Enhancing Culturally Responsive Practice in a District: Engaging Families through Culturally Responsive Practice

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ENHANCING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICE IN A DISTRICT:
ENGAGING FAMILIES THROUGH CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICE

Dissertation
by

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with Daniel S. Anderson, James J. Greenwood,
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ENGAGING FAMILIES THROUGH CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICE

by
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Abstract

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.

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Dedication

To my mom. My biggest fan and the reason I completed this. You engaged with my education in every way you could and advocated for me when I didn't know what that meant. I will remember for the both of us, always.

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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

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[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 through 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

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[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]

ENGAGING FAMILIES THROUGH CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICE

Dating back to the Supreme Court's landmark 1954 decision in *Brown v Board of Education*, the scope and scale of national, state and local efforts to improve the educational outcomes of marginalized students is staggering. Despite the magnitude of these efforts, achievement gaps persist among students in marginalized racial, linguistic and economic groups (Lee, 2004; Ferguson, 2007; Hanushek, Peterson, Talpey, & Woessmann, 2019). Even Massachusetts, a state consistently ranked first in the country on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), has "glaring and persistent disparities that separate low-income students and students of color from their peers" (Massachusetts Education Equity Partnership, 2018, p. 2).

Reducing and closing the achievement gap is the critical work of Massachusetts school districts. However, as the achievement gap persists in Massachusetts, the population of marginalized students continues to grow. "Fifty years ago, 95 percent of Massachusetts residents were White. Today, people of color make up 26 percent of the state's population and four out of every 10 students are students of color" (Massachusetts Education Equity Partnership, 2018, p 10). The challenge of raising the achievement of all students is multiplied when considering that the efforts directly impact students and families whose culture does not match the dominant culture of public school employees. The importance of culturally responsive practice (CRP) is well-documented as a key component in effectively teaching the increasingly diverse student body in public schools (Gay, 2018).

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[3] This chapter was individually written by Sarah L. McLaughlin

As explained in Chapter 1, we adopt the broader term 'culturally responsive practice' (CRP) for the overarching study. CRP has the goal of:

> …ensur[ing] that all groups are benefitting equally from instruction and classroom management practices... It involves a set of congruent educator/stakeholder behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system that works for all students. (Indiana University's Center on Education and Lifelong Learning)

A conceptual framework allows researchers to situate their investigation and focus their methodology within a set of established ideas (Maxwell, 2013). To examine individual understandings of CRP within a school district, we apply a conceptual framework of organizational sensemaking. Sensemaking theory is frequently applied when analyzing an organization's experience in times of unpredictability, shifting conditions and emerging challenges. As the student populations of public schools grow increasingly more diverse and increasingly different from the culture of school staff, the way in which educators make sense of their responsibility and efforts to improve student outcomes is critical to understand.

Individual Research

My individual research examines how teachers understand and implement CRP in regards to engaging families of marginalized populations. It is widely acknowledged that family engagement in schools is highly correlated to school success and student performance (Epstein, 1987; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Auerbach, 2007; Cavanaugh, 2012). However, in school districts that serve an increasing number of students of marginalized backgrounds, traditional understandings and approaches to family engagement may be insufficient or misaligned. My two research questions are as follows:

(1) How do educators make sense of CRP in efforts to engage families of marginalized populations?

(2) How do educators enact CRP in regards to the engagement of families of marginalized populations?

I draw from Maitlis' (2005) organizational sensemaking framework that considers the reciprocal and dynamic processes of sensemaking and sensegiving. She defines sensemaking as "a process of social construction in which individuals attempt to interpret and explain sets of cues from their environments" (p. 21), and sensegiving as the actions or efforts that "influence others' understandings of an issue" (p. 21). Maitlis investigated the processes of sensemaking and sensegiving in large organizations with diverse sets of stakeholders, similar to the structure of a school district. I explore how educators understand CRP in family engagement (the sensemaking piece) while also examining the origins of understanding (the sensegiving piece) be it personal or professional experiences. I turn now to connect my individual research question to the larger group project.

Our team's larger focus is how educators in a diverse school district understand and enact CRP. The specific other individual components examine educator understanding and practice of CRP in realms of leadership, supervision and evaluation, and educator identity. We are unified by our belief in CRP as a critical approach to dismantle educational inequity and improve outcomes for marginalized students. Before describing the methods of my individual study, I turn now to outline the literature related to family engagement that situates this study.

Literature Review

I organized my research on district and schools' work to engage with families into four strands: (1) connections between family engagement and student outcomes, (2) frameworks of

family engagement, (3) emerging definitions of family engagement, and (4) building educator capacity to effectively engage families.

Family engagement and student outcomes

The relationship between parent involvement in schools and academic success of students has been established in numerous research studies (Epstein, 1987; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Auerbach, 2007; Cavanaugh, 2012). The positive impact of parental involvement has been demonstrated across racial categories as well as socio-economic levels. Outcomes include higher grades and test scores, higher rates of attendance, better social skills and behavior and higher graduation rates. Most federal efforts to improve public schools include a component of parent involvement or even mandate it in school reforms such as the Comprehensive School Reform model and the No Child Left Behind Act (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002). It is important to note that parental involvement within these policies is often defined as a family's physical presence at school-based events.

Traditional notions of parent involvement in schools may not be meeting the needs of a growing and diverse population of families (Lowenhaupt, 2012). Districts and schools are seeing increased numbers of students living in poverty and students who represent racial and linguistic minorities. As traditional approaches to family engagement are reconsidered, current conceptual models for parental involvement in schools may need updating or modifying. I describe this in greater detail in the next section.

Frameworks of family engagement

A 2017 study investigated the frameworks used in research on family-school partnerships over a five-year period (Yamauchi, Ponte, Ratliffe, & Traynor, 2017). In its examination of both theoretical and conceptual frameworks, the study analyzed 215 journal articles published from

2007 to 2011 on the topic of family-school partnerships to determine which frameworks were most frequently used. The four theories found most often in this study were Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory, social capital theory, Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence and Moll and colleagues' funds of knowledge. The study also found that two conceptual frameworks were most often cited: Epstein's types of family involvement and Hoover-Dempsey and Sangler's model of the parent involvement process. As the model most prominent in their findings, I further researched Epstein's model.

Epstein (2001) developed a framework that defined six different types of parent involvement and became the basis for further research and studies. The types of involvement described range from more basic (communication, school volunteering) to more substantial (decision-making and collaboration) as well as activities ranging from how families can support learning at home to activities based at the school site. Epstein's model represents a more traditional consideration of schools and their work with parents and families. Yamauchi, et al. (2017) identified a key limitation of Epstein's model: "While Epstein's model portrays schools as open to more participation from varied stakeholders and suggests shared activities to ensure families feel welcomed at the school, the framework continues to position the school as the one that sets the agenda" (Yamauchi, et al., p. 24). If schools are setting the agenda for parent involvement and engagement, it is likely that the approach reflects the dominant culture and language of the school staff.

Yamauchi's finding on the use of traditional frameworks is amplified by the 2019 report on enrollment trends in U.S. public schools by the National Center for Education Statistics which projects continued substantial changes.

Between fall 2015 and fall 2027, the percentage of students enrolled in public schools

who are White is projected to continue decreasing (from 49 to 45 percent). In contrast,

the percentage is projected to increase over this period for students who are Hispanic

(from 26 to 29 percent), Asian/Pacific Islander (from 5 to 6 percent), and of Two or more

races (from 3 to 4 percent). (de Brey et al., 2019, p. 52)

Growing numbers of students and their families who are racially, economically and/or

linguistically marginalized are participating in an educational system that does not necessarily

match the cultural background and experiences of the majority of educators. Epstein's model

does not explicitly consider CRP. With this limitation in mind, I move now to discuss emerging

definitions and frameworks of family engagement.

Emerging frameworks of family engagement

In parallel with projections of more racial diversity in the K-12 school population, there

are similar projections for the continued growth of linguistically minoritized students in our

country. In its 2019 report, the National Center for Education Statistics reported, "by 2025,

nearly one out of every four public school students will be an English Language Learner" (de

Brey et al., 2019, p. 60).

Given the achievement gap that currently exists in this country between English speaking

students and non-English speaking students, the need to engage the families of these students is

critical. However, there are differences in how linguistic minority families perceive involvement,

participate in schools and engage with schools (Baird, 2015). In a review of 31 research studies

that used inductive methods to define and describe parent involvement of linguistically

minoritized families, the findings revealed that parent involvement of this particular population

focused on three key relationships: (a) between families and schools, (b) between parent and

children and (c) among families (Baird, 2015). These findings do not fully fit within traditional frameworks such as Epstein's. For instance, relationships between families whose children attend the same school are neither captured specifically nor emphasized in Epstein's model of parent involvement.

Durand (2011) examined parental involvement of Latinos in early childhood years and found that:

> Low-income and ethnic minority parents may display different types of involvement in children's schooling than middle-SES, Euro-American parents because they may differ in regard to their habits around the construct of involvement, and because they may experience significantly more situational and personal barriers that limit their ability to be involved in the ways that are legitimized by the school or most strongly associated with academic achievement. (p. 472)

Similar to the powerful lesson of Yamauchi, et al. (2017), Durand's critique includes the danger of schools and districts setting the agenda of parent involvement that may not align with the lives of English learner families. Georgis, Gokiert, Ford & Ali (2014) also emphasized the idea that parental school involvement amongst linguistic minority groups may be valued but traditional forms of involvement may not be effective at engaging these families. The authors argue that prevailing notions of parental engagement may be narrow and ultimately exclusionary.

Family engagement activities that do support schools and student learning can be overlooked when the definition of parental involvement is narrow. In a study of Latino immigrant parents done through a series of semi-structured interviews, parents did engage in activities that research has shown will benefit children but didn't include the school itself (Poza, Brooks & Valdes, 2014). This study is an example of how a limited construct of parent

involvement potentially results in the perception that linguistically minoritized parents aren't involved or engaged with their children's school.

A danger exists for practitioners, policy makers and researchers who hold a narrow definition of a construct like parent involvement. It can lead to false assumptions about groups of people not being involved and not caring about the education of their children. In a 2016 study of schools in six Midwestern states, Baker, Wise, Kelley & Skiba found that parents and school staff held different definitions of family engagement and these divergent definitions created a disconnect. The authors argued that the definition of parent engagement needed to be co-constructed. Lopez (2001) studied the school involvement experiences of five immigrant families in the Rio Grande Valley area of Texas. The results of his qualitative study demonstrated how these families were involved in their children's education in ways that were not measured by traditional parent involvement definitions. Latino parents often misunderstood their role in their children's education because they didn't understand the concept of involvement as defined by the school (González & Huerta-Macías, 1997). As newer frameworks and practices emerge, districts that serve marginalized students and families will be responsible for developing educator capacity.

Building educator capacity

Along with newer definitions of family engagement that reflect and honor cultural and linguistic diversity, a framework developed in response to a key limitation inherent in prior family engagement models. Mapp and Kuttner's (2013) work developed from their initial collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education in 2010 on effective family engagement. They identified a tension resulting from more traditional approaches:

This focus on families alone often results in increased tension between families and

school staff: families are trained to be more active in their children's schools, only to be

met by an unreceptive and unwelcoming school climate and resistance from district and

school staff to their efforts for more active engagement. (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013, p. 10)

Mapp and Kuttner developed the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School

Partnerships to strengthen family engagement practices within schools. This framework is unique

and represents a significant departure from previous family engagement models built solely

around how schools can support families to engage more effectively. It comprises a dual focus:

strengthening the capacity of families to support their children's academic success and building

the capacity of educators to engage with diverse families. For educators, the framework

embodies four areas of capacity: (a) being capable, with knowledgeable and asset-orientations

toward the community they serve, as well as possessing skills in cultural competency, (b) being

connected with trusting and respectful relationships and networks within the community, (c)

having confidence with a sense of comfort and self-efficacy related to working amongst cultural

differences, and (d) being cognizant of the role of partnership in improving student learning. I

move now to discuss related research on educator capacity building.

Recent research on strategies to increase the capacity of educators to engage with

families of marginalized students has yielded important lessons for practitioners. Several studies

focused on the professional development (PD) needs of teachers in schools with growing

numbers of linguistically minoritized students and families. One study demonstrated how a

professional development (PD) initiative increased teacher knowledge on how to collaborate

with parents of English Learners (Bell, Grant, Yoo, Jimenez, & Frye, 2017). The study examined

teachers serving these students in a year-long PD. The authors found that beyond the increases in

instructional capacity, there was also a significant increase in the participants' perceived knowledge of collaborating with parents. Furthermore, the participating teachers demonstrated a significant shift in their current paradigms about working with linguistically minoritized families. Another study examined two cohorts of teachers in a project focused on enhancing the instruction of English learners and the corresponding impact that learning had on their individual practices of family engagement (Chen, Kyle, & McIntyre, 2008). The study found that teachers connected with families in new ways and made their instruction more connected to the students' lives and cultural backgrounds. These strategies differed from traditional or historic beliefs and definitions of family engagement.

Panferov (2010) concluded that as schools become more diverse, it is contingent on educators to learn the stories of English learners (ELs) and their families. Her work is part of a larger study on parent experiences of ELs in schools. Through in-depth interviews, she found that the more schools knew the parents and families, the more relevant communication and other outreach was. Panferov also suggests having linguistically minoritized parents involved in schools in ways that promote their home language and culture and "minimize subtractive bilingualism" (p. 111). Her recommendations for practice included home visits, personal interviews with parents about best modes of communication and educating parents directly on how they can help their children with school work.

There is the example of a successful university-school partnership in Maryland that responded effectively to the needs of immigrant families and children (Mogge, Martinez-Alba, & Cruzado-Guerrero, 2017). It involved teachers participating in courses over a two-year period on culturally responsive curriculum and second language instruction, in addition to parent

workshops with school families. The experience served to change the school culture and promote stronger school-community relationships.

My study builds from the current landscape of emerging frameworks for family engagement that attempt to better meet the needs of marginalized students and their families. I focus on the intersection of family engagement and culturally responsive practice and how educators understand and enact it in efforts to engage marginalized families. I turn now to detail the research design and methods.

Research Design and Methods

I employed a qualitative research methodology to gather information about educators' understanding and enactment of CRP in regards to family engagement. It is a single site case study design within a Massachusetts school district as a bounded system (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) conducted from August 2019 through January 2020.

Data Collection

As a qualitative researcher, I collected both narrative and visual data (Mills & Gay, 2019). In order to minimize validity and credibility issues within the study, I practiced "triangulation to compare a variety of data sources and different methods with one another in order to cross-check data" (p. 560). My data collection relied on three data sources: district and school documents, interviews, and survey responses. Additionally, our team maintained a process log to ensure the dependability of the data collected (Mills & Gay, 2019).

Document Review

My research began with a document review in order to examine how language related to CRP. This included a full review of the district's website along with internal documents shared by district leadership. Documents and other artifacts serve a number of purposes for researchers,

most specifically to "furnish descriptive information," "offer historical understanding," and "track change and development" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 182). I reviewed the district's family engagement policies, district strategic plans, school improvement plans (portions of which relate to family engagement), as well as district and school guides and handbooks (specifically the sections referencing expectations for educators to engage families). The analysis was guided by the review protocol found in Appendix E.

Semi-Structured Interviews

As described in Chapter 2, our team conducted 34 individual interviews including teachers, school leaders and district administrators. This interview format allowed for flexibility in wording of interview questions and probing questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In support of a team approach, interview protocols were collaboratively developed to include questions stemming from individual studies. These are found in Appendices G, H and I. Our team audio recorded nearly every interview and later transcribed the interview using software. Notes were taken when audio recording was not used. I also engaged in reflective journaling after the interviews and visits to school buildings.

Online Survey

Our team developed an online survey instrument that probed educator understanding and practice of CRP in more depth. It can be found in Appendix K. Overall, 31 respondents in the district completed the survey and I analyzed the responses of the 17 educators who identified as school based.

Data Analysis

Our research team employed a coding regime for all data collected from the district. I understand 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 included data from all sources: document review, interviews, and
our online survey as well as my reflective journal, so that patterns or contradictions were
identifiable regardless of the data source. The process of data analysis informed further data
collection and code creation.

For my specific focus, I created codes related to Maitlis' forms of organizational
sensemaking to capture and sort examples of educator understanding. Additionally, my codes
included key tenets of CRP and types of family engagement efforts. During the second phase of
coding, I embedded components of Mapp & Kuttner's framework and categorized data from
interviews about educator understanding using the four capacities: (1) capabilities, (2)
connections, (3) confidence and (4) cognition.

Given our team's shared focus on CRP and use of sensemaking frameworks, we
discussed initial themes and patterns of our individual coding processes. I relied on criteria from
Merriam and Tisdell (2016) to guide and check the process of categorization so that categories
were "responsive," "exhaustive," "mutually exclusive," "sensitizing," and "conceptually
congruent" (p. 212-213). These reminders served to make the process systematic and organized.
I primarily used Quirkos, a qualitative research package for coding, in addition to some limited
coding by hand. Our team shared our individual codebooks that proved essential for the
alignment and coherence of our collaborative research project and overall findings in Chapter 4.
Analytic memos also served to guide the team's research and contributed to overall knowledge
and understanding.

Findings

This individual study explored two research questions in a district with a majority of historically marginalized students. (1) How do educators understand CRP in efforts to engage families of marginalized students? and (2) How do educators enact CRP in regards to the engagement of families of marginalized students? The most critical finding is one that relates to both research questions. Educators in Sunnyside do not have a shared, clear definition or framework of CRP and family engagement. This individual finding from my research parallels an overarching finding from our group's study that the district lacks a clear definition of CRP that will be discussed further in Chapter 4. In the absence of a universal, well-developed definition, educator understanding and enactment of CRP and family engagement is inconsistent and discordant.

Understanding of CRP and Family Engagement

In response to my first research question, there are various ways in which educators in Sunnyside understand CRP in family engagement. Educator understanding is reflected in their awareness of the diversity of cultures of students and their families, their emphasis on the importance of knowing students and families, and through widespread recognition that family engagement is an essential component of their work. However, analysis of educator understanding also revealed points of teacher frustration and struggle as well as deficit beliefs about family engagement. Additionally, educator understanding of CRP and family engagement derived primarily from personal and work experiences followed closely by learning from colleagues. It is logical that in the absence of a formal district definition, educators make sense of CRP through their own experiences and the experiences of others.

Awareness of diversity

One way that educators in Sunnyside understand CRP is illustrated in their awareness that the current population of students in Sunnyside is significantly more diverse (racially, culturally, linguistically and economically) than it was two decades earlier. Table 3.1 illustrates the significant decline in the population of white students and corresponding rise in the population of black and brown students in Sunnyside in the past 20 years.

Table 3.1

Demographic changes in student enrollment in Sunnyside School District from 1999-2019

Race of student	School Year 1998-99	School Year 2018-19	Change over 20 years
White	52%	11.7%	- 40.3%
African American	29%	49.9%	+ 20.9%
Hispanic, non-white	6.6%	15.9%	+ 9.3%
Asian	11.8%	17%	+ 5.2%
Multi-race, non-Hispanic	Not collected	4.8%	-

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, School & District Profiles, SIMS Enrollment by Race/Gender, February, 2019.

Most educators interviewed referenced these shifts in the student population. They highlighted emerging ethnic representation as well as linguistic diversity. One educator with 18 years of teaching experience in Sunnyside shared, "Now because it's changed and now we're like, we have a lot more cultures, right, like Haitian and Vietnamese, and tons and tons of Spanish speaking of different countries." Even younger educators with less experience in Sunnyside referenced the demographic changes.

Knowing Students and Families

Many of the educators interviewed understood CRP as the need to know the students they are working with and recognize their various backgrounds and cultures. Several educators understand CRP as understanding cultures that are different from your own and being interested and curious about different cultures. One educator explained it as "looking at who you have in front of you and, being appreciative, knowledgeable. Understanding that those kids most likely represent different cultural groups, different ethnic groups, different religious groups, [   ]... and, that they really bring with them a real array of what their norms are, what their values are". This finding aligns with Mapp & Kuttner's capacity of recognizing the assets and strengths of other cultures.

These two findings primarily reflect educator understanding of the overarching framework of CRP and not specifically the intersection of CRP with family engagement. Taken together, they provide a foundation for the next section of analysis. I now pivot to findings that specifically relate to educator understanding of family engagement.

Importance of Engaging with Families

Beyond educators' understanding of CRP as recognizing demographic changes and knowing students and families, educators in Sunnyside also understand that engaging with students' families is a critical component of their work. As one educator stated, "We can work with kids, but where we're going to see our highest impact is working with kids and engaging families". Nearly every educator interviewed mentioned engaging families as a key component of their work and efforts.

Beyond data collected with interviews, the belief in the importance of family engagement is evident in key documents and publications of the district. Sunnyside's Strategic Goals booklet (revised in 2018) includes this goal and strategic objective: "Increase academic success for all

students through quality family and community partnerships". This goal also appears in the district's Equity Plan for School Year 2019-20. The district's website further promotes information about its commitment to practices that engage families in schools. Available on the website is the 2019-20 Family/Student Handbook. This comprehensive document of all policies related to families opens with a bold statement. "Families are our most important partners in accelerating student achievement." Information on school-based family engagement practices also appears in this handbook. Through these electronic and print materials, the district signals to educators that family engagement is a key priority and commitment. Consequently, educators make sense of and understand family engagement as part of their overall work.

Challenges with Family Engagement

While educators overwhelmingly acknowledge the importance of family engagement as part of their role and responsibility, there were corresponding hesitations and concerns shared about it. Analysis of interview data uncovered educator frustration about family engagement, technical challenges with it and a potentially harmful deficit mindset towards it.

The struggles and frustrations experienced by several educators directly influence their understanding of the practice. Despite well-intentioned efforts, educators describe family engagement events with low levels of attendance and how communication from them to families is not reciprocated. One frustrated educator remarked, "There's a hundred kids in front of me, but parents only have one or two in the system. There should be equal... 'Hey, how's my kid doing?' Sending an email. Or, come to parent-teacher night or open house night."

Educators frequently mentioned that lack of access to translation and interpretation services impede their family engagement efforts. "So we have a lot of forms that come from the district that are not automatically translated," complained one educator who regularly sends

home information in English to families whose primary language is not English. While the district's Family Resource Center works to expand access to trained interpreters, their availability to school level personnel appears limited. There is even evidence of discontent with newer family engagement practices intended to be progressive and equitable. In the 2019-20 school year, the district transitioned to an online report card system. One educator perceived this as lacking awareness of family needs. "And I just feel like we don't understand that and like the biggest thing that gets me right now is we've transitioned to an all online model for our grade reporting. Like that's assuming there's technological access at home".

Deficit Mindsets

A small percentage of Sunnyside educators interviewed understand CRP and family engagement as the need to address gaps in families' knowledge and experiences. This perception reflects a deficit mindset towards cultural differences and family engagement. One educator shared her perspective on trying to connect with families, "You have people who we teach whose parents don't understand the American educational system because they didn't go through it. It's not a bad thing, but they just don't know what a parent teacher conference is." Another teacher characterized her experience with families from diverse backgrounds whose children have an IEP (individualized education plan) with this opinion: "A lot of times they don't really understand it, or they have lots of questions, or a lot of times, especially from other cultures, they're not used to that, because maybe they didn't have that where they are from*."* The deficit-based mindset towards engaging families, while shared by only a few educators, stands in stark contrast to the district's Action Plan, revised in 2017, which describes the diversity of students and residents as an asset to learning and growth.

Learning about CRP and Family Engagement

In addition to analyzing the attitudes and beliefs held by educators about CRP and family engagement, I explored the origins of these understandings. Most commonly, educator understanding of CRP and family engagement derives from an individual's own life experiences. Beyond that, sensemaking comes from students and their families, colleagues, leaders, and to a lesser extent, professional learning opportunities.

Influence of Life Experience

Most frequently in interviews, educators shared experiences that shaped their understanding of CRP and working with families from different cultures. These life experiences included living or studying abroad or growing up minoritized in a community. Immigration status and prior experience specifically shaped one educators' understanding of working with families in Sunnyside. "Being a refugee and an immigrant myself and seeing the challenges that the immigrants and some families face, that's where I saw what was missing."

Educators also shared personal characteristics that influence the way they understand CRP and family engagement. When asked where their understanding came from, one educator responded, "I think part of the reason why I'm on the spectrum towards cultural responsiveness, and trying to move that way, is because I was raised in an open minded family, and I feel I'm a very open minded person. I'm trying to kind of challenge myself to always grow."

Learning from Families and Students

Beyond general life experiences, many educators shared that experiences working with families and students impacted their understanding of CRP. Learning from families was especially notable for an elementary level educator who stated, "It's a lot of the different settings I've worked in, and just opportunities I've been able to have either with professional development

or just experientially with families and students" and "I learned so much from my students every day based on their backgrounds and parents sharing information." Reflecting back to the demographic changes cited in Table 3.1, one long standing educator in the district described how experiences with families and students shaped their understanding:

> Because (Sunnyside) has changed, and I've worked with families and kids, and I make it my business what's important to them. And so just by virtue of having changed, and exposing me to new experiences, and myself taking advantage of that and being open to receiving those, Sunnyside has educated me immensely.

Learning from Colleagues and Leaders

Educator understanding of CRP and family engagement also comes from professional peers. An educator who worked closely with ESL teachers, shared how she learned from them by saying, "So, automatically, when you're in that group, you're already a little more because they have experience, they have a lot of education, and they probably spent a lot of time with different students from different cultures, meeting parents." An educator in the same building shared the most important influences on her development of CRP and family engagement: "Number one is experience...I've seen the demographics change. Number two is talking to teachers as well and finding out, Hey, why is this happening? Teacher input is also one of the ways that I get information."

Survey data collected from educators further supported the how learning from colleagues shapes teacher sensemaking of CRP and family engagement. Our group's online survey asked educators where they go for advice on working with and communicating effectively with families from diverse cultural backgrounds. See Table 3.2 for the breakdown of responses.

Table 3.2

Sources of advice for educators on communicating with families from diverse cultural backgrounds

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

Source of advice	Number of times cited as a source of advice	Number of times cited as the top source of advice
District leaders	6	0
School leaders	12	8
Professional peers in district	16*	6
Professional peers in other districts	2	0
Students and families directly	10	2
Community Resources	6	0
External Professional Development	4	0
Independent research/self-reflection	3	0
I don't know where I would go	0	1

Note: 17 respondents total (school-based educators, not administrators)

School-based educator respondents indicated that they most frequently sought advice and information from professional peers.

Educators in Sunnyside understand CRP in family engagement in various ways. Primarily, educators cite the importance of knowing their students and being aware of the population shifts in the district enrollment. At the same time, some educators expressed frustration or held a deficit mindset towards family engagement. Educators' understanding emanated from various experiences, including working with students and families, as well as learning from colleagues. Educator sensemaking of CRP appeared most impacted, however, by the absence of a clear and coherent district wide definition of the expectations and the practice.

As I turn now to how educators enact CRP in engaging families, I will underscore the further impact this critical finding wields.

Enactment of CRP in Engaging Families

The second research question probed the enactment of CRP in engaging families of marginalized students. The lack of a shared definition of CRP and family engagement, a primary finding in the first research question, substantially hinders educator enactment. The district's commitment to family engagement is evidenced in public documents and district directives shape the agenda of family engagement activities at the school level. Educators did willingly share examples of their engagement efforts. However, a majority of these activities align with traditional models of family engagement efforts that fail to meet the needs of its diverse population. I do identify a potentially promising practice of family engagement for consideration.

Family Engagement as District Strategy

In addition to the district's stated goal of family engagement (referenced above), the district's efforts are evidenced elsewhere. Common family engagement practices (calendars, newsletters, arts events) appear on the district's website as well as public notices and signs in most school building entrances. The district's 2018-19 Guide to Sunnyside Public Schools for Families and Students, a 72-page, comprehensive document includes policies and procedures. This guide includes information on the district's Office of Family and Community Relations and its efforts to "build the capacity of families and school staff, to organize School Site Councils and plan activities to engage families in their children's learning." This capacity building effort mentioned in the guide could potentially support and impact family engagement activities happening at schools. Educators did not mention this resource in school-based interviews. A

school-based educator, who felt fortunate to attend an out-of-district conference, voiced this dilemma:

> They do ask us to engage families more, quite often. But given like examples of how to do that, that hasn't really happened. I was at a conference last year. And it was about inviting families into the classroom to look at student work and how to get parents who can't get in, and they had a lot of good suggestions. And I just haven't figured out how to implement them.

Family Engagement as School Strategy

A review of school improvement plans between 2017 and 2019 reveals that seven of eight school plans contained a goal around family engagement each year. Most frequently, the goal is stated as, "Increase students' academic success by building family and community partnerships". The activities embedded in these plans appear as technical (i.e. when a flyer is sent home) points or compliance (i.e. attending at least one) expectations. See Table 2 for more examples.

Table 3.3

Excerpts from Sunnyside School Improvement Plans (2017-2019)

Improvement Plan	Family Engagement activities listed
School A	All school events will be shared with families on Class DoJo and flyer at least 2 weeks before event and again 1 week before event
School B	All staff will attend at least one community event per year at school or in the community
School C	Track and share monthly data of tardies, absences, and perfect attendance with staff and families

School D	Teachers will make direct contact with families as soon as a tardy or absence pattern is identified (more than 3 in a week and/or month)
School E	Continue implementing multi-modal two-way communication between schools, families and community to support student learning using school-to-home flyers, Connect Ed, Social media

There were a few outliers in the plans of establishing CRP within family engagement practices. One plan included this expectation for educators: "Communicate respectfully and equitably with families about their children's academic and social-emotional development and document the contact via contact logs, emails, text message, face-to-face meetings, etc". It is notable that while this expectation includes what could be interpreted as culturally responsive approaches, it is more focused on the technical aspects of what educators should be recording and documenting. There is no guidance offered to educators to shape their understanding of what respectful and equitable communication looks like in practice. When asked, educators did not cite a professional development or training that they received on that topic. The school improvement plan, in and of itself, is insufficient in providing this for educators.

Traditional and Technical Approaches

Overall, data revealed that educators predominantly enact family engagement with traditional approaches. Despite educators understanding CRP as acknowledging and knowing different cultures, the family engagement activities described tended to be traditional, monolithic strategies and approaches. One educator shared, as if from a checklist, "There's newsletters. You can have coffee with the guidance counselor. There's Connect Ed. There is an email blast. Open houses, parent teacher night. The standard." These strategies represent forms of one-way communication with families in which the information flows in only one direction: school to

home. Another educator, relatively new to the district, voiced their opinion of current family engagement activities conducted in schools:

> They have their open houses the way they have their open houses. Now, they have translators there. They try to translate stuff home, but no. Not that I'm aware of. This is the way it's always been. It's the way we've always done it here. We hear a lot of that. Which, given the population, is amazing to me.

Having interpreters available at family engagement events represents an acknowledgement that the dominant school language can be a barrier for families. However, one educator expressed frustration that interpretation alone did not constitute cultural responsiveness. "We try to get interpreters. I don't think that's cultural responsiveness, I think that's just basics, you know? Interpreters and translations. Other than that, nothing."

For further data on educator enactment of CRP in family engagement, I analyzed the Sunnyside Induction Program Mentor/Protégé Handbook (2019-20) that guides the mentorship of new Sunnyside educators. The handbook includes a monthly Teacher Mentor expectations/task list. Across a total of 64 action items for new teachers from September to June, only four relate to family engagement. These include (1) Establish parent/guardian contact routine and procedures, (2) Review parent contact log/data and parent engagement activities, (3) Share organizational systems for grades, homework, parent communications, etc. and (4) Discuss procedures for parent-teacher conferences prior to scheduled dates. These tasks represent technical aspects of family engagement but fail to establish an understanding and expectation of CRP and family engagement for new teachers.

District and School Directives

The majority of family engagement activities and strategies being implemented in Sunnyside are the result of district and school directives. Educators engage in the activities that the district or school requires them to do. One school leader shared her expectations for engaging families. "I have some pretty specific expectations for my teachers in connection with family engagement, and we have a minimum of three curriculum related opportunities for parents to engage with their child in learning related content." Another leader voiced, "Well, they (educators) have to have two way communication. So most of them now have classroom dojo and the expectation is that they have regular contact with families in a variety of ways." Finally, a leader shared their advice to educators when engaging families, "be mindful of what needs to be translated to families. I do say you need to communicate if the family's requesting communication that you have to respond within 24 hours." Each of these leaders offers educators specifics on the type of activity or frequency of activity. However, the directives lack underlying rationale as well as capacity building components. No educator mentioned training provided that supported them to implement these directives.

From the perspective of the educator in the classroom, these directives are received as compliance tasks and isolated activities. A newer educator in the district rotely listed off the evidence they must produce related to family engagement by stating, "So they want to see your phone log, emails to parents. And then we take attendance when we have parent-teacher conferences, and that would be evidence that we could provide to the district." When prompted, educators were not able to connect these technical requirements to the impact or quality of engagement or the extent to which it represented CRP.

Emerging Strategy

Several educators shared an example of a family engagement practice to note. The use of Class DoJo which translates messages into more than 35 languages addresses the challenge of communicating with families of different linguistic backgrounds:

> We do have Class DoJo for communication, I do use that. The good thing about that is that if the parents can set a language so it will automatically translate it for them. Also, I do a lot of videos for parents because I don't think I don't have the capability of translating everything. But I think a video of their student working, shows them, this is what's happening in school and this is what is expected of them. And I've had parents that weren't connected and as soon as they see a video, they're like, Oh, I need to get connected.

This technology-based strategy reduces linguistic barriers and offers families authentic opportunities to develop connection to classroom practices and expectations at a time that works for their schedules.

Overall, enactment of CRP in family engagement is impeded in Sunnyside by the absence of a clear definition and framework for it. While the district states a commitment to family engagement through multiple public documents, the commitment is accompanied by a set of technical and compliant directives. This results in educators relying on traditional approaches that are insufficient for engaging the families of marginalized students.

Discussion

This study examined the intersection of CRP and family engagement in a single school district. Through Maitlis' organizational sensemaking framework as well as Mapp & Kuttner's dual capacity building framework for family engagement, I analyzed how educators understand CRP practice in regards to engaging families of marginalized students and, accordingly, how

they enacted that understanding. Most critically, the lack of clarity and definition of CRP for family engagement in Sunnyside directly results in limited educator understanding coupled with discordance in practice.

Understanding and Enactment

Both educator understanding and enactment of CRP in regards to family engagement is limited and hindered by the lack of a clear definition and framework. Educators recognize there are significant cultural differences between themselves and the majority of students and families and most of them value knowing their students. They also view family engagement as an important component of their work. However, these understandings aren't a solid or common foundation of the intersection between CRP and family engagement that is essential for working with the families of marginalized students. Their understanding is grounded in both personal and professional experiences as well as what they learn from students, their families, professional peers and leaders and is not being developed or influenced through district guidance or structures. The lack of district provided learning or capacity building also leaves a void in enactment of CRP in family engagement.

It follows that absent a clear understanding of CRP and family engagement, enactment of it is not consistent or impactful. The district's commitment to family engagement, shared in written form, manifests in a set of technical and compliant requirements for educators at the school level. As a result, family engagement at the school level appears in the form of parents and families coming to the school for information, presentations and events and educators held accountable for logs and sign in sheets. These types of activities, while well intentioned, represent more traditional approaches and do not meet the needs of the families of marginalized students.

Sensemaking and sensegiving

Sunnyside educators do not have a clear, district-wide definition or framework for CRP in family engagement. This impedes the district from engaging in what Maitlis defines as guided organizational sensemaking. In this guided form, leaders are active as sensegivers and are regularly organizing and promoting understandings and explanations. Simultaneously, stakeholders (or educators) receive ideas from leader sensegiving and actively develop their understanding and beliefs. In guided organizational sensemaking, outcomes are unitary and significant.

Instead of guided organizational sensemaking, educators in Sunnyside operate within fragmented organizational sensemaking where they (as stakeholders) are generating and shaping their own understandings. In fragmented organizational sensemaking, leaders aren't sensegivers as they don't attempt to organize discussions or control accounts. In this form of sensemaking, Maitlis found multiple narrow accounts that result in an inconsistent set of actions. The reciprocal process and sensegiving and sensemaking about CRP and family engagement is happening in the district. However, it is happening albeit informally in Sunnyside amongst stakeholders. It is occurring in a less hierarchical manner than is ideal for this type of organizational challenge; a challenge where collective and consistent action is sought.

Implications for Practice

Most critically, districts such as Sunnyside, must endeavor to establish a coherent framework for CRP and family engagement. Educator capacity to meaningfully engage with families can develop when there is a foundation of structure and rationale. Districts can use Mapp & Kuttner's framework as a starting point to assess current educator capacity in four areas.

However, the framework must be accompanied by a robust district vision and commitment to engaging families in culturally responsive ways.

There is a ripe opportunity for Sunnyside leaders to effectively build the capacity of educators to engage families with CRP. Educators are aware of changing demographics of the district as well as the importance of engaging families. A comprehensive approach to building educator capacity should include experiences for educators to explore cultural awareness and competency. This learning should be embedded into the day to day work and learning of professionals. It will provide educators the impetus to shift from current and traditional strategies. The district can identify emerging practices and build teacher leadership there to lead the work. District and school leaders should also employ other methods to influence educator practices such as the educator evaluation process as well as family engagement policies.

Implications for Research

Further research on the intersection of CRP and family engagement is critical. Examining leadership actions that effectively build understanding and enactment of CRP in educators would provide valuable guidance to school districts. Additionally, as new models, frameworks and practices of family engagement emerge, research on its efficacy and impact should follow. An additional research implication is a scholarship on CRP and family engagement that includes family voice. While it pushed outside the boundaries of this doctoral program's research window, I believe it would bring a critical perspective to the analysis.

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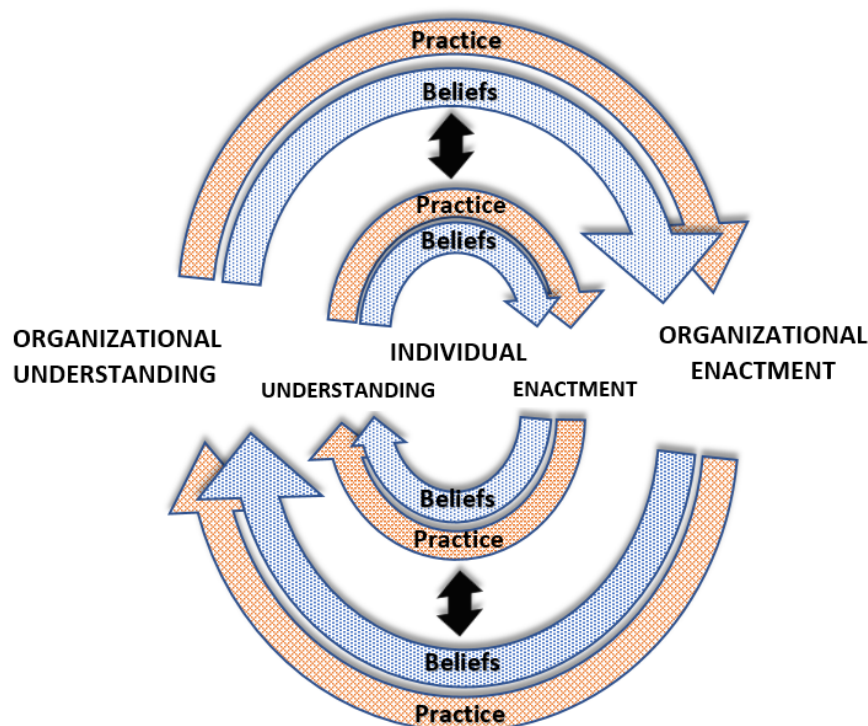
As noted above, this sensemaking requires a continuous cycle of learning, reflection, and implementation related to both the beliefs (represented in blue) and the practices (represented in

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 which 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 Jason W. Medeiros' Individual Study

Enhancing Culturally Responsive Practice in a District:

Understanding Culturally Responsive Practice through Supervision and Evaluation

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.

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		