* (F)	*Most + Always* (G)
Formal Conferencing (formative or summative)	0%	13%	56%	25%	6%	69%	31%
Written Evaluations	0%	22%	44%	25%	9%	66%	34%
Classroom Observation	0%	13%	50%	31%	6%	63%	37%
Self-Assessment & Goal Setting	0%	9%	50%	31%	9%	60%	40%
Informal Conferencing or Coaching	0%	6%	44%	44%	6%	50%	50%

Note: n=32 (7 district leaders, 6 school leaders, 19 teachers)

When disaggregating district and school leader responses from classroom teacher response, results were similar across most domains. Table 3.9 below compares the perceptions of leaders to those of teachers.

Table 3.9

Perceived Role of CRP in Supervision & Evaluation (by position)

Elements of Supervision & Evaluation	Leader Rarely & Sometimes (A)	Leader Most & Always (B)	Teacher Rarely & Sometimes (C)	Teacher Most & Always (D)
1) Formal Conferencing (formative or summative)	69%	31%	68%	32%
2) Written Evaluations	69%	31%	63%	37%
3) Classroom Observation	57%	43%	63%	37%

4) Self-Assessment & Goal Setting	77%	23%	47%	53%
5) Informal Conferencing or Coaching	54%	46%	48%	52%

Note: Leader n=13, Teacher n=19

Except for self-assessment & goal setting (row 4), where the data displayed the largest disparity between stakeholders, responses were relatively consistent. Along with that row, classroom teachers also felt CRP was more strongly integrated into informal conferencing and coaching (row 5) than the evaluation system's other components. These aspects of the evaluation system tend to involve dialogue and offer the classroom teacher the opportunity to provide input on how they perceive their own performance. However, when prompted to explain how they made such connections between CRP and elements like self-assessment and goal setting, classroom teachers did not offer specific examples.

Many teachers indicated, though, that they believed it is the evaluator's responsibility to address issues of CRP. It is important to note that, overall, teachers had a negative perception of the three evaluator-initiated elements of the process (rows 1-3 in Table 3.9 above). These three elements require evaluators to make judgments of performance and to document those judgments in writing.

Accountability in the Absence of a Shared Understanding. While educators did not perceive supervision and evaluation as a means of growing CRP within the district, a separate finding is that supervision and evaluation is used as a means of accountability for behaviors that are decidedly not culturally responsive. While not widely referenced across interviews, there were a few leaders and teachers in different schools who spoke to this. For instance, at times, leaders described the evaluation process as a tool to hold educators accountable for behaviors that are not CRP. One school leader shared such an experience:

> I could observe that she was very unkind to African American students and very mean to their parents on the phone…So with her, I did actually just write [into her evaluation], "My observation is that you are treating kids differently based on their race and here are the examples."

Others noted using achievement data or discipline data that reflect bias in a teacher's practice in conferences with teachers. For example, one leader noted how they observe the number of times "black boys are required to stand against the wall," describing a concern over inequitable discipline practices at recess. Another leader discussed how they used achievement data to give direct feedback on the topic of CRP: "Look at data face-to-face, ask the teacher why [it looks this way] and what they think about achievement and growth."

Teachers also talked about evaluation as a source of accountability. Some talked about it in a prescriptive way. To these teachers, evaluation was perceived as a series of protocols that had to be followed. As referenced above, some educators feel obliged to provide superficial examples of cultural responsiveness (e.g., evidence of family engagement) so not to be judged negatively. Given the lack of a shared definition, educators have no clear guidance on how to demonstrate proficiency otherwise.

UDL as a Proxy for CRP

Alongside this ambivalence in defining and prioritizing CRP, evidence showed one part of the supervision and evaluation process that did explicitly address CRP involved lesson planning. This focus on lesson design stemmed from the district's emphasis on Universal Design for Learning (UDL). In a review of district documents, the attention to UDL appears as early as 2016 in the "District Goals & Action Plan." That document cites the district's "Instructional Practice Guide" as the source by which Sunnyside will measure its instructional progress.

This 28-page guide references content related to cultural responsiveness on two pages. In the introduction, it provides a bulleted list of six behaviors that will be evidence of Sunnyside's "culture of respect." That list highlights the importance of "understanding" cultural diversity and "eliminat[ing] stereotypes." The second instance is a page-long explanation of the "Key Components of Educational Equity." The page provides one sentence descriptions of seven discrete elements of equity: access, instruction, materials, assessment, beliefs, engagement, and language. The terminology used in these parts offer overarching definitions explaining Sunnyside's commitment to fostering a learning environment that is free of bias. While these excerpts offer the district's positions pertaining to what the organizational beliefs are, it is not necessarily clear in the document how educators will grow into these beliefs if they do not hold them already. One school leader captured this tension when reflecting on their role in advancing the district's mission:

> I think, to some extent, the assumption is if you're a leader in [Sunnyside], you should be at a certain level of cultural responsiveness because it's our responsibility to then bring it [to your building], but we haven't done a lot of that hard work as a team ourselves.

Framed in this manner, CRP is presented as a trait to have or not, rather than a system of beliefs and practices to learn about, develop, and incorporate into one's professional repertoire.

This commitment to UDL practices is also reflected in the school improvement plans. Most of the plans included in my analysis reference a commitment to growing UDL practices or, more generally, committing to the practices embedded in the district's instructional guide. As an example, one elementary school improvement plan from 2017-2018 school year, the year after the district published the "Instructional Practice Guide" year states the "review of the instructional practice guide" as a core activity to accomplish three of the four strategic objectives

for the year. More recently, another elementary school cited in their 2019-2020 school improvement plat that the “Implementation of UDL strategies to meet the diverse needs of all learners” will be a strategic initiative.

The consistent messaging of the importance of UDL as an instructional practice has led some educators to equate UDL with many types of practice, CRP included. In reflecting on the role of CRP in evaluation, one elementary school teacher shared how this framework informs the feedback offered in support of student learning: “I think if you were talking to teachers about feedback, that there is a shared understanding that we have high expectations for all students and that the way that we get there is around UDL and inclusive practices.” Some of the teachers also linked their learning on UDL practices as a means of being culturally responsive. As one secondary teacher shared, “Being culturally responsive, I don't know what that would look like, but I know that I'm following a UDL template for lesson planning is kind of meeting the diverse needs of all students.” These comments reveal that at least some educators conflate what is culturally responsive with what is deemed inclusive by UDL standards. One such example arose in an interview with a secondary teacher who, when discussing the role of UDL as a district initiative, stated the following as an outcome for their practice: “Why don't you just put every accommodation into the lesson, and then you never have to worry about it?” To this individual, it seemed that creating access to the curriculum meant indiscriminately inserting accommodations into lessons without the need to understand why certain practices benefit different sub-groups of students. While UDL has become a vehicle for discussing practices related to CRP, UDL focuses primarily on creating equitable access to the curriculum. As such, it does not offer educators the language and tools required to explore how the racial, cultural, and linguistic identities of historically marginalized students influence their learning and their relationships to school.

Intentional Lesson Design

Mirroring the district's commitment to UDL, the evidence showed another part of the supervision and evaluation process that did explicitly address CRP involved lesson planning. Specifically, some of the school leaders encouraged teachers to design lesson plans with the unique cultural and linguistic needs of their students in mind.

When asked how they approach offering feedback in this area, some school leaders shared detailed descriptions of their thought processes. For example, one leader described giving feedback to a teacher about a math lesson, suggesting that instead of focusing solely on taking a trip to a grocery store, they consider an alternate approach that more students might find relatable:

> Looking at how you put together recipes at a house is a much more culturally appropriate way to engage kids in talking about what your favorite thing is that your mother makes you, or your father makes you, or your guardian makes you. And what are the ingredients of it? And how much do those ingredients cost? We can still do the math of it, but the context is that everyone gets to choose their favorite meal from their own background.

Most leaders acknowledged that engaging teachers in this type of self-reflection plays a critical role in their work as evaluators. One secondary school leader described what would happen with an educator struggling to support English language learners: "It's trying to really think about [the students] in their planning. I think this is critical. Will they understand this language? Will they understand the objective? Will they understand what I'm asking them to do with this assignment?" Asking probing questions of their teachers' lessons was an important strategy to steer teachers towards CRP without necessarily naming it as such.

A few leaders shared how this process requires "feeling out" the individual teacher, trying to understand their skills and helping guide them to solutions. These conferences continued to occur in the absence of a shared understanding of what it means to be culturally responsive. While teachers may be receiving feedback about how to meet the needs of certain students on a case-by-case or lesson-by-lesson example, this learning does not appear to be anchored explicitly in a culturally responsive mindset. These conversations could be missed opportunities to name explicitly for teachers what CRP looks like.

Written evaluation documents (listed in Table 3.2) revealed a similar pattern. Most of the documents included language that was used to describe practice related to a teacher's ability to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of the various "abilities in the room." This language was either used in a general statement or with an explicit reference to UDL or "inclusive" practices. References to students' cultures only appeared in two ESL teachers' evaluation documents. This feedback focused on educators' abilities to communicate effectively with students and families.

In written classroom observations that named the content of the instructional material, there was no reference as to whether or not the content was culturally relevant. In one instance, the topic was immigration; the other referred to "farm plots" as an application for a math concept. Each piece of content has potential implications for CRP and offers an opportunity to engage teachers in reflection as to whether and how the content resonated with the lived experiences of the students in the room – a core feature of CRP.

In all, the findings related to my second research question showed that the lack of a shared definition of CRP hindered school leaders from being able to refer to CRP consistently throughout the supervision and evaluation process. While some leaders improvise and

incorporate preferred source material into their feedback to teachers, not all do. It is also unclear how, if at all, leaders make explicit the connections between educator practices and the unique needs of historically marginalized students. The district's emphasis on UDL as an instructional strategy helps bring educators closer to that understanding, but the absence of a district definition, coupled with vague language in the evaluation standards, make it harder to develop linkages between CRP and current practice. As a result, teachers do not view CRP as a priority in the supervision and evaluation process and conflate CRP with the UDL strategies they are learning.

Discussion

This study explores how school leaders and teachers in the Sunnyside School District understand what it means to be culturally responsive and how they use supervision and evaluation to further their understanding. My first research question asked, "How do teachers and school leaders understand CRP?" Using Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer's (2002) cognitive framework for policy implementation, the data revealed that while some Sunnyside educators acknowledge a number of barriers to growing CRP within the situated context of the school district, most see the possibility of a change in this culture with new district leadership in place. Similar to the situated context, most of the Sunnyside educators also cite their individual experiences (both personal and professional) as having a formative impact on their understanding of CRP. Within this context, Sunnyside educators described various examples of learning from their childhood and/or adult lives that shape their current understanding.

In contrast to the individual and situated domains, only some of the educators in Sunnyside cited external representations of CRP informing their understanding. For school

leaders, these external sources tended to be utilized as part of their instructional leadership practice – be it through the pursuit of new curriculum or through supporting educator growth.

My second question pursued this leadership practice by asking how the supervision and evaluation process contributed to developing a shared understanding of CRP. Three themes emerged from the data. The first is that the lack of a shared district definition of CRP inhibited CRP from being a focus in the evaluation process. This gap forced the school leaders who want to address this topic to improvise and rely on preferred source material to construct meaning for their faculty. At the same time, the absence of a shared definition limited teacher understanding of CRP to the obligation of communicating with families – a small, discrete, and technical application of CRP. Second, educators within Sunnyside understood there was an expectation that lessons be designed with students' individual needs in mind, but understanding what it means to be culturally responsive was conflated with the district's push for teachers to incorporate the principles of UDL in their practice. Third, lesson conferencing was the most explicitly utilized source for growing CRP, but that practice may not fulfill its potential given the lack of a shared definition.

In the subsequent sections, I discuss the implications of these findings in the context of the existing literature. Specifically, I discuss how the lack of a shared definition of CRP impacts how educators perceive and engage with available sensemaking opportunities within the context of Sunnyside. I then focus on how the practices related to supervision and evaluation contrast with the literature on improving educators' culturally responsive skillset.

Sensemaking in the Absence of a Shared Definition

Given the lack of shared vocabulary for discussing CRP, the language related to UDL offers a potential (but imperfect) bridge between the two concepts. In their interview responses,

classroom teachers had a clear and consistent understanding that lessons should incorporate the elements of UDL. At the same time, they exhibited only a basic ability to describe why UDL practice was beneficial to historically marginalized students. Teachers were not able to connect how the unique learning needs of this population could fit specifically into the framework of UDL.

By conflating UDL and CRP, teachers consistently focused on low level technical applications of CRP. While the teachers' descriptions of the role of UDL covered behaviors that would fall under the list of practices associated with culturally responsive teaching, the extent to which teachers adhered to the underlying beliefs about students associated with CRP was unclear. This knowledge/belief gap seemed wider for teachers than it was for school leaders and was exacerbated by the fact that teachers perceived that they received infrequent feedback on CRP. It is important for teachers to cultivate CRP mindsets. If educators do not believe students can overcome challenging ecosystems and that their own personal instruction can overcome institutional barriers to student success, then the achievement gap that pervades the school system will continue.

Some teachers expressed having access to professional networks within Sunnyside to discuss topics such as CRP, but these meetings often were mentioned in the context of pre-established professional learning communities who had responsibilities to address matters of practice beyond CRP. Professional learning communities were underleveraged in this study as a potential way for teachers to learn CRP. These networks have the potential to build relational and professional trust – both of which are required to support teacher growth. Structured learning communities that incorporate opportunities for peer consultation improve teacher practice and

can help teachers shift their attitudes about historically marginalized students (Song, 2016; Messiou, et al., 2016).

Establishing an explicit CRP framework would further this work. The data indicated that teachers were not seeking external sources of CRP knowledge. More teachers could be led to engage with external representations of CRP if a shared definition were created. Such a framework could offer a signpost directing teachers towards sources of information aligned with the district's CRP objectives.

Shared language would also help create a holistic sensemaking approach. Teachers already expressed valuing the situated learning opportunities (e.g., peer networks) as well as the learning garnered through individual cognition. By incorporating an external framework for CRP, a school district can engage and integrate the learning from all three domains investigated in the research.

Using Supervision & Evaluation to Build CRP

Sunnyside educators did not view the supervision and evaluation process as a lever for increasing CRP. School leaders and teachers were ambivalent about its role, and the lack of a shared definition (combined with vague language in the evaluation tool) created few opportunities to engage in dialogue explicitly about CRP. Similarly, evidence of a commitment to knowledge-building and support on CRP did not emerge. While there may be pockets of expertise at the leader and teacher level, there was not shared understanding or shared confidence in the supervision and evaluation process to grow CRP.

Principals and school leaders in this study expressed a need for additional professional development in order to effectively coach teachers in the area of CRP. They also referenced the need for a shared district-wide definition and vision for CRP in order to support them in being

effective in their supervisory roles. This is consistent with the research literature. The bodies of research most relevant to this study point to the need for educators to feel knowledgeable, competent and supported in CRP in order to take risks in their practice. Normed language and shared understanding of practice tied to cultural responsiveness can increase educators' CRP, but leaders require training in the language's application for it to be useful (Sobel, Anderson, & Taylor, 2003). Leaders tend to provide feedback in areas where they have the most expertise and confidence. Other studies also highlighted the importance of evaluator training or the effects of a lack thereof (Milanowski, 2004; Kimball & Milanowski, 2009).

As such, if a district wants to improve CRP through supervisory systems, they need to focus on growing CRP skills of leaders and providing tools to help administrators examine and reflect on CRP practice in the classroom. Like teachers, this process should engage the three cognitive domains of sensemaking. Unlike the teachers in this study, more leaders valued the learning they acquired in their careers through these domains; however, Sunnyside did not create a coherent plan for the learning to continue across these domains. If leader learning is integrated in the same way as teacher learning, and this learning is transparent and public, leaders are supported by the trust that is established by positioning themselves as learners, too.

CHAPTER FOUR[4]

Discussion, Recommendations, and Implications

This study examined how educators in the Sunnyside School District make sense of what it means to be culturally responsive and how they enact that understanding in their various roles. Employing a sensemaking framework, the five members of our research group each examined a specific area of district practice and investigated how stakeholders approached culturally responsive practice (CRP). Specifically, Rogers (2020) focused on district administration support of principals' culturally responsive leadership practice; Anderson (2020) focused on district administrator understanding and influence on educator CRP; Medeiros (2020) focused on how school leaders and teachers utilized supervision and evaluation to construct a shared understanding of CRP; McLaughlin (2020) focused on CRP as it relates to educators' family engagement practices; and Greenwood (2020) focused on how educators perceived their development related to CRP.

We conducted this case study in the Sunnyside School District, a district in Massachusetts, serving between two and five thousand students Pre-K to 12. Sunnyside's enrollment is composed of almost 90% students of color, nearly half of whom are classified as economically disadvantaged, and between 10 - 20% as English Learners. The demographic makeup of the student population has become markedly more diverse in the last two-to-three decades. (See Chapter Two for a full description.)

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[4] This chapter was jointly written by the authors listed and reflects the team approach of this project: Daniel S. Anderson, James J. Greenwood, Sarah L. McLaughlin, Jason W. Medeiros, Tina C. Rogers.

In this final chapter, we answer our overarching research questions by presenting the common themes that emerged from our individual findings as well as implications for practice, policy, and research.

Synthesis of Shared Findings

The most prominent finding across all of our studies was that educators in Sunnyside did not operate with a shared understanding of CRP. While there were some similarities in the ways that district administrators, school leaders, and teachers discussed issues of equity, school leaders and teachers developed individualized understandings of CRP in the absence of a common definition from district leadership. Educators then enacted those understandings in varied, inconsistent ways.

Moreover, in the absence of a single espoused definition of CRP, other ideas and frameworks that are understood as district initiatives served as proxies for CRP. For example, when asked about their understanding and enactment of CRP, educators referred to the universal design for learning (UDL) framework and used its components to explain CRP. In addition to UDL, educators often connected the framework of CRP to positive behavioral interventions systems (PBIS) and social emotional learning (SEL), all of which were the focus of professional development initiatives in Sunnyside. Educators of all roles followed this pattern. Additionally, educators connected CRP to the value of equity that is espoused in the district from the top level of leadership. This focus on equity as a proxy for CRP may derive from the direction given by district leadership. In conversation, the Sunnyside superintendent shared a belief that culturally responsive practices were not only about issues of race but more broadly around issues of access.

The absence of a district-espoused definition of CRP, however, did not lead to a dearth of educator sensemaking; in fact, several distinct patterns formed around CRP sensemaking. The

following sections outline triggers in the Sunnyside district that prompted educators to interpret CRP on their own, and the behaviors that they displayed while interpreting these triggers and engaging in behaviors they believed to be culturally responsive.

Sensemaking Triggers within Sunnyside

How organizational leaders respond to sensemaking triggers impacts the organization's capacity to process, understand, and respond coherently to change. Such triggers include "environmental jolts and organizational crises," "threats to identity," and "planned change interventions" (Maitlis & Christanson, 2014). Maitlis (2005) characterized responses to these events as having varying levels of control (the extent to which leaders structure opportunities to guide understanding) and animation (the extent to which stakeholders participate and engage in the sensemaking process). Our data revealed three triggers that spurred educators in Sunnyside to make sense of what it meant to be culturally responsive: (1) demographic changes within the student population, (2) frequent turnover in superintendent leadership, and (3) investment of resources towards implementing UDL practices. Together, these changes jolted how educators saw their responsibilities to educate historically marginalized students in Sunnyside and have animated considerable amounts of sensemaking. After describing each of these triggers, we evaluate them in the context of Maitlis's framework and describe how efforts to control and animate understanding of CRP informed its enactment.

The Demographic Change of Sunnyside

A desire to understand how to support the diversity of Sunnyside's student population arose as a consistent theme in the data. Interview participants used language of "old" and "new" to articulate the difference between Sunnyside's pre-2000 demography (a predominantly white, ethnic European population) to its current racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse

composition. These responses conveyed apprehension amongst educators of all racial and ethnic backgrounds about how the district as a whole was meeting the needs of its students. While most participants named "diversity as a strength" of the district, teachers within Sunnyside expressed feeling on the frontline of this demographic change. Contributing to their sensemaking around Sunnyside students was the perception of consistent negative media attention of the district and, more generally, the sentiment in the community that the schools were now "second rate."

Educators acknowledged a need for the district to respond to Sunnyside's local context and explore the racialized environment inside and outside of the school system. A school system's ability to respond strategically to racial demographic change, such as the one experienced in Sunnyside, requires leaders to reflect on how personal, professional, and organizational identities contribute to practices that are not aligned to the needs of the new populations entering the school system (Evans, 2007). The racialized perceptions in the community made it challenging for the district to address CRP because, as one district leader put it, racism "feels like it's very much alive in [the] community."

Tensions in District Leadership

Tensions in district leadership were the second prevalent trigger that spurred Sunnyside's sensemaking of CRP. One form of tension stemmed from steady turnover in the district office leadership team (four superintendents in nine years). Frequent leadership transitions created few opportunities for educators to internalize and incorporate practices tied to a unified, lasting vision for teaching and learning. When sensemaking opportunities did arise, leader sensegiving was inconsistent and varied. The educators who have remained through these changes lamented that models of CRP either have not carried over across leaders or have not been defined at all.

In addition to the challenges caused by multiple leadership transitions, educators described damage caused by the poor leadership skills of some of these past administrators. Educators used phrases like “scary” and “reign of terror” to describe prior leadership. These previous experiences left some teachers feeling “attacked,” and subsequent leaders expressed having to “fix” the conflicts that arose from these moments. Such repair work was done at the expense of building new and different approaches to teaching Sunnyside’s students. As a result, school leaders expressed feeling alone and responsible for supporting the educators in their buildings through the issues related to the demographic changes referenced above. School leaders longed for a district culture that allowed for open conversation to occur, one where educators are “talking about race and just how it impacts kids, and how it impacts teachers.”

District Commitment to UDL

A third trigger that arose as a contributor to CRP sensemaking in Sunnyside was the district's continuing commitment to incorporating UDL as an instructional strategy. UDL, a set of classroom-based planning practices that enable access for diverse learners, was highlighted in the district’s Instructional Practice Guide (developed in 2017). Educators explicitly connected the focus on UDL and access to a larger focus on equity. This comprised the district’s tiered system of instructional support, along with SEL and PBIS. Elements of UDL, SEL, and PBIS also appeared in the district’s Instructional Monitoring Tool (updated in 2019, under the new superintendent), a classroom observation protocol intended to calibrate observations and norm school leader feedback. These practices have been the focus of leader sensegiving, and educators have had multiple opportunities to think about, adopt, and practice the pedagogical skills that contribute to these models. When asked to describe their understanding of CRP, educators frequently referenced components of UDL along with references to SEL and PBIS.

Though UDL and CRP have some commonalities, such as the belief that barriers to equitable access lie within educational systems rather than as deficits in students, they should not be conflated (Kieran & Anderson, 2019). Both frameworks require educators to understand students' individual needs and proactively remove barriers that are embedded in the systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. However, without intentionally acknowledging personal bias and considering how racial, cultural, and linguistic differences affect student learning, the differentiation within UDL may not be responsive to the unique needs of historically marginalized populations. The conflation of UDL and CRP surfaced in conversations with Sunnyside educators as they pivoted to more technical language tied to instructional practice and away from matters concerning beliefs about students' racial, ethnic, and linguistic identities. Thus, the use of UDL, or even of equity, as an explanation for CRP impinged on complete understanding of the latter.

The messaging that equity and UDL were about more than just race had the unintended consequence of diminishing the consideration of race and culture in educators' enactment of their practice. The UDL focus diluted the commitment to reflecting on one's own identity and how that identity informs one's beliefs and practices related to supporting historically marginalized students, crucial elements of CRP. As Weick (1995) posited, when sensemaking creates and maintains coherent understandings, collective action is enabled. In findings across the individual studies, action was neither collective nor consistent in Sunnyside.

Assessing the Sensemaking Processes within Sunnyside

A district leader can perform sensegiving by creating structures and systems that build efficacy toward the district's mission and vision (Leithwood, 2010) thus engaging in controlled sensemaking of the organization (Maitlis, 2005). These sensegiving opportunities can both

inform how district stakeholders understand key messages and provide opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to the organization's learning. It is the dynamic interplay between enactment, environment, and sensegiving that "differentiates sensemaking from interpretation" (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 84) and shapes the way practice and beliefs are adjusted and become accepted. In the case of Sunnyside, we saw fragmented organizational sensemaking (animated, but not controlled) when it came to the core beliefs surrounding CRP, and guided organizational sensemaking (controlled and animated) around the practices like UDL that educators used as proxies for CRP.

Fragmented Organizational Sensemaking of CRP Beliefs

Our data did not indicate that there were regular opportunities for educators to talk about how they might proactively confront the biases towards Sunnyside students that existed in the community, nor did it indicate that there were widespread opportunities to reflect on what biases educators themselves may have held or how those biases impacted their practice. Without such structure, high levels of animation could lead to multiple, narrow, and divergent understandings, leading the group's sensemaking to be "fragmented" (Maitlis, 2005). Fragmented groups act inconsistently and incoherently. Sunnyside consequently lacked coherence around conversations regarding the educator beliefs associated with CRP.

Findings across several of our individual studies revealed that individual educators' personal stories and life experiences held the most influence on their understanding of CRP. When such understandings are individualized and unique, the actions resulting from them are varied. In addition to educators' tendency to use other frameworks as proxies for CRP, there were also examples of how educators were acting within their own conceptions of CRP. These examples included varied ways of

- introducing culturally relevant literature and themes in their buildings and classrooms;
- honoring student expression of cultural norms (e.g., not making eye contact with figures of authority);
- having documents translated into other languages;
- measuring family engagement by tallying attendance at school events; and,
- leveraging teacher evaluation as a CRP accountability tool rather than a developmental opportunity.

While each example represented a genuine attempt to act in a culturally responsive way, the actions were based on individualized understandings that had been formed in isolation and therefore had limited alignment. Furthermore, educators lacking a clear understanding of CRP or not having life experiences that enriched their understanding of CRP tended to enact more traditional or technical practices that were not fully in line with CRP scholarship or concepts.

Guided Organizational Sensemaking of CRP Practices

Educators in Sunnyside expressed confidence in the knowledge they were gaining about UDL. This CRP sensemaking trigger corresponded with a high level of leader control, signifying significant leader sensegiving. Sunnyside constructed a clearly defined commitment to UDL as an instructional strategy. They developed tools and protocols to ground feedback in UDL, and they allocated resources in accordance with this initiative. But this focus on UDL (and its use as a proxy) as discussed above, did not immediately translate into understanding of CRP aligned to its defining characteristics.

Despite the resources, structure, and support devoted to UDL, school leaders expressed improvising strategies to engage their respective faculty on issues related to CRP. The superintendent, however, was clear in asserting that district sensegiving uniting the two was intended to begin with the district Equity Plan. Admitting it was not yet a comprehensive plan, they clarified that the plan's impetus was to establish equity "as a value" so that the district would not be "ignoring it." In systems change, maintaining systemic focus on equity begins with

a strategic plan that is communicated to the community (Leithwood & Azah, 2017). However, the highly emphasized implementation of UDL did not immediately translate into the ability to use it as a scaffold for furthering sensemaking of CRP.

Discussion

Our analysis of how educators make sense of and enact CRP has implications for practice, policy, and research. We address each in turn.

Implications for Practice

Working with building and district leaders, educators should develop a shared definition for and deepen their understanding of CRP. This shared definition would then inform teaching practice and professional development opportunities that enhance and sustain CRP. Because schools are dynamic, social organizations where heterogeneous groups of educators continuously strive to make sense of the cues from their environment, we propose a model for how leaders could establish a strategic approach to organizational CRP sensemaking.

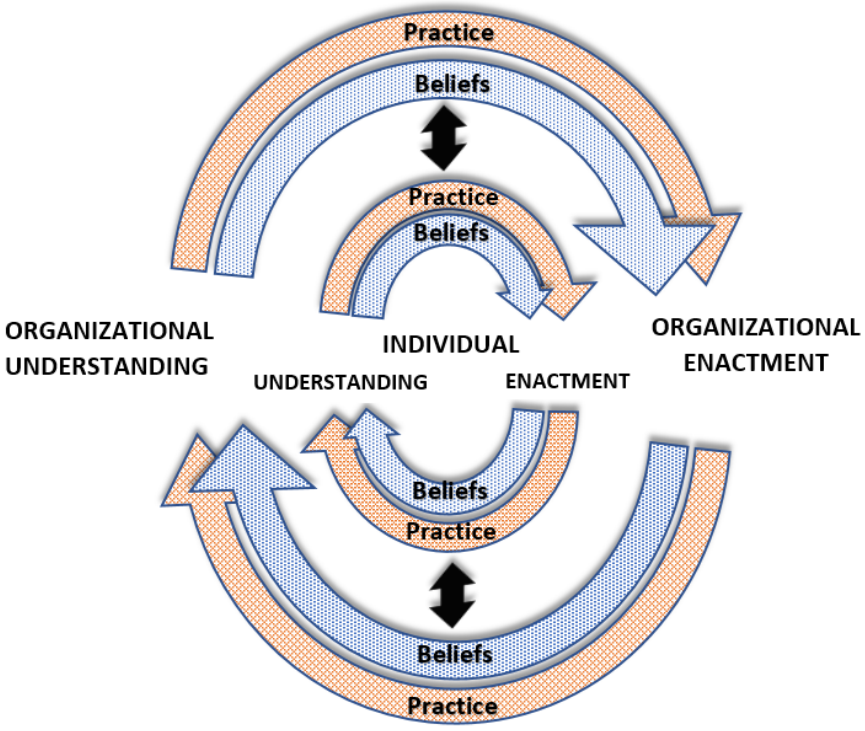
In doing so, we extend one of Maitlis's (2015) four forms of organizational sensemaking, guided organizational sensemaking, proposing a model to support practitioner sensemaking of CRP. We claim there are two unique patterns for sensemaking within the realm of CRP: a sensemaking structure for learning related to teaching practices that support historically marginalized students, and a pattern of behaviors associated with unpacking beliefs about students and their families - mindsets that are critical to CRP.

Figure 4.1 illustrates a model for organizational sensemaking specifically as it relates to CRP. This conceptualization emerged from the study's overarching research questions, which sought to understand, first, how educators make sense of CRP and, second, how they enact that understanding through their practice. As such, the figure depicts two concentric loops

representing the iterative cycle of understanding and enacting new practice at both the individual and the organizational levels. We claim that there should be an intentional, aligned, and coherent approach to supporting sensemaking at both of these levels. In order to enhance CRP throughout a school district, the guidance and structures offered at the organizational level should not only detail and direct sensemaking activity, but should also serve as a model for individual stakeholders of what they should personally be reflecting upon and doing to grow CRP in their own work as culturally responsive practitioners. The double-sided black arrows between the two loops in the figure indicate the need for the organization and individuals to engage in sensemaking and sensegiving exchanges that will help refine collective practice over time.

Figure 4.1

Sensemaking of CRP



As noted above, this sensemaking requires a continuous cycle of learning, reflection, and implementation related to both the beliefs (represented in blue) and the practices (represented in

orange) encompassed by CRP. The distinction between these concurrent cycles of learning is equally as important as the relationship between the organization and the individual. In this current study, we found a lack of controlled sensegiving by district leadership pertaining to CRP beliefs. Even though there was a highly controlled and animated sensemaking process for UDL and other related practices, the absence of a similar sensemaking process pertaining to CRP beliefs resulted in Sunnyside's educators relying on their current interpretations of the environment to inform the way they made sense of CRP. We contend that in order for districts to realize the benefits of organizational sensemaking of CRP, processes must be characterized by both high control and high animation in order to promote the practices and the beliefs related to CRP.

In addition to this model, we also acknowledge that federal, state, and local agencies are continuously implementing new reform initiatives. These reform efforts are often seen as something "new" for educators to learn and implement rather than an adjustment to current practice. When implementing CRP, districts should critically analyze their current landscape to assess how their current vision, core values, policies, and practices align with the tenets of CRP. Districts should then consider how they can leverage what already exists within the district, for example UDL practices, as a scaffold to support organizational sensemaking of CRP. This principle holds true for the introduction of any new concept, particularly in light of the evidence that educators in Sunnyside often did seize on the few examples or concepts that they were provided.

Superintendents, school leaders, other district leaders should tightly align formal structures and tools such as scheduled meetings, district documentation, and formal committees to develop a shared understanding that builds on prior knowledge, practice, and policy

(illustrated in the orange outer loop of Figure 4.1). These structures and tools should clearly articulate a district definition of CRP and empower stakeholders to negotiate meaning over time. For example, districts should consider developing observational tools and rubrics that clearly articulate the culturally responsive practices for which principals are looking. Teams should then debrief strategies and identify tools to use in addressing gaps they see in classrooms. Again, this interplay between individual and organizational beliefs and enactments is modeled in Figure 4.1.

If educational leaders form a better understanding of how teachers and other educators effectively develop CRP, then principals and district leaders will be able to use this information to more effectively design ongoing professional development programs and learning opportunities that sustain and enhance educators' CRP. Our data suggests that educators (both teachers and leaders) found opportunities—when they had them—to learn more about their surrounding communities and the history of the region to be helpful, in turn impacting educators' individual beliefs as represented by the inner blue concentric loop of Figure 4.1. As a result, professional development should be specifically tailored to learning the history of the district and the cultures of the populations therein. All educators should seek professional development opportunities that are immersive in both their professional and personal networks. Educators should also continue to pursue opportunities that provide them the experience of being in the minority and living and working amongst historically marginalized and minoritized groups. These should include opportunities to reflect on their identities and the ongoing significance of race. All educators, both white and educators of color should seek and develop ways to strengthen their individual practices and beliefs surrounding CRP as illustrated by the inner concentric loops in Figure 4.1.

Teachers who have been evaluated and deemed as having stronger CRP practices by their principals and peers could be placed in leadership positions serving in mentorship roles for both new and veteran teachers. New teachers could model their developing practice on the best examples of skilled teachers. Moreover, they should work towards developing their practice and pedagogy in their direct work with students and families.

Implications for Policy

The findings presented in this study and the accompanying studies of the research group suggest several implications for policy. First, we list several district level policies and then turn to addressing school level policies and teacher preparation policies. As we saw in Sunnyside, one area that educators may immediately gravitate to when implementing CRP is ensuring instructional materials are relevant and representative of racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse student populations. Policymakers, particularly state education agencies or occasionally legislatures, are frequently in a position to provide guidance or requirements to school districts and other local education agencies on acceptable curriculum and instructional materials. If guidance or requirements do not direct educators towards cultural responsiveness, this may either be lost as a priority or educators may attempt to address it themselves and veer far afield if uninformed. This unique sensegiving opportunity allows states, either through adoptions or general guidance, to create the initial resources that any district must consult when undertaking a curriculum effort. Curriculum policy can channel leaders and educators towards CRP and inform their understanding.

A second implication involves licensure and tenure policies. State agencies or legislatures generally provide regulation or legislation governing requirements for educator licensure and certification. Similarly, school districts engage in collective bargaining or directly mandate contract terms to enumerate tenure-granting policies and requirements for teachers,

administrators, and other educators, depending on the state collective bargaining environment. In all of these cases, there are opportunities to establish standards for teacher and administrator practice as well as for permanent status to be granted. These mechanisms can signal the importance of CRP by elevating it as a requirement. They may also make use of the captive audience that must attend to them by including detailed guidance on what CRP is and how to implement it.

Third, as states or districts establish evaluation policies, they have an opportunity to ensure that expectation-setting documents direct educators towards culturally responsive practices. Mandatory rubrics, resources on effective practice, and guidance documents that spotlight pedagogy can encourage CRP. Additionally, if policymakers frame educator evaluation as a system for supporting educator growth, and not strictly for accountability, school-based leaders can encourage educators to document and engage with elements of teaching practice that promote the self-reflection and critical consciousness required to understand the intersection of race, identity, and practice. Doing so will further support the interplay between organizational and individual practice and beliefs related to CRP (see Figure 4.1).

We now turn from district-based policies toward policy suggestions for teacher preparation and continuing development. As teacher education programs strive to prepare the next generation of teachers who will serve an increasingly diverse student body, there are implications for improving their work to better equip teachers around CRP. Teacher education programs should assess the current state of their coursework and curriculum and enhance it to more thoroughly address development of CRP. Teacher preparation programs might also require a practicum that includes cultural immersion experiences working in diverse populations, supporting individuals' sensemaking of beliefs and practices related to CRP (see Figure 4.1). To address the cultural mismatch of the teaching force and student body, teacher preparation

programs might aggressively enhance their outreach to (and recruitment of) candidates of color and teachers from diverse backgrounds to increase the diversity of the teacher population. Moreover, as districts continue to work with the continuing education of current and veteran teachers, districts must develop ways to enhance ongoing professional development beyond that which teachers obtained in their teacher education. If teachers did not have strong CRP components in their teacher education programs or graduate work, district teacher induction programs could include a course studying the demographics of their local communities to engender understanding of the racial, ethnic, and cultural identities of the students and families they will be serving.

Family engagement policies and practices can be adjusted to support the immediate needs of a school district experiencing substantial shifts in student and family demographics. Financial investments in translators, interpreters and parent activity accounts can meet near-term needs. However, effective and meaningful family engagement is not attainable without educators who are willing, supported, and prepared to engage in meaningful partnerships. Instead, efforts will be misaligned. As Mapp (2013) posits, the capacity of educators must be strengthened in four areas in order to achieve impactful family engagement: capabilities, connections, confidence and cognition. There is evidence of educator cognition of family engagement, believing it to be a critical component of their work. Mapp's other three areas directly connect to components of CRP: holding informed and asset-minded beliefs about families from other cultures (capabilities), building trusting relationships through social networks (connections), and feeling a level of comfort in working across diverse populations (confidence). Districts such as Sunnyside can more effectively build the capacity of educators to engage families with CRP. This can begin

with the induction and mentoring process as a key area of orientation and ongoing support for new educators and continue with regular opportunities to explore beliefs and practices.

Finally, all of the preceding policy ideas must be carefully considered. As policymakers consider adopting positions that encourage schools or districts to implement culturally responsive practices, they must be attentive to the challenges faced by educators who feel urgency but do not understand the subject. We have seen in this case study a tendency for educators to fixate on the first ideas that they can understand. Policy must take into consideration the need to provision for real concrete guidance on practice and for time and expertise to accompany any implementation, lest educators fearful of being on the wrong side of conversations about race and inequity rush for the wrong solutions in an effort to feel and be seen as acting correctly. If guidance and scaffolding are not channeled by policy to be priorities, educators, from district officials to individual classroom teachers, may be incited to grasp at partially or completely unrelated ideas, and then to solidify them before more authoritative knowledge can be provided. Policymakers should work with practitioners to identify the places where policy interventions may elevate the urgency of performing CRP, without undermining it as a compliance activity. A compliance-only approach would reduce the influences shown in Figure 4.1 to one loop of practices and negate the beliefs loop.

Implications for Research

Finally, our study has implications for future research. The findings across the individual studies point towards a need to further study the way in which educators negotiate multiple parallel sensemaking efforts. We found educators in Sunnyside grappling with the meaning of CRP and equity at the same time that they sought to understand and enact other concepts, such as universal design for learning (UDL) and social-emotional learning (SEL). Educators, then, made sense of one concept by relating it to another, particularly if they were more fluent in one.

Research in this area could improve how we understand a school district's—or any institution's—approach and capacity to incorporate simultaneous initiatives supporting historically marginalized students. This focus would potentially expand Figure 4.1 to incorporate multiple loops of understanding and enactment happening at both the organizational and individual level each related to a specific initiative.

Additionally, this case study focused on the perceptions of educators within the district and did not examine their interactions with students or families. In the context of sensemaking research, it would be instructive to see examinations of organizational sensemaking using accounts from the perspectives of the organization's clients or consumers. This case study focused on educators and their leaders, just as Maitlis (2005) examined the roles of orchestra musicians and their executives. Literature that rounded out this view with, for example, the perspectives of students and families in Sunnyside might increase our understanding of how these stakeholders participate in the sensemaking and sensegiving activities within the organization.

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Appendix A

Abstract for Daniel S. Anderson's Individual Study

Enhancing Culturally Responsive Practice in a District:

Central Office Administrators' Sensemaking and Sensegiving of Cultural Responsiveness

Culturally responsive practice (CRP) by educators is an essential tool to serve increasingly diverse public-school populations. This study examines the sensemaking and sensegiving that district central office administrators undertake regarding what it means for educators to be culturally responsive practitioners. This dissertation used a case study of a mid-sized urban district which has not yet undertaken systematic effort on CRP to explore three research questions: (1) How do district administrators understand what it means for educators to be culturally responsive practitioners? (2) How do district administrators seek to influence the cultural responsiveness of educators? (3) What does evidence suggest about the efficacy of these efforts to influence the cultural responsiveness of educators? Data included interviews with seven district administrators and nineteen teachers, a survey of 33 educators in the district, and a review of internal district documents. Findings included that administrators had limited understanding of CRP, though they believe it to be important. They connected CRP to methodologies and practices in which they were more fluent. Sensegiving by district administrators was more effective at conveying the importance of CRP than its meaning or how to implement it. Absent a shared definition of CRP, but with heavy signaling of its importance, educators developed varying conceptions through their sensemaking. This case study suggests several implications for research, policy, and practice, including for the study of sensemaking in multi-layered organizations grappling with multiple changes and for implementation by school districts of CRP, as well as barriers to such implementation.

Appendix B

Abstract for James J. Greenwood's Individual Study

Enhancing Culturally Responsive Practice in a District:

How Teachers Make Sense of Their Cultural Proficiency

While the U.S. student body is increasingly racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse, the teaching population itself, however, does not mirror this same diversity. As such, there is an urgent need for teachers who can adequately meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population (Sleeter, 2001). Some teachers are undeniably more successful at the task of educating diverse student populations than others. How then - are these teachers in particular - successfully able to effectively teach students across various lines of difference? The purpose of this qualitative individual study is to explore teachers' views on how they have developed their cultural proficiency. How do teachers who have been identified by school leaders as particularly effective at teaching diverse student populations develop their culturally responsive practice, and more pointedly - their capacity to effectively teach students from historically marginalized groups (i.e. students from racially minoritized groups or socio-economically disadvantaged groups)? Utilizing a sense-making framework, and gathering information using methods including semi-structured interviews, teacher questionnaires, and reflective journaling, this study uncovers emergent themes and trends in how individual teachers within a diverse Massachusetts school district make sense of the process by which they developed their culturally responsive teaching capacities and practice. If educational leaders form a better understanding of how teachers effectively develop their cultural competencies, then principals and district leaders will be able use this information to more effectively design professional development programs that

sustain teachers' cultural proficiency and better equip them to successfully serve the increasingly diverse student population.

Appendix C

Abstract for Sarah L. McLaughlin's Individual Study

Enhancing Culturally Responsive Practice in a District:

Engaging Families Through Culturally Responsive Practice

As the populations of public schools in the United States grow increasingly more diverse, it is critical for district and school leaders to understand how educators make sense of their responsibility to improve outcomes for historically marginalized students. Culturally responsive practice (CRP) is a framework of beliefs and practices to enhance these students' success. Additionally, it is well established that family engagement in schools also supports student achievement. This qualitative case study explores the intersection of CRP and family engagement by focusing on two research questions: (1) How do educators understand CRP in efforts to engage families of marginalized students and (2) How do educators enact that understanding in practice? It is part of a larger case study examining understanding and enactment of CRP in a diverse Massachusetts school district. Along with Mapp's (2013) Dual Capacity Building Framework of family engagement, I apply Maitlis' (2005) organizational sensemaking theory to data collected from semi-structured interviews, document review and an online survey. Findings reveal that educators understood CRP in regards to family engagement as the need to know students and families and recognize differences in their cultures. Also, educator understanding emanates from both personal and professional experiences including learning from colleagues, students and families. However, educators lack a common definition or understanding of CRP in regards to family engagement. Consequently, family engagement practices vary and tend to be more traditional versus reflective of CRP. This study revealed the need for stronger district direction and support for CRP and family engagement.

Appendix D

Abstract for Tina C. Rogers's Individual Study

Enhancing Culturally Responsive Practice in a District:

A District's Support of Principals' Culturally Responsive Leadership Practice

This qualitative single site case study examined how district administrators in one racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse Massachusetts school district supported and strengthened principals' culturally responsive leadership practice. Building coherent culture and structures that provide space to critically self-reflect and collaboratively learn are essential. Data collection included interviews with district administrators and principals, observations of leadership meetings, document review, and a survey. Findings revealed district administrators established collaborative relationships with principals by employing a coherent service-oriented approach. Participants perceived the intentionality of the superintendent's efforts as foundational to building trust, however prior experiences with district leadership impede these efforts. The superintendent controlled sensemaking to signal equity as a district priority, yet the lack of a shared understanding of culturally responsive practice led participants to conflate culturally responsive practice with other district endorsed equity practices. Though attempts were made to align structures and tools to equity priorities, culturally responsive practices were subsumed within other equity initiatives creating variance in the perception of the effectiveness of how structures and tools support principals' culturally responsive leadership practice. Recommendations include developing a district definition of culturally responsive practice while leveraging equity practices as a scaffold to support principals' understanding and enactment of culturally responsive practices. Also, efforts should be made to support sensemaking of individual and organizational beliefs through critical self-reflection and conversations about

racial and cultural bias. Future research may extend this study to analyze sensegiving interactions and examine the impact of these interactions on principals' cultural responsive leadership practice.

Appendix E

Document Analysis Protocol

Item Name	Date of publication	Format	Author	Intended Audience	Code	Detail

Appendix F

Interview Screener Survey

You are invited to participate in a web-based online survey on culturally responsive practice in education. This is a research project being conducted by a team of doctoral students at Boston College. It contains just 4 questions designed to provide aggregate information and to ask for volunteers for future activities such as interviews.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this research is to understand how various educators within the school district make sense of what it means to implement "culturally responsive practice" and how that understanding influences an individual's practice. The intent of this study is to explore how information and knowledge about culturally responsive practice is accumulated, shared, and then translated into practice. It is not an evaluation of the district's or individual educator's efforts.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason.

BENEFITS

You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about the role that district leaders, school leaders, and building-level educators alike share and implement local best practices in support of historically marginalized student populations.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than the risk that you may find some of the questions to be sensitive.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your survey answers are collected as data and will be stored in a password protected electronic format. This platform does not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study. Within the survey you will be asked if you are interested in participating in an additional interview. If you choose to provide contact information such as your phone number or email address, your survey responses may no longer be anonymous to the researcher. However, no names or identifying information would be included in any publications or presentations based on these data, and your responses to this survey will remain confidential.

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact our research supervisor, Professor Martin Scanlan via email at martin.scanlan@bc.edu.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT:

Please select your choice below. You may print a copy of this consent form for your records. Clicking on the "Agree" button indicates that

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are 18 years of age or older Anonymous

❑ AGREE
❑ DISAGREE

Anonymous Questions

What is your professional role in your school district? (Please select the answer that best fits your primary role)

❑ District Administrator
❑ Principal/School Leader
❑ School Level Administrator
❑ Teacher
❑ Paraprofessional
❑ Other School-Based Educator
❑ Other: _____

For how many school years have you worked in this district (in any educational role)?

Based on your experience in this district only, have you engaged in the following practices with the purpose of reflecting on or improving your understanding of "culturally responsive practice?" Please check all that apply.

❑ Personal self-reflection on my own identity
❑ Personally sought out professional development through a course, seminar, etc.
❑ District-based professional development
❑ School-based professional development
❑ Through supervision and evaluation
❑ Professional coaching offered by district staff
❑ Through informal professional conversation within the school
❑ Through informal professional conversation within the district
❑ Any experience focused on the practice of family engagement
❑ None of the above

Interview and Survey

If you would be willing to be interviewed by a researcher about the professional learning experiences you identified above, please provide an email address and phone number.

Note: your responses will not be reported anywhere linked to your contact information. They will only be used in written analysis as part of an aggregate of all responses. The research team may not be able to interview all willing participants if the response is high.

Name

Email Address

Phone Number

Is there a colleague from the district skillful in culturally responsive practice whom the research team should contact for an interview? If so, please provide their name and contact information. Your referral will be kept confidential. You may enter multiple colleagues.

Appendix G

District Administrator Interview Protocol

Introduction

a. Welcome and thank you for agreeing to this interview
b. As a reminder, the purpose of this study is that: "We are seeking to understand how various educators in the district make sense of what it means for educators to have culturally responsive practice, and how that influences what they do. This is not an evaluation of individual educators or of the district; it's a case study that is part of our doctoral work."
c. Your confidentiality will be maintained by anonymizing all information
d. I have a consent form that outlines the background of this interview. I want to give you time to review this before we begin, and I will need you to sign it
e. Would you confirm that it is okay to record, just for our research purposes? No recordings will be shared.
f. Thank you
g. We're going to start with some background questions

Background Questions

2. Would you confirm your name and your role here?
3. How long you have been at the school/district?
    a. How long an educator?
4. How did you come to be in this role? What was your trajectory?

Understanding of CRP

Again, in this study, we are seeking to understand how various educators in the district make sense of what it means for educators to have culturally responsive practice, and how that influences what they do.

5. What do you think it means for an educator to be culturally responsive in their practice?
    a. [Probe for further clarification/detail as needed.]
6. Where does this understanding come from? How have you come to this understanding?
    a. Probe: Does the district explicitly define cultural responsiveness, cultural proficiency, or a similar idea for educators?
        i. If so, how would you explain it?
    b. Probe: To what extent is that same understanding shared throughout the district?
    c. How did that come about (or what do you think the barriers are to that shared understanding)?
7. Can you think of one specific practice that is implemented throughout the district that supports the diverse student body?

Experiences Supporting Principals

Thank you. The next question relates to how the district influences and supports principals, generally.

8. How does the district support the learning and growth of principals?

   a. Do you see these supports enhancing principals' learning and growth?
   b. If yes, how? In what ways?

Experiences with CRP Work

Shifting now, the next set of questions relates to how the district influences culturally responsive practice of educators.

9. Do you see the district trying to explicitly influence teachers' or principals' cultural responsiveness in any way?
   a. If yes, how? What ways does the district do this?
   b. What are the effects on practice?
   c. [If respondent only answered for teachers or principals, ask again about the other group]
   d. [If necessary] How has the district used [as needed, any of:] policy, brokering and boundary spanning, direct influence, professional development?
10. Would you identify any changes in your or others' perceptions of what it means to be culturally responsive that came as a result of district action?
   a. Can you say more about how the district action influenced you?
   b. If needed: Specific probe re school leaders and teachers
11. Would you identify any changes in your or others' practice that you have made explicitly to be more culturally responsive as a result of district action?
   a. Can you say more about how the district action influenced you?
12. Is there anything we missed or anything you would like to add?
13. For context, how do you identify in terms of race and ethnicity?

Appendix H

School Leader Interview Protocol

1. Introduction
    a. Welcome and thank you for agreeing to this interview
    b. As a reminder, the purpose of this study is that: "We are seeking to understand how various educators in the district make sense of what it means for educators to have culturally responsive practice, and how that influences what they do. This is not an evaluation of individual educators or of the district; it's a case study that is part of our doctoral work."
    c. Your confidentiality will be maintained by anonymizing all information
    d. I have a consent form that outlines the background of this interview. I want to give you time to review this before we begin, and I will need you to sign it
    e. Would you confirm that it is okay to record, just for our research purposes? No recordings will be shared.
    f. Thank you
    g. We're going to start with some background questions

Background Questions

2. Would you confirm your name and your role here?
3. How long have you been at the school/district?
    a. How long have you been working in education?
4. How did you come to be in this role? What was your trajectory?

Understanding of CRP

Again, in this study, we are seeking to understand how various educators in the district make sense of what it means for educators to have culturally responsive practice, and how that influences what they do.

5. What do you think it means for an educator to be culturally responsive in their practice?
    a. [Probe for further clarification/detail as needed.]
6. Where does this understanding come from? How have you come to this understanding?
    a. Probe: Does the district explicitly define cultural responsiveness, cultural proficiency, or a similar practice for educators?
        i. If so, how would you explain it?
7. Can you think of one specific practice that is implemented throughout the district that supports the diverse student body??
    a. Probe: To what extent is that same understanding shared throughout the building? How did that come about (or what do you think the barriers are to that shared understanding)?

Experiences supporting principals

Thank you. The next set of questions relates to how the district influences and supports you as a principal, generally.

8. How does the district support your learning and growth?
    a. Do you see these supports enhancing your learning and growth?

b. If yes, how? In what ways?

Experiences with CRP Work

Shifting now, the next set of questions relates to how leaders in the district attempt to influence culturally responsive practice.

9. First, in terms of your growth, do you see the district trying to explicitly influence your cultural responsiveness in any way?
    a. If yes, how? What ways does the district do this?
10. Would you identify any changes in your perceptions of what it means to be culturally responsive that came as a result of district action?
    a. Can you say more about how the district action influenced you?
11. As a leader yourself, how do you approach determining if a teacher is effective at teaching students from diverse backgrounds?
    a. Does the supervision/evaluation process play a role at all?
    b. What does feedback look like? What areas for growth do you observe?
12. What framework/structure/language do you lean on to talk about that aspect of teacher practice?
    a. How did you come to that understanding?
    b. To what extent is that same understanding shared throughout the building?
    c. How do teachers respond to that feedback?
    d. How did that come about (or what do you think the barriers are to that shared understanding)?

Last topic now. I want to inquire about family engagement in such a diverse context...

13. How do you, as a leader, try to engage families in the life of the school?
    a. Probe: Was it always this way?
    b. Probe: How did you come to develop this approach?
14. What are your expectations for teachers in terms of family engagement?
    a. Probe: Have these expectations shifted at all from your learning in the district?
15. What have been your successes in this area?
16. What about areas of struggle?
17. Is there anything I missed or anything you would like to add?

Appendix I

Teacher Interview Protocol

1. Introduction
    a. Welcome and thank you for agreeing to this interview
    b. As a reminder, the purpose of this study is: "We are seeking to understand how various educators in the district make sense of what it means for educators to have culturally responsive practice, and how that influences what they do. This is not an evaluation of individual educators or of the district; it's a case study that is part of our doctoral work."
    c. Your confidentiality will be maintained by anonymizing all information
    d. I have a consent form that outlines the background of this interview. I want to give you time to review this before we begin, and I will need you to sign it
    e. Would you confirm that it is okay to record, just for our research purposes? No recordings will be shared.
    f. Thank you
    g. We're going to start with some background questions

Background Questions

2. Would you confirm your name and your role here?
3. How long you have been at the school/district?
4. How did you come to be in this role? What was your trajectory?

Understanding of CRP

Again, in this study, we are seeking to understand how various educators in the district make sense of what it means for educators to have culturally responsive practice, and how that influences what they do.

5. What do you think it means for an educator to be culturally responsive in their practice?
    a. [Probe for further clarification/detail as needed.]
6. Where does this understanding come from? How have you come to this understanding?
    a. Probe: How did your undergraduate, graduate and/or pre-service education prepare you to effectively teach students across lines of difference?
7. Were there specific lived-experiences in your background that were particularly helpful in shaping your cultural proficiency? (Don't lead, but if they need examples - i.e. international travel or cultural immersion experiences)

Experiences with supervision

Thank you. The next set of questions relates to your experiences with supervision.

8. What opportunities do you have to learn about, share ideas, or get feedback on this aspect of practice?
    a. Probe: Has there been any feedback through supervision, be it a helpful suggestion or a commendation?
    b. Probe: If you needed support, who would you turn to? Why that person?
    c. Probe: How did they develop that skill?
9. Has the evaluation process played a role at all? If so, how?

   a. Probes could be about self-assessment, goal setting, observations, or evaluation

Experiences with CRP Work

Shifting now, the next set of questions relates to how the district influences culturally responsive practice of educators.

10. Do you see the district trying to explicitly influence teachers' cultural responsiveness in any way?
    a. If yes, how? What ways does the district do this?
    b. What are the effects on practice?
    a. [If necessary] How has the district used [as needed, any of:] policy, brokering and boundary spanning, direct influence, professional development?
11. Would you identify any changes in your or others' perceptions of what it means to be culturally responsive that came as a result of district action?
    a. Can you say more about how the district action influenced you?
    b. If needed: Specific probe re school leaders and teachers
12. Would you identify any changes in your or others' practice that you have made explicitly to be more culturally responsive as a result of district action?
    a. Can you say more about how the district action influenced you?
13. Is there anything we missed or anything you would like to add?

Thank you. The next set of questions relates to your experiences with Family Engagement.

Family Engagement

2. How do you work to engage families?
    a. PROBE: What are your family engagement practices?
    b. PROBE: Are there different things for different families?
3. Why do you do family engagement?
    a. PROBE: What are you trying to achieve?
4. Next set of questions is about how you as an educator learned to do family engagement OR How do you decide what to do?
    a. Something that influenced you
    b. Colleague, experience, training, PD
    c. Directives or requirements from district or school leaders
5. Is there anything we missed or anything you would like to add?

Appendix J

Interview Consent Form

Consent Form

BOSTON COLLEGE
Lynch School of Education
Professional School Administrator Program

Research Study: Enhancing Culturally Responsive Practice in a District

Individual Consent Form

Introduction:

You are being asked to participate in a research study exploring how various stakeholders make sense of and enact culturally responsive practice.

You were selected to be in this study because you are either a central office leader, a principal, or a teacher in the Sunnyside Public Schools.

Please read this form. You may ask any questions you have before agreeing to participate in this study.

Purpose of Study:

The purpose of this single-site case study is to understand how various educators within the school district make sense of what it means to implement "culturally responsive practice" and how that understanding influences an individual's practice. The intent of this study is to explore how information and knowledge about culturally responsive practice is accumulated, shared, and then translated into practice. It is not an evaluation of the district's or individual educator's efforts.

What Will Happen in this Study:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in one or more of the following: (1) a semi-structured interview facilitated by one or two of the researchers, (2) a focus group facilitated by one or two of the researchers, (3) a regularly scheduled meeting or training that is observed by one or two researchers, (4) an online questionnaire. The interviews, focus groups, and observations will be audio recorded.

Risks and Discomforts of Being in the Study:

There are no expected risks. This study may include risks that are unknown at this time.

Benefits of Being in the Study:

The purpose of this single-site case study is to explore how various stakeholders make sense of and enact culturally responsive practice. The participants may derive some benefit from having the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their experiences. Further, the district may benefit from the information gleaned from the interviews and information gathered during this study. However, no benefit to the participants can be guaranteed.

Payments: There is no payment or other compensation for participating in this study.

Costs: There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

Confidentiality:

Participants' identities will remain confidential throughout the research and reporting of this study. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. All electronic information will be coded and secured using a password-protected file, this includes transcripts of interviews. Audio files will be deleted upon the completion of this study.

Mainly just the researchers will have access to information; however, please note that a few other key people may also have access. These might include government agencies. Also, Institutional Review Board at Boston College and internal Boston College auditors may review the research records. Otherwise, the researchers will not release to others any information that identifies you unless you give your permission, or unless we are legally required to do so.

Choosing to be in the Study and Choosing to Quit the Study:

Choosing to be in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to be in this study, it will not affect your current or future relations with the Sunnyside Public Schools or Boston College. You are free to quit at any time, for whatever reason.

Getting Dismissed from the Study:

The researchers may dismiss you from the study at any time for the following reasons: (1) it is in your best interests (e.g. your identity cannot remain anonymous), or (2) you have failed to comply with the study rules...

Contacts and Questions:

The researchers conducting this study are Dan Anderson, James Greenwood, Jason Medeiros, Sarah McLaughlin, and Tina Rogers. The Boston College faculty advisor for this study is Martin Scanlan, Associate Professor, Lynch School of Education and Human Development. For questions or more information concerning this research, you may contact him at martin.scanlan@bc.edu or 1-617-552-1255.

If you have any questions about your rights as a person in this research study, you may contact: Director, Office for Research Protections, Boston College at (617) 552-4778, or irb@bc.edu

Copy of Consent Form:

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records and future reference.

Statement of Consent:

I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form. I have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to be in this study. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

Signatures/Dates:

Study Participants Name (Print):_____Date: _____

Participant's Signature: _____Date: _____

Witness/Auditor Signature: _____Date: _____

Appendix K

Online Survey Protocol

You are invited to participate in a web-based online survey on culturally responsive practice in education. This is a research project being conducted by a team of doctoral students at Boston College. It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this research is to understand how various educators within the school district make sense of what it means to implement "culturally responsive practice" and how that understanding influences an individual's practice. The intent of this study is to explore how information and knowledge about culturally responsive practice is accumulated, shared, and then translated into practice. It is not an evaluation of the district's or individual educator's efforts.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason.

BENEFITS

You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about the role that district leaders, school leaders, and building-level educators alike share and implement local best practices in support of historically marginalized student populations.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than the risk that you may find some of the questions to be sensitive.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your survey answers are collected as data and will be stored in a password protected electronic format. This platform does not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study. Within the survey you will be asked if you are interested in participating in an additional interview. If you choose to provide contact information such as your phone number or email address, your survey responses may no longer be anonymous to the researcher. However, no names or identifying information would be included in any publications or presentations based on these data, and your responses to this survey will remain confidential.

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact our research supervisor, Professor Martin Scanlan via email at martin.scanlan@bc.edu.

SOURCE MATERIAL

This questionnaire was adapted from original materials provided by the Washington state Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Original materials may be accessed on the OSPI website: https://www.k12.wa.us/special-education-9

The following references also informed the questionnaire's content:

Mason, J. L. (1995). Cultural competence self-assessment questionnaire: A manual for users. Portland, OR: Portland State University, Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children's Mental Health.

Goode, T. D. (2000). Promoting cultural competence and cultural diversity in early intervention and early childhood settings. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Child Development Center.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT:

Please select your choice below. You may print a copy of this consent form for your records. Clicking on the "Agree" button indicates that

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are 18 years of age or older

○ Agree

○ Disagree

What school setting do you currently work in?

○ District-Level

○ Secondary School (6-12)

○ Elementary School (PK-5)

Which of the following best describes your role?

○ District-Level Administrator

○ School-Based Administrator

○ School-Based Educator

For how many school years have you worked in the field of education?

○ 0-5

○ 6-10

○ 11-15

○ 16-24

○ 25+

For how many school years have you worked in this district (in any educational role)?

○ 0-5

○ 6-10

○ 11-15

○ 16-24

○ 25+

This research defines culturally responsive practice as a combination of educational mindsets, instructional skills, and pedagogies that collectively reject deficit mindsets linked to the languages, cultures, and abilities of historically marginalized students, their families, and the communities in which they live. Such practice entails beliefs and practices such as:

- an inherent belief that all students can learn
- a willingness to challenge the status quo
- a willingness to reflect on how one's identity informs practice
- the ability to set high expectations while offering high levels of support
- the ability to scaffold instruction
- the ability to engage students' lived experiences into the classroom learning experiences

Given this broad overview, respond to the following prompts regarding your own practice:

I am confident in my own understanding of the diverse cultures of the students and families in the district.

- ○ Very
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Not at all
- ○ Not sure how to answer

I am confident in my own understanding of how students' cultural backgrounds influence their learning and behavior.

- ○ Very
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Not at all
- ○ Not sure how to answer

How frequently do you take part in (or support) the following practices?

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Modify instruction so that students from different cultural backgrounds have their unique learning needs met.	○	○	○	○	○
Examine assessment data with the specific purpose of exploring any discrepancies in performance by cultural background	○	○	○	○	○

Ensure that classroom displays and curriculum materials contain pictures and images that reflect the cultural backgrounds of students and families in your district	○	○	○	○	○
Assess whether or not curriculum resources are free from negative cultural stereotypes	○	○	○	○	○

How frequently do the following practices occur throughout your building (or buildings if you are responsible for more than one building)?

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Modify instruction so that students from different cultural backgrounds have their unique learning needs met.	○	○	○	○	○
Examine assessment data with the specific purpose of exploring any discrepancies in performance by cultural background	○	○	○	○	○
Ensure that classroom displays and curriculum materials contain pictures and images that reflect the cultural backgrounds of students and families in your district	○	○	○	○	○

Assess whether or not curriculum resources are free from negative cultural stereotypes	○	○	○	○	○

Rate how influential the following types of experiences have been in helping you improve your culturally responsive practice?

	Very	Somewhat	Not at all	I have not had this experience
Personal self-reflection on my own cultural identity	○	○	○	○
Reflecting on my experiences with students and their families	○	○	○	○
Learning about the people and history of the district	○	○	○	○
District-based professional development	○	○	○	○
School-based professional development	○	○	○	○
External professional development	○	○	○	○
Through supervision and evaluation	○	○	○	○
Professional coaching offered by district staff	○	○	○	○

Through informal professional conversation within the school	○	○	○	○
Through informal professional conversation within the district	○	○	○	○

To what extent are the following aspects of the supervision and evaluation process utilized to explore culturally responsive practice?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
Self-Assessment & Goal Setting	○	○	○	○	○
Classroom Observation	○	○	○	○	○
Formal conferencing (formative or summative)	○	○	○	○	○
Informal conferencing or coaching	○	○	○	○	○
Written evaluations	○	○	○	○	○

For each of the following, SELECT the items that you currently utilize to complete the stated task. Then, RANK ORDER them with the most important items listed first.

If I want to have more...
information about the diverse cultures of the families in my district...
I go to...

Items listed in order of their importance to you
_____ District Leaders
_____ School Leaders
_____ Professional Peers in district
_____ Professional Peers in other districts
_____ Students and Families directly
_____ Community Resources
_____ External Professional Development
_____ Independent Research/Self-Reflection
_____ I don't know where I would go

If I want to learn more about how...
a student's cultural background influences learning and behavior...
I go to...

Items listed in order of their importance to you
_____ District Leaders
_____ School Leaders
_____ Professional Peers in district
_____ Professional Peers in other districts
_____ Students and Families directly
_____ Community Resources
_____ External Professional Development
_____ Independent Research/Self-Reflection
_____ I don't know where I would go

If you want to have more...
information on how student achievement looks for students of different cultural backgrounds
I go to...

Items listed in order of their importance to you
_____ District Leaders
_____ School Leaders
_____ Professional Peers in district
_____ Professional Peers in other districts
_____ Students and Families directly
_____ Community Resources
_____ External Professional Development
_____ Independent Research/Self-Reflection
_____ I don't know where I would go

If I want...
feedback on my own efforts to support the learning of students from diverse cultural backgrounds...
I go to...

Items listed in order of their importance to you
_____ District Leaders
_____ School Leaders
_____ Professional Peers in district
_____ Professional Peers in other districts
_____ Students and Families directly
_____ Community Resources
_____ External Professional Development

_____ Independent Research/Self-Reflection

_____ I don't know where I would go

If I want advice about how...
to communicate effectively with families from diverse cultural backgrounds
I go to...

Items listed in order of their importance to you

_____ District Leaders

_____ School Leaders

_____ Professional Peers in district

_____ Professional Peers in other districts

_____ Students and Families directly

_____ Community Resources

_____ External Professional Development

_____ Independent Research/Self-Reflection

_____ I don't know where I would go

Appendix L

Observation Protocol

Date: _____ Description of activity (what is being observed): _____
Time Start: _____ Time End: _____
Location: _____ Participants: _____

Component	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
□ Description of participant □ Description of activity □ Interaction □ Behaviors □ Unplanned event □ Specific comment/quote □ Non-verbal behavior □ Physical setting		
□ Description of participant □ Description of activity □ Interaction □ Behaviors □ Unplanned event □ Specific comment/quote □ Non-verbal behavior □ Physical setting		
□ Description of participant □ Description of activity □ Interaction □ Behaviors □ Unplanned event □ Specific comment/quote □ Non-verbal behavior □ Physical setting		
□ Description of participant □ Description of activity □ Interaction □ Behaviors □ Unplanned event □ Specific comment/quote □ Non-verbal behavior □ Physical setting		