Journal of Leadership, Equity, and Research

Vol. 10, No. 1, 2024

ISSN: 2330-6459

JLER | Journal of Leadership, Equity, and Research

Center for Leadership Equity and Research

ClearVoz.com

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FOREWORD: THE UBIQUITY OF WARS AND THE "GOOD DANGER" OF PRAXIS

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For a long time, great thinkers like Noam Chomsky and Paulo Freire, among many others, have always been viewed as "dangerous" and even more so in recent days and years. Both are illustrious thinkers and actors who are considered radicals in their own ways, given their defiance against the "banking system" of education; while both men simultaneously pinpoint the "paradoxes of democracy" that hamper creativity and independent thinking of students, educators, administrators, and leaders. Chomsky and Freire have dedicated their work that cultivates the power of language as a means for educational emancipation, intellectual freedom, and social empowerment within overarching universal principles of humanity, justice, and equity. For them, language is the currency for understanding the world realities and the essence of what it means to be human free from bias or prejudice. As such, education should be grounded in emancipation rather than oppression, enlightenment rather than ignorance, and empathy rather than apathy. More importantly, education should be praxis-based in which learners and educators are not brainwashed but constantly brain-triggered to freely dialogue, interact, think, reflect, analyze, apply, and take action to become skillful rather than full of skills.

Indeed, the nature of what educators do, especially when trying to do the right things, is "dangerous". But it is "good danger" for which they are drafted to serve as change agents in society's most vital institutions that are supposedly structured to prepare emancipated upright citizens and human champions. Needless to say, the alternatives are much graver and more detrimental to the most precious bounty civilization has ever possessed—the human mind and potential!

The current remedial trends in educational reforms reflect how reactive schools are in meeting the needs of students and their communities, especially the marginalized and underrepresented populations, that have been deprived of full participation for a long time. So many have fallen prey to the hidden curriculum that amplifies and nurtures a certain tree while concealing the entire forest of world realities reflecting cultural pluralism and human diversity.

For example, it has been assumed that history is recorded from the mouths of the rich and powerful to serve their agenda often with explicit blind bias and grotesque prejudice that ignore the world around them. This old-new notion is articulated by ancient scholars and echoed by contemporary ones. In fact, for thousands of years, the curriculum has, or should have at least, played a large role in portraying the world of reality around us objectively and humanely, but it is often reduced to amplify the reality, perspective, and narrative of the privileged few at the expense of the many oppressed populations. Thus, "those who tell the stories rule society," Plato suggests, and consequently rule the mindsets, brains, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of participants in schools and in other social settings.

Notwithstanding, there is no shortages of wars around us. The literacy wars have been re-emerging under new buzz tunes of the reading science and seemingly literacy fiction. We thought we have come a long way since the era of *Why can't johnny read?* to *Why can't Jose read?* to the advent of *Why can't everyone read?* But, social justice educators have come under fire since *the war on free speech* coupled with *the war on the freedom to read* and *the war on the freedom to think* continue to rage. Similarly, the culture wars continue to hamper efforts towards emancipation in many fronts in the educational arena and beyond both locally and globally. The vicious attacks against many initiatives calling for educational empowerment continue to underscore the need to engage in courageous, difficult, and dangerous praxis advocated by the timeless Platonic, Freirean, and Chomskyan models that drive active involvement in *good danger* for the good of humanity.

With the ubiquity of culture wars, the Center for Leadership, Equity and Research (CLEAR) continues to be a vital forum for combating racism by opening the hearts and minds of anyone serious about equity and social justice. The CLEAR mission and vision largely is reified through the contributions and voices of scholars to the Journal of Leadership, Equity and Research (JLER) despite the resistance and ambivalence all around. In this volume, the authors engage readers in courageous discourse regarding what matters to the common good of schools and communities at large. The volume includes yet another account from which praxis outcomes can be gleaned—all in the name of *good danger*.

Brooke Soles and Colleagues examine formal and nonformal educational leaders' perceptions about the Cultural Proficiency training and its implementation. Their findings indicated variations based on many factors including participants' identity, roles, sociopolitical contexts among others. The study has implications for leaders for effective planning and implementation of cultural proficiency that should be a mindset to for sustaining culturally responsive practices in schools.

Based on the power language exerts in the communication and interactive processes, **Krissia Martinez and Colleagues** examine linguistic brokerage in the American health care system in linguistically and culturally diverse contexts. They shed light on the role bilingual children play in facilitating the communicative process and narrowing communication and cultural gaps. The study underscores the process of translanguaging in various educational and social contexts including the health care institutions.

Denise Ramirez and Amy Williams draw upon the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework to examine inclusive practices in diverse physical education classrooms. Given the unique aspects of physical education goals, objectives and pedagogies, the study is critical in helping novice and veteran teachers to consider the place of inclusive and responsive practices to respond to the needs of all students in diverse settings. The article has direct implications for physical education teachers who seek to engage their students meaningfully (physically, emotionally, socially…etc.) and based on their unique circumstances and cultural needs and expectations.

In their phenomenological study, **Lervan Atticott and Brandy Kamm** examined the exclusionary disciplinary practices that negatively and disproportionately impact Black students academically, socially, and emotionally which have been attributed to the school-to-prison pipeline. They evaluated the lived experiences of students and teachers to explore the impact of restorative justice practices on exclusionary discipline. Their findings indicate restorative justice practices can effectively interrupt the over-suspension and expulsion of Black students if implemented as a practice as opposed to a program. While more research is needed in field, the implications of the study can be gleaned to better serve underrepresented students who have suffered immensely form a system that always failed them.

Shaylyn Marks provides thoughtful review of Milner et al.'s (2019) book *These Kids are Out of Control:" Why We Must Reimagine "Classroom Management" for Equity* that underscores the systemic racism that continues to plague schools that were originally designed for the mainstream privileged populations without taking into account the unique needs and expectations of diverse students and their communities. The volume is yet another addition that affirms that the system's approach of blaming the victim is counterproductive; students will benefit more meaningfully when school leaders recognize that *it is system that is out of line* when it comes to serving diverse student populations, cultivating their assets while meeting their needs. Marks makes apt observations throughout her review while interacting effectively with the main thrust of the book and its implications for all participants in today's diverse schools.

Readers of this year's regular and first edition will find a powerful collection of contributions that have practical values for teachers, educators, and leaders whose vision and mission should be grounded strategic and seamless integration of diversity, equity and social justice.

Finally, on behalf of the JLER's entire team, we are grateful to all partners for preparing this special issue as well as the contributors, reviewers, and everyone who assisted in the production of this rich edition.

JLER
Vol 10, No 1
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PERCEPTIONS OF FORMAL AND NONFORMAL LEADERS ON CULTURAL PROFICIENCY IN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

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ABSTRACT
When it comes to equity and access through culturally proficient practices, what schools intend to do versus what they actually do can be incongruous by defaulting to traditional accountability metrics over change and innovation. Utilizing the Conceptual Framework for Culturally Proficient Practices, the purpose of this study was to investigate formal and nonformal educational leaders' perceptions regarding the barriers and next steps of Cultural Proficiency implementation following a 10-day Cultural Proficiency training. Findings indicated variations based on individual identity, position in the school system, and external socio-political factors that influence how individuals perceive the implementation, advancement, and/or limitations of Cultural Proficiency work.

Keywords: Cultural Proficiency, educational leadership, transformative, school change, equity

INTRODUCTION

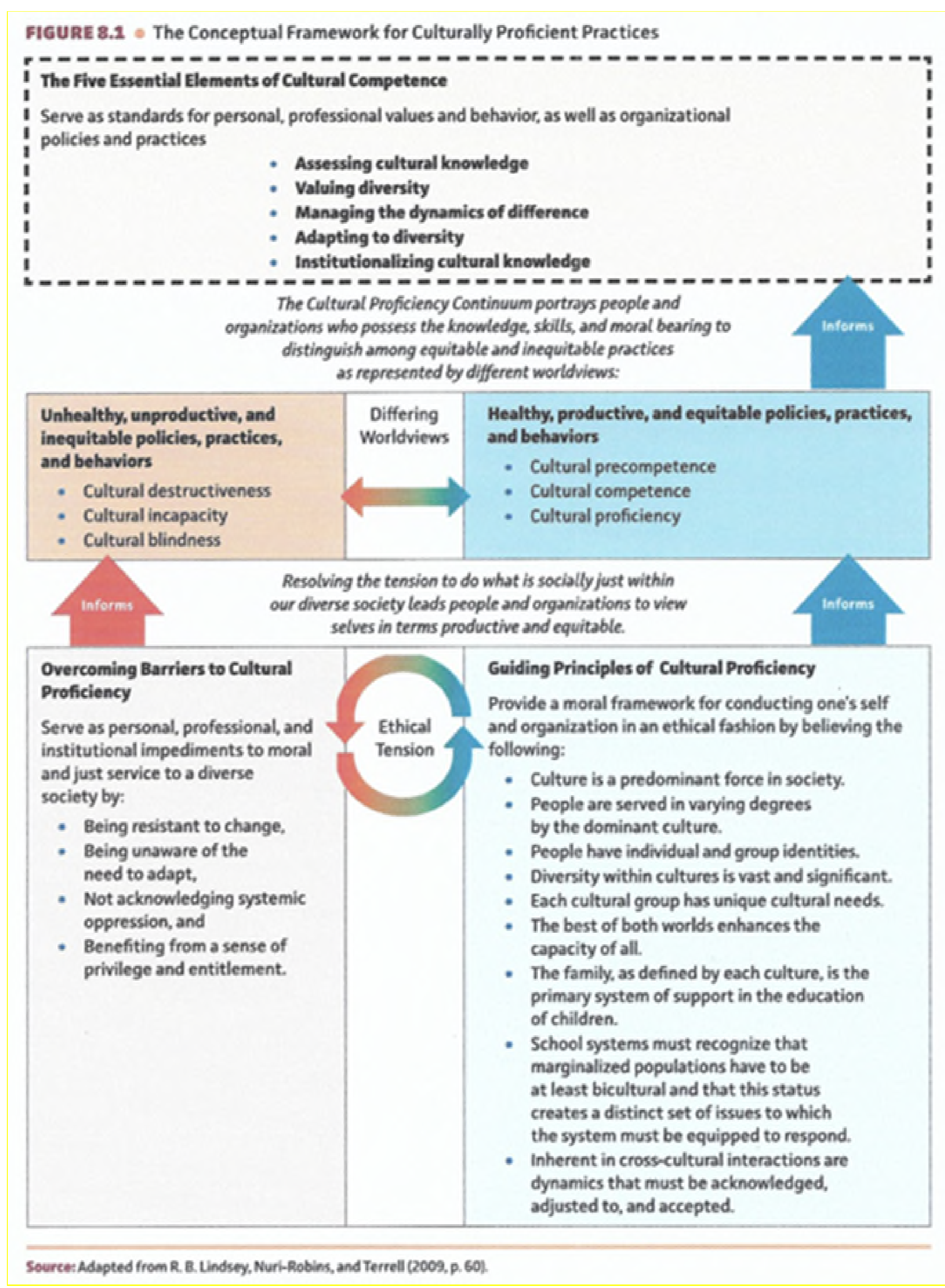
Educational leaders come to understand the importance of equity and access through culturally proficient practices (Biegel, 2010; Bockenek & Brown, 2001; Kumashiro, 2000; Lindsey et al., 2018). However, when it comes to creating measurable outcomes and documenting this process for school reculturing, the democratic process for school change and innovation becomes lost and substituted for more traditional accountability metrics such as standardized tests and sanctions (Au, 2007; Dewey, 1937; Mintrop, 2012; Schein, 1988). Even with good intentions, what schools intend to do and what schools actually do are sometimes incongruous (Kumashiro, 2000; Oakes & Wells, 1997; Theoharis, 2007) when using terms like 'innovation' and 'equity' as foundations (Christensen et al., 2015; Ellis et al., 2019) in the name of improving student outcomes (Booher-Jennings, 2005; Boulay et al., 2018; Grubb, 2010; Mintrop, 2004; Reeves, 2000). Formal and nonformal leaders assist in this disruption, creating equity and access for all and, thus, must be included in the school change process (Lindsey et al., 2018; Welborn et al., 2022; Soles, 2020). Formal leaders are typically those who have official positions that grant them authority and power in schools and districts. In contrast, nonformal leaders have no official role assigning to them, yet they present attributes and leadership skills effective for school change.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study utilized the Conceptual Framework for Culturally Proficient Practices (Cross, 1989; Welborn et al., 2022) to provide a focus on the transformative leadership intersection of formal and nonformal leaders via behaviors, language, policies, and practices of school, district, and community stakeholders (Figure 8.1). Formal and nonformal leaders assist in creating equity and access for all and, thus, must be included in the school change processes (Welborn et al., 2022). Transformative leadership in education facilitates positive school changes (Shields, 2010). Observing through a transformative leadership lens, a culturally proficient approach considers the barriers to transformation at the classroom level and reflects on the barriers' effect on bigger systems at play where leadership is essential. Taking this perspective provided the opportunity to glean how formal and nonformal leaders impacted the implementation process of the Cultural Proficiency Framework.

PURPOSE AND TRAINING GOAL

This study investigated formal and nonformal educational leaders' perceptions regarding the 10-day Cultural Proficiency Training, its influence on their educational practice, the degree to which change has occurred since the training, and potential next steps in continuing the work. The 10-day Cultural Proficiency Training aimed to familiarize participants with the Cultural Proficiency Framework and how to utilize it to address equity, access, and inclusion issues within their personal and professional environments. Participants used the Tools for Cultural Proficiency to build capacity and change conversations, practices, and policies to serve all students. Interviews were conducted with three individuals who went through inaugural trainings.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This article provides findings and conclusions related to two research questions that were used to guide a larger case study:

1. What challenges do educational leaders face during the work of Cultural Proficiency?
2. In what ways do the school district's implementation plans and experiences influence changes associated with Culturally Proficient Practices to serve all students?

METHODOLOGY

As the aim of this study involved the need for understanding individual perspectives and experiences, a qualitative methodology was chosen since such methods are geared towards understanding how individuals make meaning of their contexts in relation to their surroundings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Mertler & Charles, 2011). This required the researchers to obtain detailed, descriptive data from participants to inductively understand how participants of the 10-day Cultural Proficiency Training make meaning of that experience and its relation to their practice and perceptions (Mertler & Charles, 2011).

Given this methodology, a one-on-one, semi-structured interview approach was utilized to obtain the perspectives and experiences of participants. Participants were given the option to do a video conference or phone interview at a time they deemed convenient for their schedule. An interview protocol, based on this study's research questions, was utilized to assist with guiding the interview, but the semi-structured approach allowed the researchers the malleability to probe further into presented responses or explore topics non-sequentially (Ayres, 2008; O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017). Pseudonyms were chosen for locations and participants.

Data Collection and Sampling

The District of Leone provided a list of 10 individuals and their email addresses to the researchers of those who attended the 10-day Cultural Proficiency Training. These participants were selected to attend this Training as representatives of equity work in the District. The researchers emailed these individuals to schedule either a video conference or phone interview for up to 60 minutes that would be audio and/or video recorded. Out of the 10 individuals, four agreed to participate in the study, while three declined an interview. The remaining three individuals did not respond to either initial invitations or follow-up invitations sent via email 10 days later.

Of the four individuals who agreed to participate, one chose a phone interview, and the other three chose the video conferencing option. Of the four participants who agreed to schedule an interview, three were interviewed for the study, while one did not attend the scheduled interview, nor did they respond to follow-up emails about the interview and study. Thus, a total of three individuals were interviewed for this study. During the interviews, the researchers took preliminary notes on observations made to revisit during the data analysis process (Emerson et al., 2011; Saldaña, 2016). Recordings of each interview were transcribed to perform coding operations during data analysis.

Data Analysis

The researchers utilized an online speech-to-text program as a first-round of transcription on recorded interviews for efficiency. Researchers then reviewed and cleaned transcripts to ensure

accuracy compared to recordings and engaged in member-checking with respective participants to make sure their narratives were captured accurately and to allow participants to provide additional clarifications or insights (Glesne, 2006; Maxwell, 2013; Mero-Jaffe, 2011; Seidman, 2013). From there, iterative coding procedures were performed by hand, which began with open coding to uncover emic findings (Saldaña, 2016). A second round of process coding was utilized to identify actions taken by participants and their perceptions of actions occurring within their environments (Saldaña, 2016). A third round of focused coding was performed to assist with categorizing and relating codes either within or outside of the outlined research questions for this study (Saldaña, 2016; Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). The researchers collaboratively analyzed findings to evaluate perspectives and interpretations after each round of coding.

Participants

There are three participants in this study. Ben, an Asian-American male (he/him/his) who grew up in the South, was part of the first cohort to go through the 10-day Cultural Proficiency training. He had a background in teaching within the field of humanities and obtained an assistant principal position shortly after completing the training at a different site. During the interview, he noted being disconnected from his original site's post-training results and plans and was still getting familiar with his new site and their relationship to Cultural Proficiency. He was the only person of color interviewee and the only male-identified participant in this study. Daisy was an assistant superintendent who identified as a White female (she/her/hers), leader/educator, teacher, and learner. Like Ben, she also participated in the first cohort of the 10-day Cultural Proficiency training and was integral in introducing the district to those trainings. Rachelle, a self-identified woman (she/her/hers) with a mixture of Western and Northern European ethnicity, was a mother in a bi-racial/bilingual family. She was a former student-athlete and coach who was active in extreme sports. Her role at the time of her interview was as a language teacher who was a non-native speaker of the language and who had traveled to and lived in many countries that spoke that language. She attended the 10-day Cultural Proficiency training as part of the second cohort going through the program. These three participants represent the following findings.

FINDINGS

When asked about challenges faced while doing Cultural Proficiency work, participants responded in two ways. The first included responses related to systemic, long-held, well-known barriers to student learning within education. The second included interpreting the question as referring to challenges within the district and school that inhibited the promotion of Cultural Proficiency. Barriers to participants themselves or other individuals were not discussed by participants for either interpretation.

Value-Systems

Various mentions of existing value-systems, or interpretations thereof, emerged from each participant in discussing challenges. Topics that were mentioned in relation to value-systems

included time, priority, and politics. Value-systems represent explicit values, language, and standards for effective personal interaction and professional practices (Welborn et al., 2022).

Time

Different perceptions of time were presented in interviews: scheduling, duration, and bandwidth. An example of these three aspects of time can be seen in Daisy's experience of when the trainings were scheduled,

> …as a [district executive leadership group] member, I struggled because my colleagues in [the district executive leadership group] did not necessarily prioritize those 10 days [of training] that I was away from the office. And so that's where I personally have had difficulties of stepping out to take a phone call, and I'm missing the robust conversations and the activities. And so, at the beginning, over the summer or such, there would be fewer distractions. But once the school year was underway, I would find more and more distractions where I might have to leave a half-day. And I was super apologetic, and of course, the trainers were very understanding. But yet that's not the intent. The intent is to truly be present for the 10 days. And I did find that to be very, very difficult to prioritize, because my whole system wasn't necessarily prioritizing [these trainings] yet.

This example demonstrated these overlapping perceptions of 'time.' Having the trainings during the summer (scheduling) made it possible for Daisy to be present (bandwidth) during those long training days (duration) due to fewer overall distractions. However, when trainings occurred during the school year (scheduling), distractions from her colleagues prevented Daisy from being able to be fully present and participate (bandwidth) in these extensive training sessions (duration).

Rachelle also brought up various issues with 'time.' Though she felt it was an honor to be chosen for the second training cohort, there was concern and hesitation over being out of the classroom for so many days (scheduling and duration). It was not until she underwent the training that she realized an appreciation for the duration of time:

> …when I put in all my req[uest] forms to take the days off from school, I thought, "Oh my gosh, we have to go there for three whole days? I don't want to be out of my classroom for three whole days, that's a lot of time." But then once you're there and you're involved and you have time to reflect and you have time to think, you're, like, "Oh wow, I couldn't have done it in an afternoon. I couldn't have done it on a Saturday morning." I needed those three days to go through the process in order to really get on board.

Rachelle's experience demonstrated a contradiction between her and Daisy's experiences. While Rachelle, as a classroom teacher, expressed concern with spending time away from regular duties during the school year (scheduling and duration) prior to the training, she came to appreciate the need for it to truly be present for the trainings (bandwidth) after the fact. As an administrator, Daisy had the obstacle of regular duties conflicting with the training during the academic year and preventing her from being present during the training (scheduling and bandwidth). Questions that

arose from this contradiction included: 1) Does being absent for those days during the academic year negatively impact students as Rachelle feared?; 2) Was there a positive change to the classroom environment as a result of attending the training?; and 3) Did Daisy's inability to be present during trainings due to work-conflicts negatively impact her ability to experience and gain key components from the training? Though there was no direct way to test for answers to these questions, it demonstrated differing value-systems for those attending trainings (teachers versus administrators) and how their regular duties either allowed for or acted as barriers to Cultural Proficiency trainings.

Another challenge that Rachelle brought up was the work being done post-training. Her district held monthly meetings after school and during the week to strategize how to promote Cultural Proficiency trainings and practices in the district. However, she relayed how those two-hour meetings were taxing on members, especially after spending all day teaching virtually (scheduling and bandwidth) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, during those meetings, Rachelle was unsure whether such work was truly valued by the district and personnel since 1) the time dedicated to it was relegated to after-hours or only as 15-minute activities at the beginning of a packed staff meeting (scheduling, duration, bandwidth), and 2) it was considered an optional activity and some staff were more dedicated than others in attending and promoting this work (scheduling):

> …using our kind of advisory committee that we are working on right now, [we should] have maybe a half-day or something where you're not waiting until the end of the workday to get it done…and make sure that everybody's there, make sure that everybody's present, make sure that we're able to kind of move forward […] So changing the focus [to], "Yeah we're going to go ahead and pay you hourly to be involved and to show up," and things like that. But if the district really, really, really wants buy-in from the committee and from having us go out to our sites and kind of spread the word, then maybe it does need to kind of shift in terms of how they do their meetings and how much emphasis they put on the meeting.

This sentiment was not brought up by Ben or Daisy, who were more administrative in their duties, which again contrasts perceptions between those in the classroom and those in administration. These points regarding a value in time also lend themselves to the topic of values in priority.

Priority

As addressed by Rachelle and Daisy, questions regarding the district and personnel's focus, or perceived lack thereof, on Cultural Proficiency due to time constraints signaled the value and priority placed on Cultural Proficiency work. As mentioned by Daisy, her colleagues' disregard for her time while participating in the training made it clear to her that they did not prioritize her ability to be present in those trainings. Though this brought up questions as to whether this might have been due to other personnel issues (i.e., lack of training, lack of communication, the nature of issues needing her attention, delegation of duties), it was clear that Daisy's experiences in the

Cultural Proficiency training were hindered by such disruptions which impacted her perceptions of her colleagues and their priorities related to Cultural Proficiency training.

All three participants, to varying degrees, noted differences in priority for Cultural Proficiency work when it came to district personnel. Rachelle and Daisy brought up a lack of access to trainings by classified versus certified staff, as certified staff or administrators were sent to trainings over classified staff. This subsequently limited the classified staff from promoting or supporting the work done by the district toward Cultural Proficiency. Such barriers to access may present an assumed hierarchy of who district administrators perceived to be eligible and have priority for such trainings. However, as an administrator, Daisy noted in her interview that she would like more classified personnel to participate in trainings. A question that arose regarding this matter was whether classified personnel may have similar concerns to ones brought up by Rachelle on attending such trainings (e.g., finances, duties being put off while away, etc.). Districts should consider and proactively address this to ease concerns for both classified and certified staff for future trainings.

Another issue brought up by all three participants was that Cultural Proficiency is not typically seen as a priority for others in the district, or it is seen as an auxiliary topic to other professional development topics rather than a central value on which to build the district's mission and policies. Ben perceived others as hesitating towards Cultural Proficiency work, while Rachelle noted others were not as dedicated to the work due to absences at the Cultural Proficiency workgroups. Again, Rachelle also noted perceiving the district as not being as dedicated due to having meetings and workgroups after-hours and designating them as optional.

Rachelle and Daisy also brought up perceptions and observations regarding different types of personnel in the district, notably veteran personnel who have been in schools for a while. Rachelle summed it up as such:

> …[promoting Cultural Proficiency is] a daunting task because you've got those old-school folks that have been around for a long time, and it's very difficult to convince them that this is amazing work and it does actually function […] That's the one thing that I hear from them is, "Oh what's this new group? What's this new organization? What's this new system that we have to learn?," because so many, back in the [19]80's and [19]90's in education, every single acronym in the world was thrown at you. Every single new concept was thrown at you, and you're like, "Okay, I have to learn this now," or, "I have to learn this, I have to involve this in my curriculum, in my teaching." […] They treat [Cultural Proficiency] the same way because they don't know how important it is.

This example shows both a lack of communication or set expectations regarding the goal and purpose of these trainings to district personnel and a tension that exists between those excited, willing, and wanting to charge ahead with this work versus those who still need easing into the work or understanding that this is a priority topic and focus for the district. An interesting approach brought up by Ben was:

> If it's important enough, you make it a priority, and you find the time. And, given our current climate, I think you find the time. You find the resources to do it. But, I mean, it's not easy. It will take time, and there are people who are not going to be prepared for it or want to do it to face up to those things. But, slowly but surely, you got the critical few turning into a critical mass and then hopefully right the boat with where those people who are refusing to admit it are the exception rather than the rule. And then you keep working at it on trying to convince them, too. So you just don't stop. […] I'm a big believer in, 'Fake it until you make it'. So, if they're going through the motions, at least they're going through that motion and they're practicing that skill. And eventually, maybe little things connect. But if there's a certain behavior that you want them to do while they may not believe in the theory behind the behavior, well, you're still getting the behavior that you want to see whether it be treating kids equitably, discipline-wise, they might have problems with it, but if they're following, say, a restorative process, they don't have to believe in restorative practices, but the effect is what we want is the ending result.

Ben brought up an interesting point: the idea of Cultural Proficiency performance without having it be internalized as an actual priority for individuals. Questions that arose from this perception and approach were whether this enactment was enough to reach the desired goal of Cultural Proficiency. One could argue that a 'fake it until you make it' approach may not be enough to achieve the desired Cultural Proficiency goal if students perceive disingenuous approaches by personnel who might be unable to sufficiently model or moderate Cultural Proficiency discussions outside of a prescribed approach. Such an approach may cause harm to student experiences. However, given Ben's position as an administrator, setting a standard expectation, requirement, or regulation for personnel may be in his purview to accomplish when it comes to Cultural Proficiency work. This brings up perceptions of individual agency and their ability to enact systemic change in their roles regarding Cultural Proficiency.

Politics

On the topic of agency, there also exists an element of politics within the district and from the external surrounding community. These discussions by participants were reminiscent of Kezar's (2018) analogy of higher education institutions being within a cage where institutions appear to function within their own ecosystem separate from society, but there actually exists a high permeance and influence between the two 'through the bars' when it comes to culture. As a district administrator, Daisy noted that her work and the district's work were impacted by community influences and societal politics.

> I would say in our community of Romia, the political element is very polarized…[W]e have absolutely the best intentions for all of our students, but yet we don't want to roll [Cultural Proficiency] out in such a way that there's a backlash and then that inhibits us from moving forward as quickly as we wish to […] The State recently put together the Ethnic Studies framework, and are encouraging school districts to create

> Ethnic Studies curriculum courses, and even require it for high school graduation…Before we've even considered it, or had a chance to talk about it, people are calling us, calling Board members, "You're not doing this, are you? This is racist curriculum. This is anti-American. This is calling all White people racist." It's that level of fear or anxiety around the topic, and not a readiness to have a conversation and explore what would that look like, and what does it mean. It's the politics piece that's clouding the implementation and the good intentions […R]ight now it's more of this quiet, behind-the-scenes talking to Board members [like], "Hey, you're not doing this, are you?," to leaders who then are hesitant to have a conversation, because of the sentiment that they're hearing from the community. I had a phone call myself from a community member, not a parent, not a staff member, not really related to our organization, just a community member who was asking me all about the Ethnic Studies, and what is our stance, and where are we at. That kind of a thing. So, it's this proactive resistance that then inhibits the conversation, or at least delays it.

This indirect emotional and political intrusion and influence from the public – not even members of the school community – was what Daisy termed as "proactive resistance" that hindered the pedagogical practice of educators. In addition to these external pressures, Ben and Rachelle also alluded to similar political barriers within their own sites that hindered Cultural Proficiency work. Both noted some personnel at their respective sites considered this just one more item on a checklist to perform as educators. However, they each brought up different perspectives and additional barriers to Cultural Proficiency work, which could be attributed to their roles within their specific sites. As noted previously, Ben recognized that Cultural Proficiency work is not simple and can take time to achieve. However, due to his role, he responded to such barriers by suggesting continuing to implement and push towards that direction and practice regardless of internalization by educators. Rachelle, on the other hand, expressed frustration with those who were not ready to fully value and embrace Cultural Proficiency while she and her colleagues were excited and ready to dive in. This in-group/out-group rhetoric reflected similar political polarization that Daisy mentioned occurred between the district and its community.

Consistency

Another category cited as a challenge to promoting Cultural Proficiency was consistency. These were brought up in terms of practice, personnel, and current events. Consistency is encapsulated as implementing change requiring focus, clarity, and monitoring; situating contexts for the best change leaders in education (Reeves, 2009).

Practice

When it comes to the Cultural Proficiency trainings, Daisy noted that the practice of Cultural Proficiency was related to the consistency of members within the training cohorts. With the first cohort, Daisy mentioned the practices introduced within the training, and the cohort's ability to have a common language and experience created a strong bond and deep connection between the members. Even after the training, Daisy noted members were still connected with

each other and had infused Cultural Proficiency in their work even when moving on to different positions within the district. This indicates a cohort-model and designated training schedule for this Cultural Proficiency training may have provided a consistent, reliable, and safe environment in which to introduce the practice of Cultural Proficiency, which allowed members to test out language and develop rapport amongst each other on the subject. Having practiced within this environment and consistent community, cohort members were then able to translate knowledge into their respective roles after training was complete. The importance of consistency in real-world practice can be seen by contrasting these experiences with those of the second cohort. Daisy brought up inconsistencies in membership of the second cohort due to career movements which caused a fracture in the rapport-building of the group. This inconsistency, in her view, impacted the cohort's ability to feel safe in practicing Cultural Proficiency with each other and impacted their ability to develop a strong connection with each other as a cohort. Given Daisy's observation and the frustrations Rachelle brought up regarding her colleagues' lack of commitment to Cultural Proficiency, the internalization of such practices due to lack of consistency in membership at trainings may have been negatively impacted.

While Daisy noted there being consistent Cultural Proficiency policies and practices as a district, Ben and Rachelle brought up concerns regarding practices at their individual sites. Ben brought up disciplinary practices that existed at his site that were inconsistent with the values of Cultural Proficiency. Taking a broader view on the subject, he referred to long-standing racial disparities when it came to disciplinary practices in education that systemically disenfranchise students of color. In this sense, Ben highlighted such practices as a perpetuation of such racialized practices that inhibit the success of students of color and supports what he considered the "school to prison pipeline."

Rachelle, on the other hand, discussed inconsistencies when it came to educators' pedagogical practices and their ability to include Cultural Proficiency within a set curriculum,

> In some of the curriculum that we have already kind of set up in our textbooks and supplementals that we use, [Cultural Proficiency pedagogy is] already there. It's just a matter of what you do with it. You can keep it extremely dry and not do anything interesting with it and just teach the material and assess the kids, which unfortunately, there are some people that do that in our district. Not necessarily at my school but at other sites. After being in the district for 14 years, I've worked with the other [language] teachers and there's a couple of them that I can tell don't really try to reach out and connect the material with the student's perspective. And then there's some people that do it really well. So I feel like maybe it was already kind of there, it's just, like, what are you going to do with it and how are you going to present it.

Given this insight, it seems to be happenstance whether a student gets a teacher who is able and willing to creatively implement Cultural Proficiency within a given curriculum. This inconsistency in practice can have major ramifications on student experiences and whether they are getting a culturally proficient education.

Personnel

Outside of the personnel concerns related to inconsistent membership and attendance impacting training cohorts, both Daisy and Rachelle mentioned how it is the certificated staff being consistently chosen for trainings and the lack of classified staff. This raises questions regarding equity, namely the existence of a hierarchal culture in education and a lack of potentially differing perspectives on culture and what it means to be culturally proficient in training settings. However, it is important to note that both participants recognized this limitation in their interviews. Rachelle mentioned this issue should be addressed, and Daisy noted all members of the district should be promoting culturally proficient practices, not just certified staff. Dais also hoped to assist in rectifying this for future cohorts before the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the issue of current events.

Current Events

Rachelle cited the COVID-19 pandemic as a barrier to culturally proficient practices due to educators needing to pivot curriculum to remote learning at the start of the pandemic and hybrid learning mid-pandemic. This inconsistency in educational modes with limited preparation and training impacted educators' abilities to translate in-person experiences. Such challenges may have stunted educators' ability to promote Culturally proficient practices in the virtual classroom.

A few examples of additional current event aspects within and surrounding the district, school, and personnel were presented previously. These included 1) interference from community members, whether associated with the district or not, that impacted educational policies and practices; 2) current disciplinary practices that perpetuated inequities; and 3) concerns regarding whether Cultural Proficiency performance rather than internalization by educators were enough to achieve Cultural Proficiency.

In addition to current events, participants brought up potential examples of language, behaviors, policies, and practices that may support or hinder Cultural Proficiency. These include participants' positional focus and training implementation.

Positional Focus

In discussing Cultural Proficiency, each participant brought up different perceptions about what this entailed, given the topics they chose to discuss. As a male-identified Asian-American, Ben's personal experiences and positionality informed his Cultural Proficiency lens to be on race, ethnicity, and gender. His anecdotes detailed personal experiences that were rich in detail and included his role, perceptions, and developed conceptualizations during and after such experiences. As an administrator, Daisy had a much broader concept of Cultural Proficiency, mentioning aspects such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, housing security, and ability. However, conversations regarding these aspects were more broadly discussed, primarily in terms of metrics, standards, and outcomes required by the state and using that information to determine areas needing support for students. Rachelle, as a language teacher, focused on deep anecdotes related to ethnicity and culture as well as the facilitation of political conversations between her

students. These varied perceptions of Cultural Proficiency point to the idea that individual experiences and positionalities within the school system shape the focus of what Cultural Proficiency means and how individuals address it. Though this insight may seem reasonable, what becomes evident is these individuals went through the Cultural Proficiency training and yet seemed to utilize Cultural Proficiency schemas that were more related to their own experiences and positionality. This raises questions regarding whether these may lead to practices or policies that are limited in reach and cover populations that align with educators' purview rather than providing equity for all students.

In addition, equity and Cultural Proficiency were defined by the two administrators, Ben and Daisy, as being able to provide access and determine where additional assistance and support for students needed to be allocated. However, both approached this concept with the idea that supporting students meant providing access to meet existing educational standards or raising performance up to a set metric. This approach reveals that a deficit-based mentality still exists when it comes to incorporating Cultural Proficiency into practice. Such approaches maintain existing measurements and curriculum with the need to bring students up to that level rather than questioning the measurements and curriculum, which by design, may exclude or marginalize various ways of learning and cultural existences. This limitation in being able to perceive culturally proficient practices, or lack thereof, within existing schemas of schooling could be seen in how training influenced practice.

Training Implementation

All three participants highlighted the icebreakers and activities they participated in during the trainings as useful tools in helping to comprehend and conceptualize Cultural Proficiency in their personal experiences. These exercises were also cited as useful in translating culturally proficient practices into their educational practice, aiding in the internalization of their importance. However, when asked how culturally proficient practices were implemented in their work, participants all noted they utilized those same activities and exercises verbatim within their respective spheres. This presents a functional-fixedness issue for participants in introducing Cultural Proficiency concepts and conversations with others outside of such activities. This inability to branch out in conceptualizing Culturally proficient practices in education limited participants' ability to promote healthy Cultural Proficiency behaviors and practices.

DISCUSSION

Formal and Nonformal Educational Leaders' Perceptions of the Influence on Practice

Timing was a theme presented by participants when it came to the training and its influence on their practice. As a district executive leadership member, Daisy was eager and able to be present for the extensive training during the summer yet struggled during the school year due to colleagues' distracting and preventing her from being able to participate fully and be present. Rachelle, was honored to be chosen as part of the second cohort, but she was initially concerned about being out of the classroom and away from her students for so many days. These concerns

regarding timing and the training demonstrates potentially differing value-systems for training attendees (i.e., teachers versus administrators) and how their regular duties and their colleagues either allow for or possibly act as barriers to Cultural Proficiency training.

Participants' personal and professional identities seemed to play a role in their Cultural Proficiency lenses and practices. As a male-identifying Asian-American assistant principal, Ben's Cultural Proficiency lens focused on race, ethnicity, and gender relating to his lived experiences. Daisy, as a district administrator, had a broader concept of Cultural Proficiency, mentioning ethnicity, socioeconomic status, housing security, and ability. Rachelle, as a language teacher, focused on detailed anecdotes related to ethnicity, culture, and politics in teaching her students. These varied perceptions of Cultural Proficiency indicate individual experiences and positionalities within the school system may shape the focus and, subsequently, method of addressing Cultural Proficiency.

Two different tensions were brought up by participants around the training. The first involved veteran personnel who viewed Cultural Proficiency work and the training as just one more item to be added to their curriculum rather than a core value held by the district. This highlights both a lack of communication around the goals, expectations, and purpose of this training to district personnel. The second involved an element of politics and those within and outside the district who were either excited, willing, and wanting to charge ahead with Cultural Proficiency work while others still needed to be convinced of its benefits to the district. As a district administrator, Daisy noted that her work and the work of the district are impacted by community influences and societal politics. Ben and Rachelle also alluded to similar proactive resistance that hindered Cultural Proficiency work within their own sites. Addressing this, Ben discussed the need to continue prioritizing Cultural Proficiency work along with an interesting approach.

Perceptions regarding influences on practice differed depending on participants' positions within the district. These ranged from 'Cultural Proficiency performance,' frustrations related to the lack of valuing and prioritizing Cultural Proficiency, and the role political polarization had on the district's community and its influence on educational policies and practices.

Formal and Nonformal Educational Leaders' Perceptions to the Degree Which Change Has Occurred Since the Training

The practice of Cultural Proficiency post-training appeared to be associated with the consistency of cohort members who attended the training. Daisy described her cohort's ability to develop a strong bond and deep connections during the training through shared language and experiences via the introduction of Culturally proficient practices. Rachelle and Ben also discussed on-site concerns regarding Cultural Proficiency practice. Rachelle discussed inconsistencies in teachers' pedagogical practices and their ability to include Cultural Proficiency within a set curriculum. Rachelle's insight introduced a level of chance as to whether a student gets a teacher who is able and willing to implement Cultural Proficiency pedagogy and practices within a given curriculum or not.

In addition, Ben and Daisy's role as administrators framed their lens on equity as

determining where resources could be utilized to mold students into predetermined, existing educational metrics rather than challenging whether such metrics promote or hinder Culturally proficient practices. Such limitations in conceptualizing culturally proficient practices were also seen in participants' dependence on training activities and icebreakers as rote when implementing Cultural Proficiency into practice.

Implications for Future Research

The relevance of this project to the field of educational leadership is evidenced by educational practitioners and researchers using the Cultural Proficiency Framework in classrooms, schools, districts, and universities to better understand the underlying belief systems that can influence educator practice, school environments, and what students experience to create positive school change. Furthermore, our public schools need leaders who are culturally proficient so they can address the cultural differences found within an unchanged educational system and, in some respects, a digressing society that sees our majority-minority student demographic as inferior, severely lacking, or responsible for its own situation (Saeb et al., 2022; Soles & Maduli-Williams, 2019). To lead this paradigm shift at the institutional, organizational, and personal level will require formal and informal leaders with skills, perspectives, and, most importantly, a self-awareness to address issues that emerge when cultural differences are marginalized in schools and other organizations (Anan, 2023; Welborn, 2023). This self-awareness is only the beginning of individual, organizational, and institutional change. It also requires the right type of leadership capable of creating praxis or synthesizing theory and reflective practice to inspire action that challenges power relationships and leads to transformative change (Roegman et al., 2021; Welborn et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this descriptive study provide further evidence of the challenges nonformal and formal leaders face when addressing complex human interactions for organizational change in their implementation of the Cultural Proficiency Framework (Lindsey et al., 2018; Theoharis, 2007). These findings illustrate how nonformal and formal leaders categorize their understanding of implementing the Cultural Proficiency Framework. Moreover, nonformal leaders may be positioned to be counter formal leaders even when collaborating alongside one another to create the change they wish to see (Gray et al., 2019; Welborn, 2023; Welborn, 2019). Thus, it is imperative that findings, such as those presented here, are made available to the public to shed light on how nonformal and formal leaders can collaborate to create sustaining, culturally proficient educational practices.

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Journal of Leadership, Equity, and Research

JLER
Vol 10, No 1
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http://journals.sfu.ca/cvj/index.php/cvj/index

UNRAVELLING CHILD LANGUAGE BROKERING FOR HEALTH: UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITIES BEHIND CHILDREN'S INTERPRETING FOR HEALTH CARE

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ABSTRACT

The U.S. healthcare system struggles to provide adequate language assistance to medical practitioners and patients. As a result, health providers and patients rely on ad hoc interpreters, including children, to communicate. Bilingual children who regularly interpret for others, whom we refer to as child language brokers, are important linguistic and cultural conduits for their communities and bridge language differences in vital contexts, such as health and medical settings. In this paper, we explore the experiences of 17 adolescent language brokers and consider the settings, tasks, and people they engage with when language brokering for health. Findings illustrate that child language brokering is a real and important component for immigrant family health, that child language brokering for health is not a uniform experience, and that language brokering for

health can sometimes have severe ramifications.

Keywords: child language brokers, health, health equity

INTRODUCTION

Language barriers in health services can impact the quality of care patients and families receive or whether they can access care at all (Al Shamsi et al., 2020). Poor communication caused by language barriers can result in misunderstanding symptom descriptions or medical instructions, potentially causing unintended and life-threatening consequences (Flores, 2014; Steinberg et al., 2016). Despite the dangers of language gaps in health care, the number of health interpreters in the U.S. remains scarce (Eldred, 2018). As a result of strained language and cultural resources, health providers and individuals who primarily speak languages other than English may seek the language assistance of bilingual children, whom we refer to as child language brokers (CLBs) (Tse, 1995). The size of the U.S. child language brokering population is unclear; however, CLBs are typically children of immigrants with limited English proficiency. As of 2017, 38% of immigrants had one parent with limited English proficiency (Lou & Lei, 2019). CLBs are likely a large population, and although research has documented that it is common for CLBs to help interpret everyday life and activities, we know little of their experiences facilitating health interactions and information.

This paper discusses findings from focus group interviews with 17 high school-aged youth who regularly have language brokered for their family health needs. Our first data review offers a wide-lens view of the health landscape in which our study participants described language brokering, including the settings, stakeholders, and language brokering tasks. We take our analysis one step further by focusing in on individual health events described by participants and reviewing each event for the health topics, language brokering tasks, stakeholders, and setting. We organize the data by participant, making visible the frequency or infrequency of certain health topics, language brokering tasks, and stakeholders. This additional step in our analysis aims to illustrate how even within a single domain, like health, language brokering activities can look different for children and families. We identified 27 health events where participants described the setting, stakeholders, health topic, and language brokering tasks. Our analysis of these events illuminates the extensive impact that language brokers have on their parents, siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, and stranger's ability to engage with health providers and information. We also discuss the multiple literacies language brokers practice when mediating health information from the internet.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language Brokering

This paper discusses findings from focus group interviews with 17 high school-aged youth who regularly language broker for their family health needs. The experiences of these young people help illustrate the complex nature of their work. Language brokers mediate their family's language, a second language (in the U.S., the second language is English), and specialized language relevant to the context, i.e., terms specific to health or technology. Their language work

also intertwines with decoding culture, voice tone, facial expressions, and emotions in cross-cultural and language interactions (Crafter & Iqbal, 2022). Another layer of child language brokering involves the dynamics of collaboration between children and adults. In child language brokering interactions, children's linguistic and cultural contributions are necessary and help their families work together to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers. Valdés et al. (2014) refer to this collaboration as a family *performance team:* "they perform as part of a team, and they must keep before them the ways in which their parents want to present themselves to the world" (p. 98).

Scholarship that examines the sociolinguistics and pragmatics of live child language brokering have found that children engage with complex language and cultural situations that promote bilingualism, biculturalism, and the development of a strong ethnic identity - all of which can support self-esteem and self-efficacy (Hall and Sham, 2007; Love and Buriel, 2007; Orellana, 2019). This research has also found that language brokering can positively impact schooling and testing (Acoach & Webb, 2004; Dorner et al., 2007; Guan et al., 2014). Despite the potential benefits, language brokering can be stressful for children and families. Numerous studies have found that child language brokers experience acculturative and family stress when their cultural knowledge and language development outpaces their parents (Kam, 2011; Weisskirch, 2010). Similarly, some studies have found that language brokering during childhood and adolescence may impact the mental health of youth and young adults, including a higher risk for depression and anxiety (Rainey et al., 2014).

Literature on CLBs in Health Contexts

Literature focused on health-related child language brokering illuminates domain-specific aspects, such as the kind of interactions they mediate, which include interpreting mail, medical instructions, and forms for health insurance. CLBs also engage digital tools such as the internet to search for the meaning and translation of unfamiliar words and language brokering health information for their families (Katz, 2014). The concerns associated with child language brokering for health are unique because they include the concerns of health providers. Several studies have found that health providers worry about child language brokers making translation errors or medical decisions for adults, and some feel concerned that relying on children as language brokers compromises their medical professional identity (Cohen et al., 1999; Katz, 2014). Another prevalent concern regarding CLBs mediating health interactions is the potential for engaging with health topics or information deemed inappropriate for children, e.g., reproductive health issues, news of a parent's poor health, or domestic violence (Green et al., 2005). A potentially sensitive topic CLBs may also encounter when interpreting for healthcare is family immigration status and access to care or insurance eligibility (Martinez et al., 2017; Castañeda et al., 2015). Despite concerns, child language brokering for health prevails as an important family resource, making it important to study.

METHODS

Data for this study were collected in five focus group interviews with 17 language brokers who reported regularly translating and mediating health information for their families. The 17 participants for this study were recruited through a convenience sampling method via class announcements by the first and third authors. The third author assisted with the school's college access program at the time of the study. The school serves K-12 students and is in a Central Los Angeles neighborhood with a large immigrant population. Given that the school is situated in a diverse and immigrant community, the recruitment process relied on students to self-identify as family language brokers who assisted with health matters regularly.

Students who expressed interest in participating in focus groups were given consent/assent forms to take home and discuss with their families; 17 students returned signed assent forms; the parents of the 16 participants under the age of 18 also signed consent forms. Participants ranged in age from 14 to 18. All participants were bilingual speakers of English and either Spanish, Korean, Chinese, or Bengali. The majority (14) were bilingual in Spanish and English. Participants' names have been changed for this paper. All participants were given food during the focus groups and a gift card for their participation. The study was reviewed and approved by UCLA's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The focus group interviews were held in classrooms at the participants' school. Five focus group interviews were conducted after school hours, each spanning 45 to 90 minutes. One focus group was moderated in Spanish and four in English. In line with traditional focus group design, interviews were semi-structured, opening with open-ended questions and followed with probing questions (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Most questions focused on participants' experiences of language brokering for health (e.g., "Have any of you helped interpret at a doctor's office? What was translating at a doctor's office like for you?)

The first and third authors served as focus group moderators. Both moderators are bilingual, children of immigrants, and have experience with language brokering. Sharing some background experience with participants made us aware that discussing health matters may be a sensitive topic for children from immigrant families because healthcare accessibility can be linked to immigration status (Martinez et al., 2017). Therefore, participants were not asked to share private details about their health histories but rather the health topics they had encountered through language brokering. Moderators also underscored the importance of respecting each other's privacy, not repeating information shared in focus groups, and that participants should not feel obliged to share anything that made them uncomfortable.

Study participants from underrepresented groups may feel uncomfortable by researchers asking personal questions; however, some research suggests that sharing an interview space with peers may help alleviate this tension and encourage participation (Morgan and Krueger, 1993). For Latina/o participants, sharing experiences with peers can help build *confianza* - trust, and confidence (Dyrness, 2007). *Confianza* acts as the foundation for in-depth and meaningful conversations and works for Latina/o communities and peers (see Fitts & McClure, 2015; García

et al., 2017). Another factor that may have assisted with *confianza* was the similar background of interview moderators with participants (Umaña-Taylor & Bámaca, 2004).

ANALYSIS

The first and third authors transcribed interview audio data. Interviews conducted in Spanish were interpreted into English and transcribed. Next, the research team analyzed the transcribed interviews. Following Spradley's (1998) domain analysis method, we conducted two rounds of coding. The first round of coding identified basic aspects of health-related language brokering: (1) physical settings and spaces in which youth described language brokering for health, (2) stakeholders and people present (participating and nonparticipating in language brokering) during language brokering encounters, (3) language brokering health tasks (i.e., interpreting at doctor's appointment, translating medical documents sent home, and online searches). Identifying these aspects provides a general overview of what, who, and where language brokering for health involves. These findings are presented in Table 1 below.

A second coding round was conducted to analyze the characteristics of specific health language brokering events. For coding purposes, we characterize a health language brokering event as an interaction for which participants language brokered health-related issues *and* included as part of their discussion about the event: health topics, setting, stakeholders, and their language brokering task. Exploring language brokering from this perspective offers the ability to recognize patterns across qualitative descriptions of events that are not recognizable in a broad thematic analysis of data. Findings from the second round of coding are summarized in Table 2.

FINDINGS

The Doctor's Office (Formal Medical/Health Space)

Fifteen participants recalled language brokering in a medical setting, including hospitals, clinics, and doctor offices. Participants said they interpreted for doctors, medical assistants, nurses, office staff, family members, and sometimes strangers. The most common reason participants said they needed to or were asked to broker language for health events was that interpreters or bilingual service providers were unavailable. In some instances, participants recalled assisting in translating or explaining words that interpreters or bilingual providers had difficulty translating. Several participants said they were aware when they accompanied relatives to health appointments for the purpose of brokering language. A broad range of topics was discussed in medical appointments and visits (listed in Table 2) for physical exams, emergency care, diagnosis consultations, and follow-up treatment.

Eleven participants could recall specific health events, the involved stakeholders, settings, health content/topics, and language brokering tasks. These eleven participants shared 27 events, 21 of which occurred in medical settings for primary care with a doctor or other health provider (ambulance worker, nurse, medical assistant). One emergency health event spanned three settings: home, ambulance, and hospital. This and other events that spanned multiple settings were coded and considered one event.

All language brokering events that unfolded in medical settings involved the language broker and a relative: father, mother, aunt, uncle, sibling, cousin, and health provider. One named health event involved a participant brokering for a stranger in a medical setting. The health topics participants described were related to chronic health conditions, such as diabetes, anemia, and scoliosis. Non-chronic health issues included vaccines, flu, prescriptions for eyeglasses, and dental care. Several participants described language brokering for diagnoses in which a medical condition was revealed for the first time. One language broker, Fernanda, described translating a diagnosis for her mother:

> I had to explain to her that she had a cyst, and I didn't know what that was. So, I told her, 'que tienes un cyst.' ('you have a cyst') She's like, 'Pues que es un cyst?' ('Well, what is a cyst?') And I am like, I don't know…And she (the physician) would tell me things, and she'd be like, well tell your mom that, that it's, not to worry, that it's this big, and telling me the size, but I didn't know what it was. And I was just like, ma, you have a ball, And she's like, 'que es?' (What is it?)

Fernanda added that she was thankful the doctor remained calm and could reschedule a visit with an interpreter since it was not an emergency. When asked how she felt during the doctor's appointment, Fernanda shared:

> "I felt pressured. I felt pressured and scared 'cause I didn't know what to tell my mom. I didn't want to tell her something bad. Not only that, but I volunteer at the hospital now, a little bit later, I know that I am not allowed to interpret medical information because they tell me that I could say the wrong things or that's just not in my rules."

Fernanda's experience reveals the complex relationship between child language brokering and language access issues in healthcare settings. Child language brokering is generally not encouraged and sometimes prohibited, but a lack of language resources creates situations where health providers and patients put aside concerns about children interpreting. From Fernanda's perspective, this situation made her feel "pressured" and "scared." She expressed that she was afraid to tell her mother "something bad," which may mean interpreting something inaccurately or delivering bad news about her health. Layered on these fears, Fernanda was a hospital volunteer and knew that translating medical information was not something she could do as a volunteer, causing her to worry about whether she could interpret for her mother during her appointment.

In a different focus group, Raul described brokering language for a diagnosis for a stranger at a medical office. This was the only event where a participant described language brokering for a stranger. Raul recalled accompanying his mother to a doctor's appointment for his younger sister. While at the appointment, Raul said his mother volunteered Raul to help a woman (stranger) having difficulty understanding English. Raul explained that he was more interested in his sister's appointment, but he offered it when the woman asked Raul for help. He explained:

> So, like the doctor, he didn't want to say her son had cancer 'cause he had a tumor, and it was hard for me to tell the lady that her son had cancer. And, I don't know, that day I cried for some reason, tears would come out. I said I am very sorry, the doctors said that your son has cancer…and I told her, I am sorry, your son has, the doctor is saying that he

has a tumor, he has cancer…from that point on, I was feeling kind of weird, but then I felt kind of sad because I thought, because I don't like people getting sick.

Raul and Fernanda's experiences exemplify language brokering health events that may emotionally burden children. Providers, policymakers, and adults worry about the consequences of interpreting devastating health news, and Raul and Fernanda describe these consequences. Fernanda expressed feeling pressured, and Raul expressed sadness about delivering news of illness. Raul and Fernanda were the two participants who shared the greatest number of health events (four and five, respectively). (See table 2.)

The other 15 participants discussed brokering language for routine health appointments, including language brokering for physical exams and follow-up appointments for relatives and themselves. Some interactions were straightforward, such as Henry's language brokering for his dental and optometry appointments. Henry described these experiences quite casually:

> With the dentist, like when I was getting braces I had to interpret to my dad how much it was gonna cost and what work he (dentist) had to do, and like when my appointment with the glasses, it was the same thing because I had to interpret umm what the doctor told me, that I need a new prescription.

Another common language brokering task involved filling out forms before meeting with a health provider. This is hinted at in Abby's recollection of accompanying her aunt to help interpret for her younger cousins' appointments:

> *Una vez, con las vacaciones me fuí para Van Nuys con mi tía y ella tiene cuatro hijos y dos chiquitos. Tuvieron que ir a la clínica, igual hacer chequeo físico, y como ella también no habla muy bien inglés... le tuve [que] ayudar a mi tia, traducir lo que tenia hacer, los nombres de los niños, la edad.* (One time, on vacation I went to Van Nuys with my aunt and her four kids and two little ones. They had to go to a clinic, also for physical exams, and because she also does not speak English well…I had to help my aunt to interpret what she had to do, the names of the kids, their ages.)

Abby highlights what she had to interpret: "the names of the kids, their ages." It is likely that the forms she filled out asked for more than this basic demographic information. For Abby, "having to help" seemed to mean a combination of assisting with the logistics of travel (with four kids, two of them small), handling paperwork, and brokering conversation. This is important because it reminds us that language brokering is just part of a larger constellation of family support work that youth participate in.

Most of the 27 events (see Table 2) were for their own health care or their parents' care. Siblings' medical appointments were the third most common health event in our data. It is not certain why language brokers assisted with their siblings' appointments. However, there are some possible and likely reasons, such as their sibling's medical appointments coinciding with language brokers' appointments or their siblings were considered too young to be language brokers. It is also possible that healthcare appointments or events are viewed as family events, and family members are encouraged or expected to be present regardless of who receives medical attention.

A sense of family obligation for different aspects of medical care (including at the doctor's office and reading the medicine bottles) seems conveyed in many of the recounts, for example, in Chris' description of language brokering for his younger brother's care when he got sick:

> Yeah, *cuando se enfermó mi hermano, el más pequeño, tuve que explicar a mi mamá lo que mi hermano tenía* (when my brother was sick, the youngest, I had to explain to my mother what he had). He had a stomach infection. So, *le tuve que explicar a mi mamá lo que era y lo que había dicho el doctor que él necesitaba hacer para que se recuperara. Y tenía que leerle la medicina, como, que tipo medicina, y cuantos dosis...* (So, I had to explain to my mom what it was, and what the doctor said he (younger brother) needed to so do he could recuperate. And I had to read the medicine, what kind of medicine, and how many doses…)

This is important because it suggests that healthcare providers might do well to work with *families* in delivering care: to recognize that siblings who interpret at the doctor's office may *also* play key support roles in follow-up care at home.

Language brokering in medical spaces primarily served health providers and immediate family members. No language broker mentioned being prohibited from interpreting for others, although several mentioned that bilingual office staff sometimes helped to interpret when they could not. Only one participant, Fernanda, mentioned a rescheduled medical appointment for a time when an interpreter was available for her mother's health appointment.

Home

As suggested by the last example, language brokering of health-related events often bridged different contexts. Youth might accompany family members to the clinic, then stop at the pharmacy and re-explain dosage and other follow-up care at home. We now turn to look more closely at health-related brokering that took place at home, a setting that almost all participants in our study named.

Most participants mentioned language brokering at home, and through our second round of coding, we identified seven home events for which participants described the stakeholders, setting, content/topic, and language brokering task. Three of these events were extensions of medical appointments they had interpreted for earlier (see Table 2). This includes Chris's experience translating for a stomach infection at his brother's health appointment, as detailed above. Chris' brokering work began *before* the appointment, also at home: before the doctor's appointment, Chris had interpreted on the phone to assess his brother's condition, which resulted in a recommendation to take his brother to be seen in person. Chris' encounter is emblematic of how language brokering tasks can traverse across physical settings and mediums. For this single health issue, Chris's language brokered over the phone at home, in person with the provider, and at home again with medication.

Language brokering at home offers a familiar setting and, for some language brokers, the opportunity to ask for help from siblings or others in the household. However, language brokering

at home instead of a medical appointment presented new challenges, such as language brokering without important contextual information. Fernanda shared one such experience:

> "Some of it's more difficult because I wasn't there (medical appointment) when the process was happening or whatever was spoken of before. I just got a letter saying some information, and in this case, it was the (test) results getting lost."

Fernanda needed more contextual information about the letter her mother received since she was absent from the health appointment. As a result, Fernanda needed to call the doctor's office to ask for clarification to help her mother. Once again, this shows why doctors might do well to treat health care as a family event and to *welcome* families who work together as translation teams.

Another common language brokering activity at home for participants involved online searches. Similar to the findings in Katz (2014), participants described using the internet to double-check comprehension and find relevant information about families' health issues. For example, Raul used the internet to research information about exercises for his aunt, who had strained her back doing an intense exercise.

> "We found out on the internet, it was this doctor…he was talking about the health of obese people and what's good for them to eat and what's good for them to exercise. And he says to walk, eat more vegetables [rather] than eating junk food. And he says to start with the basics, walking, drinking water, and just walk."

Felipa, similarly, used the internet to promote health by helping her mom look for smoothie recipes that could benefit her father's heart condition.

> "My mom asked me to look up a green smoothie so she can give it to my dad 'cause he has diabetes, so, to like, lower his sugar levels whenever it's like high. So, I had to look, look for it and sometimes it wasn't what she was looking for so I had to type it into different things…I tried to look for more like professional doctor looking websites, and like it turned it wasn't like really what I was looking for, and I had to do that several times. So, it was frustrating."

This makes evident that although the internet made resources such as translation tools and information more accessible, online resources required language brokers to exercise another skill: digital literacy. It is unclear how much support child language brokers have at home for engaging with digital language and information. However, Katz (date) has shown the many ways that youth broker technology along with language.

One language broker, Mina, described what it was like when her father searched the internet for over-the-counter medicine information: "my sister, like a month ago, she had a flu, so we went to Walgreen's. He (father) googled medicine before we went so he could know what to get because he didn't want to go to the doctor and waste time." Mina went on to share with focus group moderators about assisting her father with searching for information online below.

> Mina: He first typed in the symptoms she was having. A lot of things came up (internet results)."
>
> Researcher: Did you do it? Or=

Mina: =He did it himself
Researcher: Did you help him?
Mina: Choosing which direction to go
Researcher: What was your role?
Mina: Like if he found something like bird flu and stuff, I'd be like no it's not that, get out of that. You know, it's not that, it's just a normal kid flu, put in ages, kinda helping him.
Researcher: Why did you have to guide him?
Mina: Because so many things came up, just (to be) more specific.

In this relatively straightforward language brokering task, Mina assisted her father with a Google search that involved selecting appropriate pages, typing keywords, and adding more specific information. Mina's experience suggests that language brokering for health through the internet extends beyond translating words because it involves brokering between her father and search engine results, which required her to quickly assess the relevance of findings. Mina's language brokering also took form in directing her father to refine search words in response to search results.

Health brokering events that occurred at home were more straightforward and involved common health issues, i.e., diet, exercise, medication directions, and mail from the doctor's office. Language brokering at home also allowed participants to engage with health maintenance and treatment plans for chronic issues like diabetes. Participants described practicing different kinds of ingenuity to help resolve health needs or questions, such as making phone calls to clarify information or using digital skills to navigate the internet.

DISCUSSION

The participants in our study shared many details about their language brokering experiences with health, some of which can be clustered to provide a general understanding of what language brokering for health looks like and involves. We embarked on two rounds of coding and analysis to drive a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. The first procured a simple and concise list of places, people, and language brokering tasks. The second procured a longer list, elucidating the range of language brokering experiences per participant and making visible the common and uncommon characteristics of language brokering in health.

Our inventory of settings (first column of Table 1) demonstrates that child language brokering for health occurs in different places and is not limited to medical settings. The inventory of stakeholders (second column in Table 1) helps to illustrate that although we refer to it as child language brokering, children represent one of the multiple stakeholders in health events. Valdés et al. (2014) referred to the child language brokering family as a performance team and noted that the child has the added work of ensuring their parents are perceived favorably. Arguably, the doctor or health provider is also part of a performance team that includes medical and administrative staff and sometimes professional interpreters. When this occurs, the health provider plays a vital role in working with the child language broker, and their performance informs the brokers' perception of health care. For example, in Fernanda's interaction with her mother's

doctor, who tried but was unable to communicate what a cyst is, Fernanda described the doctor as "calm," which she appreciated because it communicated to Fernanda and her mother that they were not experiencing a medical emergency. A list of language brokering tasks, listed in the final column of Table 1, makes it apparent that interpreting for health providers is only one of the five tasks. The other four language brokering tasks involved reading and using the internet for online searches.

Our second round of coding, which reviewed 27 health events, uncovered more valuable information that adds important insight, such as that 22 of the 27 events took place in a medical setting. Although the number of events is not representative of how often participants language broker, it does offer some insight into their range of experiences. Four participants described one event, and the rest described two or more. There were no differences in the tasks per se. However, it was apparent that participants who recalled more than two events described mediating in different modes, such as over the phone and using the Internet. The majority (18/22) of events in a medical setting involved language brokering for a health provider or worker and a mother- either the language broker's mother or an aunt's appointment for their child. Medical appointments were mainly for language brokers (6) and their siblings (6). Youth also brokered for appointments for cousins (4) and mothers (4). Only one participant said they brokered for their father's medical appointment, and one participant brokered for a stranger. These findings suggest that mothers in language-brokering families may play a more active role in children's health care, at least in medical settings.

The language brokering tasks make apparent that child language brokering tasks are multimodal. Put differently, language brokering can take place in person, over the phone, as well as through literacy (reading and translating text), and digitally for internet resources. The four events involving the internet were for information searches and required language brokers to use digital and literacy skills to navigate information. Felipa, like Mina, described needing to adjust the keywords in their searches. Regarding her experience, Felipa added, "I tried to look for more like professional doctor looking websites, and like it turned it wasn't like really what I was looking for, and I had to do that several times." Felipa's description of looking for "more like professional doctor" websites illuminates the braided literacies language brokers practice when using the internet for brokering health, which includes digital, media, information, and health literacies. Mina and Felipa describe using digital literacy skills for operational and technical purposes (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006): media literacy in terms of engaging with mass media communication (Hobbs & Jensen, 2009) and critical media literacy for decoding "the multiple meanings and messages generated by media texts," many of which have social and political layers (Kellner & Share, 2005). Language brokering information from the internet also requires a level of information literacy to navigate and locate information and assess validity and reliability (Jones-Jang et al., 2021). Finally, by engaging these different forms of literacy in service of brokering information from the internet to address health issues, Mina and Felipa exercised what some refer to as E-health literacy (Gürkan & Ayar, 2020).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Findings from this study make apparent that child language brokering for health cannot be reduced to children translating for their parents at the doctor's office. The 22 health events that took place in medical settings involved health providers, relatives, and, in one case, a stranger. Framing child language brokering as an act of family service is inaccurate; it should be framed as an act of service for family, community, and health. It is imperative to shift emphasis from families as the beneficiaries of child language brokering since health providers and health organizations need and benefit from it as much. This is important for highlighting the equity aspect of this phenomenon, that is, child language brokering is a response to the inequities related to language access in health contexts.

Our work also helps address questions about the appropriateness of this work for children. Many concerns about the burdens that translating in health encounters may place on children have been raised. We found two events that involved emergency health situations. Raul was among the participants who frequently brokered language for health and was the participant who described language brokering for an emergency health event and, separately, a cancer diagnosis. We urge health providers and policymakers to invest in language and cultural resources to ensure that what happened to Raul does not happen to other children. However, it is also vital to acknowledge Raul's language brokering as helpful, empathetic, and brave. Recognizing the value of language brokers' kindness and skills, particularly the numerous sophisticated literacy skills, may promote strong identity development and self-efficacy. We encourage critical discussions about how the framing of child language brokering can impact children's perceptions about themselves, their families, and, in this case, their health.

While we do not expect children to facilitate information and mend the broken links in healthcare that have led to health disparities, we recommend that policymakers and providers examine the current avenues and interactions they already have with language-brokering families. Our data helps illuminate the different contact points that language brokers and their families have with health organizations and professionals. Capitalizing on these interactions is especially important given the strained relationships between healthcare and immigrant communities (Derose et al., 2007; Lauderdale et al., 2006). Last, the prominence of online health care has grown exponentially since the COVID-19 pandemic (Shaver, 2019), making it critical to explore and learn from language brokers how they use digital tools and make sense of health information online. Language brokers may be able to lead the way in terms of identifying skills necessary for locating and creating reliable and accessible health information for multilingual and multicultural communities.

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Tables

Table 1. The initial organization of the spaces, individuals, and tasks associated with youth's brokering of health.

Setting	Stakeholders	Language Brokering Tasks
· Hospital · Ambulance · Emergency room · Clinic · Optometrists office · Dentist office · Pharmacy · Home	· Parents · Siblings · Extended family members · Doctors · Medical office assistants · Nurses · Paramedics	· Interpreting for family members and doctors during medical visits · Reading and filling out medical paperwork · Reading and administering prescription medicines · Assisting with health related internet searches · Reading and translating nutritional information on food

Table 2. Specific Health Event Analysis

Name Grade/ Gender Language	#	Health Event and Topic	Language Brokering Task and Stakeholders	Setting
Raul (10/M) Spanish	1	Health appointment for side effects of TB Vaccine for Raul	Interpreted for Mom, Doctor	Medical
	2	Health appointment for sister, and for a stranger's appointment regarding son's cancer diagnosis	Interpreted for Mom, Doctors, and Stranger	Medical
	3	Spoke with 911 operator for younger cousin's seizure; then interpreted for ambulance workers and aunt	Interpreted for Aunt, 911 Operator, Ambulance Worker, and Nurse	Medical, Home

	4	Interpreted online information for Aunt seeking health information regarding exercises for obesity	Interpreted website for Aunt	Home
Filipa (11/F) Spanish	5	Health appointment for sister regarding "too much vitamins in her system."	Interpreted for Mom, Doctor, Sibling	Medical
	6	Health appointment for cousin's scoliosis treatment	Interpreted for Provider and Aunt	Medical
	7	Health appointment for father regarding diabetes treatment plan	Interpreted for Father and Provider	Medical
	8	Online information for smoothie to support father's diabetes diet	Interpreted online information for Mother	Home
Henry (12/M) Spanish	9	Dentist consultation for cost of braces, and treatment plan	Interpreted for Father and Dentist	Medical
	10	Optometrist appointment for information about aging out of children's health services and new prescription	Interpreted for Father and Optometrist	Medical
Charlie (10/M) Spanish	11	Interpreted directions to pharmacy during initial visit and prescription directions	Interpreted for Doctor, Mother	Medical, Home
Chris (10/M) Spanish	12	Health appointment for brother's stomach infection	Interpreted for Doctor, Mother, Medicine directions	Medical, Home
	13	Chris interpreted for food list and recipes that were recommended as part of father's heart treatment plan	Interpreted online information for Father, Mother	Home

	14	Health appointment for mother's asthma	Interpreted for Doctor and Mom	Medical
Abby (10/F) Spanish	15	Physical exam for sister, anemic diagnosis, treatment plan including diet for sister	Interpreted for Provider, Mom, Sister	Medical
	16	Physical exams for two younger cousins	Interpreted for Doctor, Aunt	Medical
Dion (12/M) Spanish	17	Health appointment for cousin, cousin was directed to exercise and was prescribed medicine	Interpreted for Uncle and Doctor	Medical
Norah (12/F) Spanish	18	Physical exam for mom	Interpreted for Doctor and Mom	Medical
Chantal (9/F) Bengali	19	Regular blood transfusions for Chantal	Interpreted for Doctor or Provider, Mom, and Aunt (when Mom unable to accompany Chantal)	Medical
Mina (12/F) Spanish	20	Health Appointment for Sister's anemia	Interpreted for Doctor and Mom	Medical
	21	Health Appointment for Mom – offered interpreter, Mom preferred Mina	Interpreted for Doctor and Mom	Medical
	22	Assisted with online search for Sister's Flu	Interpreted internet information for Dad	Home
Fernanda (10/F)	23	Health appointment for Mom, Cyst diagnosis	Interpreted for Doctor and Mom	Medical

Spanish	24	Health appointment for Fernanda, was diagnosed pre-anemic	Interpreted for Doctor and Mom	Medical
	25	Health appointment for Brother	Interpreted for Doctor and Mom	Medical
	26	Health appointment for Fernanda's asthma	Interpreted for Doctor and Mom	Medical
	27	Mail and phone calls from Doctor's office regarding health tests	Interpreted phone calls with Doctor's office	Home

JLER
Vol 10, No 1
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http://journals.sfu.ca/cvj/index.php/cvj/index

KICKING IT IN CALIFORNIA!

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ABSTRACT

Physical education classrooms reflect a range of learners, movers, and abilities. Incoming physical educators report lacking confidence and knowledge in their ability to create inclusive lesson plans. Many undergraduate and liberal studies students are required to take one adaptative physical education pedagogy course; thus, incoming educators tend to lack an array of instructional tools to ensure all students are participating in activities and engaging with peers. The goal of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is for teachers to use a range of strategies by removing barriers to learning and giving students opportunities to experience physical education to the best of their ability. Physical educators have the foundational tools; they just need to envision using those tools differently. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate how, by combining the physical education and UDL frameworks, educators can implement an inclusive lesson with a skills rubric and a summative assessment.

Keywords: Universal Design for Learning, physical education, California, inclusive practices, diverse populations

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to amplify the need for physical education teachers to implement and design educational experiences utilizing the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework. Fundamentally, UDL is about the design of the lesson with the diversity of student learning in

mind. In addition to adhering to the state and national physical education standards, educators should develop lesson plans that ensure all individual abilities are met, thus enhancing physical literacy. Physical literacy is described as one's ability to express movement through an array of physical activities in varying environments that will contribute to overall health and emotional and social well-being (Mandigo et al., 2012). Physical education standards and UDL have a common foundation, which is to engage all students through the delivery of instruction that meets varied learning needs; educators should offer students choices in the way learning is acquired, and knowledge is demonstrated, thus empowering students in their educational process (Lieberman & Grenier, 2019). With this, incoming and even veteran physical educators lack an understanding of the UDL framework (Healy et al., 2017). A misnomer of UDL is that it is a teaching practice for special education students; however, it can be implemented successfully in all general education classes. Regarding the use of UDL, Horton (2020) stated, “Needed by some, but beneficial to all.”

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates a "free and appropriate public education" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022) for qualified students ages 3-21 years old. During the fall of 2020, 95% of IDEA-eligible students were enrolled in public school, with 80% of their time spent in the general education classroom (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). However, due to minimal practicum opportunities, many incoming physical education teachers feel underprepared to teach diverse populations (Lirgg et al., 2017). The National Center for Education Statistics (2022) presented 2020-2022 data showing that 7% of educators had less than three years of teaching, and 29% had more than nine years of teaching experience. It is common for undergraduate and preservice liberal studies and physical education (PE) students to have one foundational class in teaching adaptative PE as a part of their required coursework (Healy et al., 2017; Kwon, 2018; Piletic & Davis, 2010). Research conducted by Healy et al. (2017) concluded that one course is inadequate educational preparation for ensuring inclusive PE practices. When a teacher is given the necessary tools, confidence levels rise, therefore being prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Elliot, 2008; Jung et al., 2011; Obrusnikova, 2008; Wilhelmsen & Sorensen, 2017). Many PE classes include students with a range of motor skills, learning abilities, and modalities, and as such, educators should anticipate and prepare for all learners. Universal Design is an educational framework that all physical educators should integrate into their lesson plans and classrooms; physical education teachers already have the tools to utilize UDL successfully; they need to envision using them in another way (Posey, 2023). For example, a physical educator discussed how differentiated instruction met the needs of his special education (SPED) students by offering varied equipment and task modifications; he added that implementing UDL meant he would have to redesign his lessons to meet the needs of SPED students (Amey, 2015). The teacher was utilizing the foundations of UDL but was unclear on what it meant (Lieberman et al., 2020). Differentiated instruction aims at instructional delivery, student’s learning profile, and levels of readiness. In contrast, UDLs focus is on the instructional design and full access regardless of needs, abilities, and learning profile (Vahey & Benedikt, 2022).

The purpose of UDL is to offer inclusivity, equitable learning opportunities, and improved learning outcomes (CAST, 2018). Inclusive classrooms advocate for a range of learning preferences and abilities regardless of the learners' background; equity in learning addresses barriers in knowledge acquisition and promotes a fair learning environment; and finally, improved learning outcomes result from teachers offering learners flexibility, options, and choices. Rather than asking the students to be flexible in the way they learn, UDL asks the teacher to be flexible in the development and delivery of course content (Minarik & Linter, 2011), with the goal being to develop expert learners in their unique ways (CAST, 2018). The effectiveness of UDL and PE has been examined minimally (Lieberman et al., 2020); however, what is known is how UDL meets the needs of all learners and movers. A myth surrounding UDL is how its framework primarily targets students with special needs and may not adequately challenge all learners; Delisle (1999) reported that gifted and talented students benefited from UDL's inclusive practices by allowing students to personalize their learning and accelerate the pace once they demonstrate competency. Physical educators can positively influence students' overall health and emotional well-being, and UDL can be implemented to promote mastery in health and physical fitness.

A common misconception surrounding UDL is that this approach to designing learning experiences applies only to students eligible for an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or those eligible under the American Disabilities Act section 504. Research has demonstrated that UDL is an effective educational framework that supports all learners in educational settings, from primary school to higher education (Glass et al., 2013). "UDL...is a way of thinking about students, teaching, and curriculum – a way of recognizing the diversity of learners, reducing barriers to learning, and addressing students' different needs right from the start" (Rose & Meyer, 2008).

What is Missing in Practice?

Incoming physical educators and even those considered veterans in the field who seek to enhance inclusive teaching practices would benefit from using the Lieberman-Brian Inclusion Rating Scale (LIRSPE) (Liberman & Houston-Wilson, 2018). The purpose of the LIRSPE is to measure the level of effort the teacher makes to include all students in physical education lessons. To best evaluate the teacher's ability to implement inclusive practices consistently, an evaluator (perhaps an experienced colleague) would observe a minimum of three classes (in their entirety) and have at least one student with a disability in the general education class. The LIRSPE matrix includes instructional strategies such as using varied manipulatives, class management, and assessment (Liberman et al., 2020). While the matrix does not entirely determine if the lesson is a fully inclusive activity, it provides an array of commonly experienced variables. Variables not explicitly detailed in the LIRSPE would be experiences that are challenging to measure, such as "interactions between those with disabilities and their peers" (Lieberman & Grenier, 2019).

The evaluator scores the teacher on a Likert scale, from poor (1) student is not included in the lesson, to excellent (5) student is completely engaged throughout the lesson (Liberman & Houston-Wilson, 2018). Feedback from the evaluator's observational scores can offer teachers practical solutions for improving their inclusive teaching practices (Lieberman et al., 2020). The

teachers' objective is to increase and enhance learning for all students, and the LIRSPE can provide insightful feedback as a part of critical reflection. The LIRSPE tool can be used as a physical educator's guide to lesson design. It ensures all students' needs are met and actively engaged to the best of their abilities, thus maximizing student participation in the PE classroom (Liberman et al., 2020).

Di Pardo Léon-Henri (2023) explains that self-reflection is a process where teachers regularly examine, gauge, and assess their teaching effectiveness, measuring student responses and actions and recognizing their successes and deficits. Reflective teachers continually strive to improve, re-evaluate practices, and investigate the effectiveness of their PE program, personal assessment of lesson planning, and curriculum implementation, with the diverse student population at the forefront of the preparation process (Graham et al., 2020). Universal Design for Learning strategies are integral to developing a quality physical education program, and all learners will benefit from its inclusivity; UDL supports ethnic inclusiveness, students with learning and mobility considerations, and students in mainstream physical education (Liberman et al., 2012). Universal Design for Learning is a general education framework that benefits all students and is not solely a special education practice (Willams, 2020).

What Makes a Quality Physical Education Program?

California students grades one through six must have at least 200 minutes of physical education instructional time every ten school days; before and after school programs, recess, and lunch are excluded (California Department of Education [CDE], 2022). A quality program ensures that students participate in activities that stimulate the physical, cognitive, and affective domains (CDE, 2022). Physical educators must purposefully plan long-term and short-term goals while ensuring lessons are developmentally and sequentially introduced (Graham et al., 2020). Additionally, a quality program promotes overall health, enhances motor development, and addresses psychosocial components (California Department of Education [CDE], 2010). Providing multiple opportunities for students to succeed and learn the value of an activity is crucial, as physical educators aim to develop lifelong movers (Society of Health and Physical Educators, 2023). Students with positive memories and experiences at the elementary levels are more apt to adopt movement-based activities over a life span (CDE, 2010).

Adults who participate in regular physical activity demonstrate a higher quality of life, including increased social, emotional, and physical well-being (National Institute on Aging, 2020). Perhaps more importantly, adults with movement or cognitive needs reap the added benefits of physical activity by increasing stamina and muscular strength, reducing the effects of depression, and increasing socialization, which promotes adults living an independent and overall healthier lifestyle (Centers for Disease Control, 2022). Research has demonstrated that students who have a positive PE experience carry those positive feelings and enthusiasm throughout adulthood (Green, 2014; Kim, 2008; O'Connor & Penney, 2021); thus, it is paramount that incoming physical educators have the tools needed to provide quality instruction to all students.

What is Universal Design for Learning?

Universal Design for Learning is a proactive approach to creating equity and access for each student. The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST, 2020) defines UDL as "a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn" (Williams, 2020). Universal Design for Learning is grounded in neuroscience. It is an educational framework that PE teachers can use to increase access to learning experiences for all students and the variability of educational needs they require. The UDL framework has three principles:

Multiple Means of Engagement - The degree to which students feel safe and at ease in the learning environment. Engagement ensures students connect with the content and see its relevance to their lives.

Multiple Means of Action and Expression - This is evident when students have options and choices in how they work with or learn the content and demonstrate their knowledge in a way that makes sense to them. This gives students opportunities to lean into their strengths and talents.

Multiple Means of Representation - Centers on content being presented in multiple ways. Representation is evident when teachers deliver content in multiple ways, e.g., lecture, PowerPoint, and video, each representing the standard to be mastered (Williams, 2020). Designing lessons built on the three UDL principles also creates enhanced learning opportunities for already proficient students by providing choice within the learning experiences.

Blending the Universal Design for Learning and the Physical Education Framework

For example, Ms. Smith, a physical education student teacher, is designing a lesson that introduces the foundations of kicking and ball control. Reflecting on the diversity of her class, two students come to mind: Sal and Kristi. Sal is excited about the upcoming unit, has a 504 Plan, and is in a wheelchair.

Kristi is often disengaged, requests to go to the nurse's office, and is easily distracted talking with friends; however, outside of PE, Kristi is cooperative, enthusiastic, and does well academically.

An experienced colleague is assigned to evaluate three of Ms. Smith's physical education classes using the LIRSPE matrix scale. Analyzing the results of the LIRSPE scale with her colleague, Ms. Smith gained insight into her strengths and weaknesses during the first week of the kicking and ball control unit.

Utilizing the UDL framework, Ms. Smith designs a learning experience to maximize access and engagement for both students. The designated activity space for this lesson was to be held in a grassy modified ponding basin. This space would not be accessible for Sal since the ramp does not meet Americans with Disabilities Act compliance, and the terrain of the activity field tends to be uneven (Department of Rehabilitation, CA, 2023); inaccessibility creates a barrier for Sal to engage meaningfully in this unit.

Finally, Ms. Smith talked with Kristi to learn more about her interests in physical activities. Kristi shared that she likes it when she can choose her partners during PE. By learning more about Kristi, Ms. Smith can capitalize on recruiting Kristi's interest to engage in the lesson. Ms. Smith's lessons will promote collaboration and encourage students to pick their partners during the lesson. Taking what Ms. Smith learned from the LIRSPE scale, the next step for Ms. Smith is to evaluate the lesson plans in this unit to ensure all students will be active participants with the UDL guidelines in mind.

When PE teachers are designing a learning experience, the decision-making process to integrate UDL design into the lesson begins with considering the possible barriers, both visible and invisible, that may impact students' access and engagement. Beginning with clear goals and objectives, the teacher identifies the concepts and skills the students are to acquire. Using the UDL matrix as a tool allows the teacher to consider students' variability, challenges, strengths, preferences, and backgrounds they bring to the learning experience to maximize learning. In this process, the teacher might collaborate with the learners. Collaboration provides a student voice in the learning design. The teacher has a better opportunity to tap into the student's interests and needs, along with an opportunity for students to provide feedback on their experiences and learning. Student and teacher collaboration also promotes UDL's effort to have students become expert learners of themselves and what they need to be successful.

The decision to integrate UDL beyond setting clear goals, understanding diverse learners, and collaborative decision-making also provides a framework for continuous improvement for the teacher. By embracing UDL, the PE teacher, through the process mentioned earlier, allows continued professional learning, resulting in continuous refinement of pedagogy and curriculum. This approach promotes inclusivity and enhances the overall learning experiences for all students.

Physical education teachers need to consider the activity space; when instructional space is outdoors, there are environmental factors to consider through the lens of UDL. These could include rough, uneven terrain, sensory considerations, and climate. When UDL design principles are applied to the PE framework, it creates an opportunity for all students to be engaged with the learning experiences while maintaining the PE learning outcomes. Table 1 demonstrates the alignment made with both frameworks. When preparing lessons, physical educators should incorporate the state or national standards, along with Means of Action and Expression, Means of Representation, and Means of Engagement (Gilbert, 2019).

Table 1

Frameworks

California Physical Education	**Teacher UDL Considerations**
Psychomotor Standard 1: Students demonstrate the motor skills and movement patterns needed to perform a variety of physical activities.	**Means of Action and Expression** - Offer choice in manipulative, target, and hand or foot to demonstrate the motor skill -Offer choice in distance and target - Assess all learners together.
Cognitive Standard 2: Students demonstrate knowledge of movement concepts, principles, and strategies that apply to the learning and performance of physical activities.	**Means of Representation** -Share a video demonstrating and identifying skills and highlighting vocabulary and motor concepts. -Choice in summative assessment response questions -Teaching strategies are varied.
Affective Standard 5: Students demonstrate and utilize knowledge of psychological and sociological concepts, principles, and strategies that apply to the learning and performance of physical activity.	**Means of Engagement** -Pair share -Modified rules -Choice of grouping, fitness buddy -Choice of manipulative

Educators must create lesson plans with the UDL guidelines from the inception of the unit plan - inclusivity is not an afterthought or a last-minute add-in to a lesson. Furthermore, options should be available to all class learners (Lieberman & Grenier, 2019). Table 2 is a representative lesson plan for grades one and two, with an introduction to kicking. Students are provided options in manipulatives, distances, targets, and groupings. Educators provide support in skill development based on the needs of the learners.

Table 2

Lesson Plan

TEAM: Denise and Amy	**DATES: First Two Weeks of Unit Grades 1 & 2**
UNIT/SUBJECT: Kicking a ball to a target	**LESSON TITLE: Pumped Up to Kick!**
Learning experience objectives: ● Students will be able to kick a ball to an intended target ● Students will be able to share their tips for success with peers **National Physical Education Standards:** **Standard 1:** The physically literate individual demonstrates competency in various motor skills and movement patterns. **Standard 2:** The physically literate individual applies knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies, and tactics related to movement and performance. **Standard 5:** The physically literate individual recognizes the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and/or social interaction (Society of Health and Physical Education, 2023). **CA State Physical Education Standards:** 1.1.16 Kick a rolled ball from a stationary position. 1.1.17 Kick a stationary ball using a smooth, continuous running approach. 1.2.12 Identify the location of the contact point to strike an object upward. 2.1.11 Kick a slowly rolling ball. 2.1.15 Foot-dribble, with control, a ball along the ground. 2.2.11 Identify when to begin the kicking motion when kicking a slowly rolling ball.	*Teacher Check:* *Is this an experiential learning goal? and/or* *Is this a standards-based learning goal?*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">1.5.1 Participate willingly in new physical activities.
2.5.5 Demonstrate respect for self, others, and equipment during physical activities.</td><td colspan="3"></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Learning Target:
What do we want all students to know?

Students will learn to kick a ball to an intended target accurately.

Students will learn how to manipulate a ball with control.</td><td colspan="2">Key Vocabulary:
Stand(ing)
Stationary
Control(led)
Dribble
Laces</td><td colspan="2">Teacher Check:
Is your goal clear and specific?
Are the means flexible?
If not, how can you scaffold?
How will students revisit the goal throughout the lesson?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Learning Target:

How will we respond when learning has not occurred?

Provide additional demonstration(s).

Ask guiding questions to gain clarity on students' level of knowledge.

Provide specific feedback for skill development improvement.

Ensure student(s) understands the task(s) and related vocabulary</td><td colspan="2">Learning Target:
How will we extend the learning for already proficient students?

Increase the skills challenge by adding additional obstacles, offering a smaller manipulative, and/or increasing the distance to the target.

Create small peer-tutoring groups, allowing proficient student(s) to demonstrate skills.

Connect geometry by identifying shapes in movement patterns</td><td colspan="2">Teacher Check:
Did we utilize UDL principles?
Did we consider all possible barriers to access?

Are there opportunities for choice and interest?

Connect learning to other topics/content?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Learning Target:
What are potential areas of impediment?
Barriers:
Second language learners</td><td colspan="3">Teacher Check:
Are there barriers in the context (location, grouping, noise level), presentation (oral,</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Groupings
Outdoors</td><td colspan="2">written), or activities (writing, speaking, planning)?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Variability: Engagement</td></tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Target:

Does the lesson use multiple means of engagement?

Self-select ball size and color

Self-select targets and distance(s)

Self-select groupings

Options to choose goals for self-improvement

Rubric</td>
<td>Teacher Check:

Providing options for recruiting interest?

Are there existing options to increase student choice and autonomy?

To enhance relevance, value, and authenticity?

To reduce threats and distractions?</td>
<td>Teacher Check:

Providing options for sustaining effort and persistence?

Are there existing options to heighten the salience of goals and objectives?

Vary levels of challenge and support?

Foster collaboration and communication?

Increase understanding and skills through feedback?</td>
<td>Teacher Check:

Providing options for self-regulation?

Are there existing options that guide personal goal-setting and expectations?

Scaffold coping skills and strategies?

Develop self-assessment and reflection?</td>
</tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Variability: Representation</td></tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Target:

Does the lesson use multiple means of representation?

Multiple movement pathways</td>
<td>Teacher Check:

Providing options for perception?

Are there existing options to customize the display of information?</td>
<td>Teacher Check:

Providing options for language and symbols?

Are there existing options that define vocabulary and symbols?</td>
<td>Teacher Check:

Providing options for comprehension?

What assumptions about background knowledge are made in the lesson?</td>
</tr>
</table>

Multiple distances and targets Skills and tasks are modeled in class Station cards Poster boards in class	*Alternatives for auditory?* *Alternatives for visuals?*	*Clarifying syntax and structure?* *Decoding text and mathematical notation?* *Promote cross-linguistic understanding?* *Illustrate key concepts non-linguistically?*	*Are there existing options that provide or activate background knowledge?* *Highlight critical features, big ideas, and relationships?* *Guide information processing?* *Support memory and transfer?*
Variability: Action & Expression			
Learning Target: Does the lesson use multiple means of expression? Self-select underhand toss or kick Pair-Share Write a report Create a poster board Create an infographic Develop a story to share aloud	*Teacher Check:* *Providing options for physical action?* *Are there existing options in the mode of physical response?* *Multiple means of navigation?* *Accessing tools and assistive technologies?*	*Teacher Check:* *Providing options for expressive skills and fluency?* *Are there existing options in the media for communication?* *In the tools for composition and problem-solving?* *In the scaffolding needed for practice?*	*Teacher Check:* *Providing options for executive functions?* *Are there existing options that guide effective goal-setting?* *Supportive planning and strategy development?* *Facilitate managing information and resources?* *Enhance capacity for monitoring progress?*

Note. Adapted from CAST, 2018, & Sherry Adrian, Ph.D., Project Wild, September 26, 2018, Workshop.

Table 3 represents an example of a skills and self-responsibility rubric the teacher can use to measure student abilities. An abbreviated rubric is to be shared with students before the activity. Creating a poster board depicting expectations of skills and behaviors using texts, colors, and pictures will provide a clearer and grade-level appropriate understanding for learners, as a means of multiple representation (Lieberman et al., 2021). Before evaluating skills, teachers should post the rubric for all students, and the teacher should verbally explain the goals. Finally, teachers should encourage students to ask questions and provide an opportunity to Pair-Share information; ensuring clarity and comprehension is key for all learning environments. Multiple opportunities for success are detailed in the rubric, providing students with choices to successfully demonstrate motor skills to the best of their abilities (Lieberman & Grenier, 2019).

Table 3

Skills and Self-Responsibility Rubric

	Skills	**Responsibility - self and others**
	Student is consistent in performing: -ball is always in control -ball reaches target 4 of 4 attempts -ball is dribbled or tossed to target 4 of 4 attempts	Student is consistent: -cooperates -works well with others -provides support to others -follows rules
	Student is inconsistent in performing: -attempts are made to control ball -ball reaches target 3 of 4 times	Student is occasionally consistent: -cooperating -engages without disruption -not all rules are followed
	Student is rarely consistent in performing: - ball management - ball does not reach intended target	Student is rarely consistent: -cooperating -can be disruptive -rules are rarely followed
	Student is not consistent in performing: -ball management -limited effort	Student is unable to demonstrate consistency in the responsibility of self and toward others

Note. Adapted from "Universal Design for Learning in Physical Education," by Liberman, L. J., Grenier, M., Brian, A., & Arndt, K., 2021, *Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics,* p.32.

Assessment is another crucial piece in the learning process - for the teacher and student. Educators who reflect on their teaching practices ask themselves, "Are students learning what I am teaching, and how well did they learn it?" and "Am I meeting the needs of all learners?" (Graham et al., 2020). Assessment can help answer those questions provided the outcomes are linked to instruction, are student-centered, and students know what learning is anticipated (Graham et al., 2020). Table 4 depicts how students may choose the skill to perform, with each skill aligning with the lesson outcomes. Student choice provides autonomy, allowing learners to determine how

they can demonstrate motor skills while staying actively engaged in the lesson (Liberman et al., 2012).

Table 4

Kicking Assessment

Students may choose their object and target. **Are skills present at this time?**				
Skill	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4
Kick a rolling or stationary ball to a target. Toss a ball from the stationary position to a target.				
Kick a slowly rolling ball to a target. Catch a tossed ball and toss it to a target.				
Kick a stationary ball with at least 3 approaching steps to a target. Toss a ball while traveling to a target.				
Foot-dribble a ball to a target. Toss a ball to multiple distanced targets.				
Total Stars				

Assessing students in the cognitive and affective domains can be achieved in varied ways, with autonomy at the forefront. Table 5 allows students to demonstrate learning in the cognitive and affective domains through choices and options; students may demonstrate knowledge with storytelling, creating an infographic, drawing, or completing a written assessment. With each option, students may choose four questions from the six offered. The affective domain may be challenging to measure, so teachers must have clear goals, and students must be taught (Graham et al., 2020). Additionally, the example assessment offers a word bank to support Second Language Learners and students with learning disabilities, encouraging language use and increasing vocabulary.

Table 5

Summative Assessment

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">Using the rubric, students may demonstrate skill development and cognitive knowledge through a written handout, a short story, telling a story, or creating a poster.

Students may choose four questions from each section. A Word Bank is offered.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Psychomotor:
On my first day, I kicked or tossed my favorite ball. It was (color).
On my first day, I kicked or tossed my favorite ball (action word).
On my first day, I kicked or tossed the ball to a target. The target was (target).
On my last day, I kicked a ball while it rolled (speed).
On my last day, I tossed a ball (speed).
On my last day, I foot dribbled a ball to the (target).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Cognitive and Affective:
On my first day, I felt (emotion).
On my first day, I kicked or tossed my favorite ball to a target (yes or no).
On my first day, I told my friend how I kicked or tossed the ball to a target (describe).
On my last day, I felt (emotion).
On my last day, I was happy I could (action word).
On my last day, I kicked a slowly rolling ball with (toes or laces).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Word Bank:</td></tr>
<tr><td>cone
cones
hula hoop</td><td>orange
yellow
blue</td><td>happy
sad
excited</td></tr>
<tr><td>control
dribble</td><td>soft
hard</td><td>fast
slow</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

SUMMARY

New and seasoned educators continually assess their teaching practices; reflective teachers seek input from administration, knowledgeable colleagues, and their students, striving to engage, motivate, and inspire all learners (Graham et al., 2020). Inclusive planning is purposeful and meets all students' needs, as shown in Tables one through four. The impetus of the UDL framework is to support the development of lesson planning, thus ensuring all students are experiencing physical education in meaningful ways, with carefully designed lessons that offer challenging opportunities in a developmentally and sequential manner (CAST, 2018; Graham et al., 2020).

Lieberman et al. (2021) found that while UDL has been used in other areas of education, infusing the UDL framework in physical education is recent. Due to the lack of experience applying UDL, the concepts should be integrated into student coursework throughout the practicum and fieldwork experiences (Lieberman et al., 2021). Physical educators, incoming and veterans, would benefit from the LIRSPE matrix to evaluate their inclusive teaching practices, including writing lesson plans and developing stated assessments and rubrics. Physical educators should utilize the UDL framework and the LIRSPE matrix to promote full access and develop learning goals through innovative instruction when crafting standards-based lesson plans, rubrics, and assessments. Teachers can identify and remove barriers and offer choices in demonstrating knowledge, participation, and expression.

There is an extensive body of scholarly literature evaluating the application of UDL in special education and other classroom environments, while the exploration of UDL and PE has only been recently conducted. This paper underscores the use of UDL and LIRSPE in physical education by demonstrating the necessity of their use and the many benefits. The LIRSPE tool can be used to support all educators by strengthening areas recognized as needing improvement in instruction, assessment, and engagement; preservice teachers can discover more about inclusive teaching strategies, while the tool is also helpful for veteran teachers to assess their current practices (The National Consortium for Physical Education for Individuals with Disabilities, 2022). By embracing UDL, LIRSPE, and the PE standards, educators can foster an environment that puts learning in students' hands, enriches the socioemotional experience, and develops lifelong movement practices.

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Journal of Leadership, Equity, and Research

JLER
Vol 10, No 1
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http://journals.sfu.ca/cvj/index.php/cvj/index

ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER EXPERIENCES IMPLEMENTING RESTORATIVE PRACTICES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Exclusionary disciplinary practices negatively and disproportionately impact Black students academically, socially, and emotionally and have been attributed to the school-to-prison pipeline. This research was conducted to determine the impact of restorative justice practices on exclusionary discipline by evaluating the lived experiences of school leaders and teachers. The findings of this research determined that restorative justice practices can effectively interrupt the over-suspension and expulsion of Black students if implemented as a practice as opposed to a program. Additionally, the following barriers to implementation were identified through this study: time, mindset, lack of resources, and professional development and involvement of all stakeholders. Critical race theory and labeling theory were the theoretical lenses through which this research was conducted. Sixteen school leaders and teachers were interviewed using Zoom. Interviews were transcribed and coded to identify themes. Through this research, some of the barriers to implementing restorative justice practices were identified based on the lived experiences of school leaders and teachers. Additionally, this study identified how restorative justice practices can impact exclusionary disciplinary practices. From the results emerged the following themes and subthemes: sense of community; school avoidance; negative impact on learning and growth; restorative circles as prevention and healing; developing communication and building relationships; shift in school culture; training and resources; times; mindset and stakeholder involvement. Based on the results of this study, three recommendations were made for future

research. A qualitative study can be done comparing and contrasting the lived experiences of Black girls at schools that implement restorative justice practices and schools that do not. Another suggestion for future research would entail a qualitative study that requires engaging in a restorative circle as a participant observer. The third recommendation would be a mixed methods study evaluating the effectiveness of the Restore and Heal Wheel on various elements of school culture.

Keywords: restorative justice, school-to-prison-pipeline, exclusionary discipline, suspension, expulsion, administrators, school leaders, teachers, SEL

INTRODUCTION

It has been reported that almost two million students in the United States do not have access to a guidance counselor at school but have law enforcement officers stationed at their school (Rivera-Calderon, 2019). The school-to-prison pipeline, now considered a human rights issue, refers to the disparities that exist in terms of exclusionary disciplinary practices that often lead to incarceration or involvement in the juvenile justice system. Students who are expelled or suspended usually end up on the streets, increasing the likelihood of being arrested. Recent research has also shown a direct causality between personal and cultural trauma and student behavior that often leads to suspension or expulsion. As opposed to addressing the trauma that students experience, many schools either lack the resources or the knowledge necessary to address student behavior. As a result, students are punished rather than receiving the social/emotional support they need. (Schiff, 2017). Zero tolerance policies, established during the 1990s – 2000s, tremendously influenced racial disparities (Hall et al., 2021). Those policies were established during the Reagan administration as a response to the War on Drugs.

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this study was the disproportionate rate of suspension and expulsion among black students that led them into the juvenile justice system or the criminal justice system (Lustick, 2020). Many school leaders respond to typical adolescent behavior by involving law enforcement remnants of federal and state policies established in the 1990s. Schools then become the leaders in referrals to the juvenile justice system (Goldstein et al., 2019). The adverse effects of students' involvement in the juvenile justice system for school-based behavioral issues extend past academic ramifications.

Importance of the Problem

Students who identify as Black are suspended or expelled and end up in the juvenile or criminal justice system at a disproportionate rate, compared to their white counterparts, for the same or similar offenses. Most of those students are also of a low socio/economic status (Wirtz, 2021). Researchers have found that students who enter the juvenile and criminal justice system are at an academic disadvantage and are less likely to graduate from high school. Additionally, due to

their increased likelihood of becoming incarcerated, they may either become unemployed or underemployed, which may lead to other socio/economic issues, such as homelessness and increased involvement in crime (Heise & Nance, 2021). Those circumstances then inhibit those students from contributing positively to society.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the experiences of school leaders and educators who currently implement restorative practices at their schools. More specifically, through the lived experiences of school leaders and teachers, this study examined whether restorative justice practices have any influence on the implementation of exclusionary disciplinary practices. Furthermore, this study examined the feelings of administrators and teachers regarding the implementation of restorative justice practices. Additionally, this study examined any barriers to implementation as well as any required support.

Approach of the Study

This qualitative research study was conducted using Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. The use of qualitative research began in psychological studies when researchers struggled to quantify human behavior. In qualitative research, non-numerical data is used to analyze human experiences. People's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviors, and interactions with others can be investigated using the qualitative approach.

Research Questions

The specific research questions that were investigated in this study included:

Research Question 1

What are school leaders' and teachers' lived experiences with exclusionary disciplinary practices (suspension/expulsion), and how could these practices affect students behaviorally and academically?

Research Question 2

What are teachers' and school leaders' lived experiences with the use of restorative justice practices and how could these practices affect students behaviorally and academically?

Research Question 3

What are the perceptions of educators regarding the barriers to implementing restorative justice or restorative practices based on the lived experiences of school leaders and other educators?

Significance of the Study

This study brought about awareness and heightened awareness relative to the disparities in the formulation and administration of discipline. There are clear disparities as it relates to student

discipline. For example, Black students are suspended or expelled at a much higher rate than their white counterparts for the same or similar offenses (Wirtz, 2021). Black students, particularly Black boys, are most affected by those disparities. When students are removed from their place of learning, they are essentially deprived of an education. This leads to academic deficiencies that affect their ability to pursue higher education, whether college or trade school (Rafa, 2019).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The school-to-prison pipeline is rooted in racism and discrimination (Grace & Nelson, 2019). In order to begin addressing this issue and coming up with effective solutions, it is necessary to delve into the root cause of the issue. While this research was guided by critical race theory and labeling theory, it was also important to discuss sociocultural theory and Adlerian theory as contributors to the "roadmap" in understanding the dimensions of this study.

Critical race theory explores the role of anti-discriminatory laws and American laws in maintaining the status quo regarding White privilege (Fornili, 2018). Critical race theory dissects racism's conformity in society and how it leads to a lack of acknowledgment, making it difficult to dismantle this social construct. Critical race theory also provides a historical perspective in relation to how "minority" groups have been deemed "excluded" groups by the "included group," leading to the evolution of viewpoints about race. Critical race theory also reinforces the idea that "minority groups" are more competent than majority groups to speak on issues of race and racism, given their unique history of oppression. Recent research by Reynolds and Mayweather (2017) defined "counterstorytelling," as a methodological instrument used in Black communities that allows members of marginalized groups to share their lived experiences. Often, those experiences are not authenticated by the dominant culture and even counteract the stories of the dominant or included group. This tool aligns with recognizing the experiences of Black communities, one of the six tenets of critical race theory (Reynolds & Mayweather, 2017). Racism doesn't exist without institutional power, by definition (Berman & Paradies, 2010; Hoyt, 2012). Identity in terms of race and gender determines the trajectory of an individual's life.

While Black female students have less interaction with the school-to-prison pipeline compared to Black males, the effects of the pipeline on Black females are more profound (Mendoza et al., 2020). Therefore, overt racism and even micro-aggressions based on race have detrimental and long-term effects on Black people, particularly Black boys. Institutional racism, defined as institutions directly or indirectly discriminating against certain groups, serves as "fuel" for the school-to-prison pipeline. The tenets of critical race theory demonstrate how some educational and social policies are rooted in white supremacy that seeks to continue the oppression and social control of Black students. They serve as parasites that "suck" economic and social advancement from the grasp of Black students (Dutil, 2020). Often, students are blamed for their disconnecting as it relates to school. Many studies do not consider the general negative culture of some schools as the cause of that disconnect that leads to "dropout" (Cramer, 2014). Through critical race theory, the layers of equity become even more apparent (Grace & Nelson, 2019).

Students who become "victims" of the school-to-prison pipeline are often labeled. Labels that are deviant reciprocate deviant behavior that increases over time (Liberman et al., 2014). As children are labeled, their identity is redefined and reshaped. To disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, actions by school personnel to move away from labeling children and finding more appropriate "tools" to empower them serve as one of the foundational tools. According to Pesta, students who are labeled "trouble makers" struggle academically. They tend to have negative perspectives about the school, thereby hindering their ability to achieve academically. Labeling predominantly affects students of color, and the types of labels can have a detrimental impact on students who are Black. Labeling students as disadvantaged or deficient directly leads to exclusion. Studies also show that normal deviant adolescent behavior that may be deemed acceptable for white adolescents would be perceived as deviant for students of color. Additionally, students of color lack the resources necessary to cope with the aforementioned negative responses (Pesta, 2018).

The Adlerian theory provides context based on the social/emotional effects of the school-to-prison pipeline (Emmons & Belangee, 2018). This theory helps identify how individuals who have been funneled through the school-to-prison pipeline see themselves. Given that humans are social beings, have their experiences caused them to lack a sense of belonging in society? Children's negative assumptions about themselves and life, in general, may lead them to make certain choices and take certain actions that may be deemed inappropriate. Students do not thrive in discouraging environments, and their reactions to such negative environments are often reflected by their behavior. Negative behavior is often met with negative attention from adults in school buildings despite the fact that there may be instances where students exhibit such behavior because of mental health issues (Emmons & Belangee, 2018).

The sociocultural theory demonstrates how and why culture affects student outcomes (Curenton et al., 2022). Culture has a tremendous influence on the school-to-prison pipeline. Student's behavior and performance explain psychological activity as opposed to characteristics such as intelligence and motivation since culture affects cognitive development. What children think about is greatly influenced by their environment, and clearly, culture is transferred from adults to children. The sociocultural theory outlines the relationship between cognitive development and the school-to-prison pipeline. It is evident that social learning precedes development. Culture affects cognitive development, and the environment affects how and what children think about it (Wang et al., 2011). One of the ways that institutions have "remedied" this history of development preceding learning is through Culturally Responsive Teaching. Culturally Responsive Teaching is defined as having an awareness and understanding of the social, political, and economic context in order to establish a learning environment that is safe and nurturing for all students. This is enabled through engagement with families, deviating from "normal" classroom procedures, and being intentional regarding cultural sensitivity (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017).

Zero Tolerance and Exclusionary Disciplinary Practices

Fitzgerald et al. (2019) revealed that in most school districts where the school-to-prison pipeline had been a concern, disciplinary practices and policies implemented in schools led to students going through the juvenile justice system. Additionally, later on in life, those students are more likely to end up becoming incarcerated. Exclusionary disciplinary practices predate the implementation of Zero Tolerance. Students were suspended or expelled at a much lower rate in the seventies. However, despite the low suspension rate, Black students were still suspended at a much higher rate than any other group (Losen & Martinez, 2013). The "historical tentacle" of the school-to-prison Pipeline related to exclusionary discipline practices is Zero Tolerance Policy, a derivative of the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (Mallet, 2016; Pigott et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2018). Based on data from Fitzgerald et al. (2019), those policies disproportionately affected mostly Black individuals. Since the establishment of zero tolerance, school arrests for minor offenses such as misbehavior or disobedience have increased by 300-500% (Fornili, 2018). Students who are arrested miss out on education because they are removed from the educational setting.

School Resource Officers

Research conducted by Heise and Nance (2021) intensively highlighted the impact of School Resource Officers or even police presence in schools and its effects on the school-to-prison pipeline (Heise & Nance, 2021). The percentage of schools with school resource officers is much higher at schools with 20% or more Black students than schools with less than 20% Black students (Crosse et al., 2022). It is evident that an increased presence of SROs would lead to increased interactions with law enforcement. Additionally, relinquishing disciplinary power to School Resource officers, educators, and administrators disrupts the sense of trust and community that should create a safe space in schools. Exclusionary referrals increase because relationships are severed or strained when students are referred to SROs for minor infractions. They not only lose respect, but they also lose control which in turn leads to an increase in referrals for minor concerns.

Restorative Justice Practices

Several researchers have investigated the effect of restorative justice practices on the school-to-prison pipeline. Restorative justice practices are strategies that enable students to take responsibility for their actions and rectify their wrongdoing with their school community while the community supports both the victim and the offender. Darby states that twenty-one states have successfully implemented restorative justice, practices that are rooted in Native American, African, Maori, and other worldwide indigenous practices (Darby, 2021). Darby also states that the six categories of restorative justice practices include restorative justice as a whole school model; restorative justice as an alternative to exclusionary discipline; culturally competent and trauma-informed restorative justice; restorative justice in professional development; funding for school-based restorative justice programs and the collection of data based on school-based restorative justice practices (Darby, 2021).

Adultification and Discipline Disparities

Disparities exist in terms of how students of color, particularly males, are disciplined in comparison to their white counterparts for the same or similar offenses (Pesta, 2018). The school-to-prison Pipeline also has a detrimental and somewhat irreversible effect on academic prospects for Black students (Pesta, 2018). The "adultification" of students of color "plants a seed" that's germinated through implicit bias (Yang et al., 2018). Very often, Black students are perceived by white adults as being much older than their actual age.

Students Who Learn Differently

The history of special education provides some context for some of the variables affecting the school-to-prison Pipeline (Mallet, 2017). While many would agree that placing students with special needs into more integrated settings has been beneficial in some aspects, it is also evident that this initiative has been detrimental to some marginalized groups, such as Black students. The evolution of special education programs and the juvenile justice system appear to be headed in the same direction. Changes in those two structures have both led to the exclusion or some element of exclusion. According to a recent study, at least 47% of incarcerated youth have emotional and behavioral disabilities, and 39% are learning disabled (Houchins et al., 2021). Between 66-77% of youth in the juvenile justice system exhibit at least three forms of mental conditions (Lee et al., 2017).

Implicit and Explicit Bias

Implicit and explicit bias in terms of race and gender have been instrumental in reinforcing and sanctioning the school-to-prison pipeline (Hughes et al., 2020; Nitzel, 2018). This issue is multifaceted. Black students are receiving more severe punishment than their white peers for the same offenses. Simple mistakes in the classroom that could be addressed through redirection and other non-punitive approaches are met with severe punishment, including suspension, expulsion, and, in some cases, even referrals to law enforcement. One most recent example is the suspension of several Black students and their referral to law enforcement for having toy guns visible as they learned remotely during the pandemic (Helton, 2021). As stated by Darby (2021), there are many variables contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline that primarily affects Black students. The literacy rate among Black students is much lower than any other group. Academic expectations are much lower for students who are already at an academic disadvantage (Bryan, 2017). Due to standardized testing and underperformance, they are most likely to not advance to the next grade level. Often, due to disciplinary concerns, they are placed at alternate sites. The dropout or "push out" rate for Black students is much higher than any other group, thereby causing them to have the lowest graduation rate compared to other groups. The school culture in some of the schools they attend sometimes instills fear and even causes them to suffer consequences even when they are victims (Darby, 2021). Due to the aforementioned issues, Black students who struggle

academically may exhibit behavior that may be inappropriate but does not warrant severe punishment or discipline.

Societal Impact

The school-to-prison pipeline has a devastating effect on society, both economically and socially. Individuals who are incarcerated are not able to contribute to revenue or participate in civic engagement and are more likely to rely on social services (Fitzgerald et al., 2019; Pesta, 2018). There are very few options available for rehabilitation once incarcerated youth have become involved in the criminal justice system. Their basic needs to survive become threatened. They lose access to housing, education, and employment, leading to negative ramifications as it relates to their physical, emotional, and mental health (Gargano & Miguel, 2017). Another inevitable ripple effect with social implications is rooted in the destruction of families.

Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice is defined as a philosophical approach to problem-solving that permits individuals to own up to and remedy the harm that they have caused. It takes on a non-punitive approach to responding to and addressing harm without violating human rights (Morgan, 2021). While there has been tremendous research done in support of Restorative Justice as a means of disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline, others argue that Restorative Justice practices alone have not been effective at disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline in some school districts. Some positive outcomes were reported as it related to Restorative Justice. However, most of the results were invalid when determining whether Restorative Justice led to desired outcomes (Morgan, 2021).

Additionally, some continue to support Zero Tolerance policies as they believe those policies are one of the only ways to keep schools safe (Bleakley & Bleakley, 2018). In addition, some argue that Culturally Responsive and Culturally Relevant Teaching has little or no impact on the school-to-prison pipeline.

METHODOLOGY

This was a qualitative research study. A focal point of this study was strategies school administrators and educators use that align with restorative justice practices in response to student disciplinary issues. This study also focused on any pertinent barriers that have prevented teachers and school leaders from implementing restorative justice practices. Another focal point of this study was culturally responsive discipline.

This was a qualitative research study. Qualitative research is defined as a natural inquiry process that does not make use of arithmetic data. Rather than focusing on the end result or consequence of the research, qualitative research focuses on the process of predicting patterns (Nassaji, 2020). Therefore, qualitative research relies extensively on the lived experiences of participants. This study focused on strategies school administrators and educators use that align

with restorative justice practices in response to student disciplinary issues. This study will focus on any pertinent barriers that have prevented teachers and school leaders from implementing restorative justice practices. Another focal point of this study was culturally responsive discipline.

Transcendental phenomenology was incorporated into this research in order to capture the lived experiences of teachers and school leaders. Phenomenology is a type of qualitative research that seeks to understand human behavior through participants' perspectives (Dangal & Joshi, 2020). Psychological, nursing, tourism, and health science research have adopted phenomenological approaches to studying phenomena, but education research lags behind. It is evident that developing relationships and experiences are at the core of teaching and learning. Research in education requires learning from others' experiences. In order to develop their practice, educators, intentionally or unintentionally, draw on the experiences of others through feedback, physical or verbal cues, and analyzing or direct questions (Farrell, 2020). Therefore, despite phenomenology's underutilization in education research, it is still the most effective approach because it uses the experiences of school leaders and other educators to enhance the understanding of pertinent development in the field of education. Transcendental phenomenology was chosen as the appropriate methodology to understand the meaning of participants' experiences. Moustakas describes Husserl's transcendental phenomenology as a qualitative research approach that seeks to comprehend human experiences (Babaeer, 2021). Transcendental phenomenology was most appropriate for this research study because, through this methodology, the nature and meaning of the experience were revealed through the experiences of school leaders and other educators.

Instrumentation

Field testing was done to ensure that interview questions were validated. Field testing was accomplished by providing questions to a group of teachers as well as a group of administrators to receive feedback. Field testing provided an opportunity to assess the syntax of questions as well as the clarity of questions. Furthermore, through field testing, communication can be evaluated (McGrath et al., 2019). Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted to collect data using purposeful sampling.

Participants

Educators and school leaders with experience implementing restorative justice practices and currently employed in middle school and high school were used as participants in this study. Participant recruitment on Facebook and LinkedIn was done through purposive sampling. Individuals selected by purposeful or purposive sampling are those holding special knowledge or experience about a specific topic (Bazen & Takeshita, 2021). School leaders were selected for this study because they make final decisions in regard to consequences when disciplinary issues arise (Mavrogordato & White, 2020).

Participant Profiles

There were ten female participants and five male participants. Years of experience in education ranged from seven years to thirty-five years. Thirteen participants were affiliated with the New York City Department of Education, and two participants were affiliated with a school district on Long Island.

Participant 1. Participant 1 identified as female. She serves as a principal in the New York City Department of Education. Sixty-five of the students at the school where she serves are Asian, one hundred and forty are Black, one hundred and sixty-six are Hispanic, and forty are White.

Participant 2. Participant 2 identified as male. He serves as a principal in the New York City Department of Education. In regard to demographics, students in his school are primarily Black and Hispanic. Two percent are Asian. Ninety percent of the students at his school are male.

Participant 3. Participant 3 identified as male. He serves as a dean in a school district on Long Island. The majority of the students at the school where he serves are Black. There are a few Hispanic, White, and Asian students.

Participant 4. Participant 4 identified as female. She serves as an Assistant Principal in the New York City Department of Education. The majority of the students at the school where she serves are male students of color.

Participant 5. Participant 5 identified as female. She is a teacher in the New York City Department of Education.

Participant 6. Participant 6 identified as female. She is an assistant principal in the New York City Department of Education. In terms of demographics, her school comprises of male and female students as well as students who are transitioning or identify as gender fluid. In regard to "race" or "ethnicity," students identify as Black, White, Hispanic, Filipino, Indian, African American, and African. In regard to age, students range in age from fourteen to twenty-one.

Participant 7. Participant 7 identified as female. She serves as a teacher in the New York City Department of Education.

Participant 8. Participant 8 identified as female. She serves as an administrator in the New York City Department of Education. The school where she serves is evenly split between males and females. However, some students identify as transgender or non-binary. Ninety-nine percent of the students at the school where she serves are students of color. Two students identify as white, a few students identify as Asian, and a few students identify as Arabic.

Participant 9. Participant 9 identified as female. She is a teacher for the New York City Department of Education.

Participant 10. Participant 10 identified as male. He serves as a teacher for the New York City Department of Education.

Participant 11. Participant 11 identified as female. She serves as a teacher for the New York City Department of Education.

Participant 12. Participant 12 identified as female. She serves as a teacher for the New York City Department of Education.

Participant 13. Participant 13 identified as female. She serves as a teacher for the New York City Department of Education.

Participant 14. Participant 14 identified as male. He serves as a teacher for the New York City Department of Education.

Participant 15. Participant 15 identified as male. He serves as a principal for the New York City Department of Education. Ninety percent of the students at the school where he serves are students of color. Some students identify as being from the Caribbean. Some students identify as African Americans born in the United States, and some were born on the African continent. Two students identify as Japanese, and one student identifies as Yemeni. There are no students who identify as white.

Participant 16. Participant 16 identified as female. She serves as an assistant principal on Long Island. Regarding demographics, her school is 85% Latino, about 12% Black, and the rest of the students identify as other, including Middle Eastern. In terms of gender, about sixty percent are male and forty percent female.

PROCEDURES

Approval from Concordia University IRB was needed to conduct this research. A consent form was given to all participants prior to conducting the interviews detailing the purpose of the study, information about the researcher as well as the different advantages of the study. Informed consent essentially allowed the participants to share knowledge with researchers while obtaining participants' consent (Klykken, 2022). Participants shared whether restorative justice practices were used at their schools. They specified what strategies or programs are used that are in alignment with restorative justice practices. Participants also shared whether their school uses exclusionary discipline practices such as expulsion or suspension. They shared any factors that have hindered the implementation of restorative justice practices if they do work at a school that implements restorative justice practices. Additionally, participants shared whether the restorative justice practices implemented at their school are indeed culturally relevant. These practices are considered culturally relevant if they are conscious of students' backgrounds and if they serve as an impetus for changes within society (Lustick, 2020).

Since interviews were done via Zoom, measures were taken to ensure privacy and that the Zoom platform was conducive to collecting data. The Zoom link was tested ahead of time to ensure there were no audio-video concerns. Instructions were given to participants on how to log into Zoom and download Zoom, depending on their device of choice. Since interviews were recorded, a protective password was used to save the Zoom recordings. All participants were provided a direct link before the interview (Gray et al., 2020).

This comprehensive interview was a guided conversation related to the topic. Opportunities were provided for participants to provide details about how they ponder on and perceive a specific topic. Open-ended questions were asked to guide the discussion. The questions were all based on the research questions. Follow-up questions were also asked if necessary to guide the discussion (Knott et al., 2022). Participants discussed how and why they behave in a particular way, as well

as their experiences and expertise (Busetto et al., 2020). Prior to the meeting, permission was sought from all participants to record the meeting. Participants were also notified that notetaking would be used. Notes were transcribed and coded. Transcription is essentially duplicating the words spoken by participants and converting them into written form to evaluate the data. Verbatim transcription will be used, which is defined as writing down the verbal data word for word. After transcription had taken place, participants were allowed to review the transcript for accuracy and authenticity. This is referred to as member checking (McGrath et al., 2019). Member checking is also referred to as respondent validation. Providing participants with a transcribed summary of the interview and having them review it allowed them the opportunity to analyze or expound on their responses. Their assessment then became part of data collection and analysis (Busetto et al., 2020).

In qualitative research, it is necessary to ensure that collected data has been gathered, categorized, and thematically sorted in order to construct meaning and provide an organized platform to write the narrative (Lester et al., 2020). This is achieved using coding (Parameswaran et al., 2020). The first step in coding requires the identification of concepts and themes for categorization. Data are presented as concepts. These themes are indicated by short phrases or even single words (Labra et al., 2020). Participants' responses were assessed to identify and organize similar expressions or words, which were then categorized into broader themes. The researcher used the Quirkos software for coding (Williams & Moser, 2019).

For qualitative research to be trustworthy, it first has to be credible. Credibility describes how coherent findings are with realism (McGinley et al., 2021). Research participants were informed of the research conditions. Credibility was also be achieved through triangulation. Triangulation entails using various information sources to discern any identifiable patterns in the research (Stahl & King, 2020). Data triangulation was used in this research. Data sources will include transcripts from individual interviews. Triangulation allowed for a more precise and thorough understanding of the research topics (Nassaji, 2020). To address bias and its effect on trustworthiness, bracketing or epoche was used during the analysis of data. This entailed writing down or journaling any thoughts and ideas in order to challenge any preconceived notions or personal assumptions on the part of the researcher in regard to the research topic (DeBruin, 2020). Those memos revealed any areas that needed further analysis or exploration. Bracketing also ensured that ideas and thoughts were not lost when they were needed as references during the progression of the research (Ravindran, 2019). Bracketing ensured that the researcher had little emotional attachment to the research. Being emotionally detached from the research made it easier for the researcher to focus on the research (Gregory, 2019).

Transferability, defined as the transmissibility of the researcher's interpretation or conclusions to similar conditions, differs from qualitative to quantitative research. In quantitative research, transferability depends on the generalization of the research. However, generalizations would be invalid in qualitative research since there is a small group of participants, and participants are not a representative sample of the population. Therefore, transferability in qualitative relies on the in-depth and adequate submission of details that can make transmission possible if readers of the study should want to conduct this research study. Another factor of trustworthiness in

qualitative research is dependability. Dependability affirms that if readers or anyone decides to analyze the data from the study, their analysis would not differ extensively from that of the researcher (Nassaji, 2020). To guarantee dependability in this research study, participants were informed of all elements of the research design and its implementation. Details related to the collection and analysis of data, as well as the security and management of data, were also made transparent. Dependability is based on constancy in the findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

DATA ANALYSIS

While there isn't a single right way to analyze qualitative research data, certain commonalities appear frequently regardless of the approach used. Thematic analysis was used in the analysis of data (Labra et al., 2020). This analysis encompasses a range of approaches that identify patterns across qualitative datasets using a variety of approaches (Peel, 2020). The first step in employing thematic analysis was gathering and centralizing recordings from the interviews. Data from those recordings were then transcribed. Transcribing the data allowed for familiarity with the data and helped in comprehending participants' thought processes (Lester et al., 2020).

It is important to note that several levels of coding were used in this research study. The first level in this process entailed generating short words or phrases used to identify significant experiences, ideas, or reflections. Coding in the first phase was typically descriptive and involved a relatively low level of inference. The thematic analysis helped predetermine what was relevant in regard to the research questions (Campbell et al., 2021). Responses were sorted based on whether they relate to exclusionary disciplinary practices, hindrances to restorative justice practices, or implementation of restorative justice practices and alternatives to exclusionary disciplinary practices. Quirkos was used to record responses based on those categories. To achieve the highest level of inference, the final phase of coding involved connecting the codes to the theoretical elements presented in the theoretical framework in the research. (Lester et al., 2020).

Research Question 1

What are school leaders' and teachers' lived experiences with exclusionary disciplinary practices (suspension/expulsion and how could these practices affect students behaviorally and academically? Research question one focused on ascertaining how exclusionary disciplinary practices affected students socially, emotionally, and academically based on the lived experiences of school leaders and teachers. Two themes and one sub-theme surfaced from the data gathered based on Research Question 1.

Table 2

Table of Themes for RQ 1

Themes/Subthemes	Descriptions/subthemes
Sense of community a. School avoidance	• Students may intentionally engage in behaviors to be removed from the school community if they lack a sense of belonging. Upon return from suspension, students often have a negative perception of their school community because they feel hurt and betrayed that they were removed from the educational setting.
Negative impact on learning and growth	• When students are suspended or expelled and removed from the educational setting, they sometimes do not have opportunities to make up assignments. This impedes learning and social/emotional growth.

Finding Related to Research Question One

The initial theme identified from Research Question 1 was a sense of community. The sub-themes that emerged from this theme were school avoidance and a changed perception of the school community.

Overall, participants' responses indicated that when students experience a sense of community, they become more invested in ensuring that they contribute positively to their school. Additionally, the community influences students socially and emotionally. They often look to their school community to ensure that their emotional and psychological needs are met. Exclusion from their community can impact them significantly in many different ways.

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In summary, participants alluded to the fact that some students engage in behaviors that would lead to removal from the education setting. To those students, this serves as a coping mechanism as they desire to escape the classroom or school for various reasons. All participants agreed that the impact on learning remained the same whether students were separated from the educational setting because of school avoidance or not.

Many participants shared that removal from the education setting leads to students missing out on valuable instructional time. Inevitably, this leads to academic deficits. While attempts are made to ensure students receive academic support while they are suspended, the effectiveness and magnitude of that support vary from school to school or district to district.

Finding Related to Research Question Two

The first theme that evolved from RQ 2 is restorative circles as prevention and healing. Many participants expressed that restorative circles are a common restorative practice used by their school community to prevent conflict or prevent the escalation of conflict, or to support students in re-entering the community after exclusion. The second theme that emerged was developing communication and building relationships. This theme highlights how restorative justice practices enable students and even staff to develop communication skills in regard to addressing some of the issues experienced by community members. Working toward effective communication inevitably leads to the building or improving relationships for all involved. The third theme that emerged was a shift in school culture. This positive change in school culture benefits all stakeholders.

Several participants shared that restorative circles, the most widely used form of restorative practices, should serve as both prevention and healing. Restorative circles can be introduced as a tool used to prevent conflict before it arises. Additionally, restorative circles can be used as a source of healing for individuals and other members of the community affected by the actions of the person who has caused the disruption.

In summary, many participants shared how restorative justice practices can help students develop communication skills. Students receive a platform and opportunity to voice their needs and concerns. Relationship building is at the core of this process. Whether those relationships develop between students and staff or students and other students, they are instrumental in empowering students to take ownership of their emotions.

To sum up, most participants shared that there was a positive shift in school culture after implementing restorative practices. However, that shift in school culture was not always seen immediately. It often took a while to see those changes. Furthermore, those changes depended on how receptive the school community was to implementing restorative practices.

Research Question 2

What are teachers’ and school leaders' lived experiences with the use of restorative justice practices and how could these practices affect students behaviorally and academically? This research question focused on school leaders' and teachers’ attitudes toward restorative justice practices and its impact on student behavior and academic performance. Three themes emerged from interview questions related to RQ 2.

Table 3

Table of Themes for RQ 2

Themes/Subthemes	Descriptions/subthemes
Restorative Circles as prevention and healing	• Restorative circles are a common restorative practice used to build community and is used as both a preventative restorative measure and a means of reintroducing students back into the community after being excluded.
Developing communication and building relationships	• Restorative justice practices provide opportunities to build and restore relationships with all stakeholders within the school community and even outside the school community.
Shift in school culture	• Restorative justice practices lead to a shift toward a more positive school culture that benefits all stakeholders.

Finding Related to Research Question 3

The first theme that emerged was training and resources. One subtheme was time. The second theme that emerged was mindset. The third theme was stakeholders' involvement.

In summation, many of the participants interviewed expressed that they were not averse to the implementation of restorative practices. However, in order for them to be dedicated to implementing those practices, they would need additional training and resources. Furthermore, they shared that the training should be continuous and include everyone who interacts with students within the building.

Participants reflect on time as a barrier to implementation. Time determines whether restorative justice practices can be implemented as a program or a practice. Participants expressed that they are inundated with responsibilities, so schools must be strategic in ensuring that time is dedicated to training in restorative justice practices.

In summary, the mindset of educators was identified as one of the major barriers to implementation. Some educators are fixated on punishment as opposed to restoration in that they see restorative practices as a "free pass" for students who have done wrong. Implementing restorative practices successfully would require changing the mindset of educators.

To summarize, the successful implementation of restorative practices would involve all stakeholders. Participants expressed that students do not only learn from school leaders and

educators. Interactions with other adults in the building present opportunities for teachable moments. Having the support and reinforcement of parents or guardians also helps in the successful implementation of restorative practices.

Research Question 3

What have been some hindrances to restorative justice or restorative practices based on the lived experiences of school leaders and other educators? This research question focused on barriers to the implementation of restorative justice practices as well as strategies for overcoming those barriers. Three themes and one sub-theme emerged from RQ 3. Refer to Table 4 for themes for research question 3.

Table 4

Table of Themes for RQ 3

Themes/Subthemes	Descriptions/subthemes
Training and resources ● Time	● Participants shared that inadequate and lack of continuous professional development served as a barrier to the implementation of restorative justice practices.
Mindset	● Some participants shared that the mindset of teachers and other staff needed to be shifted positively in order to successfully implement restorative practices.
Stakeholders' involvement	● Some participants shared that not having all stakeholders to buy in or be invested in the implementation of restorative practices also served as a barrier.

Discussion of the Conclusions Related to the Research Purpose

This qualitative phenomenological study investigated school leaders' and teachers' perceptions of exclusionary disciplinary practices and restorative practices. Three research questions guided this research. The first research question explored school leaders' and teachers' lived experiences regarding the impact of exclusionary disciplinary practices and its impact on students behaviorally and academically. Two primary themes and one sub-theme emerged for research question one. The first theme was that a sense of community or belonging can impact students' behavior. This theme is related to one sub-theme. That sub-theme is that students

sometimes see school avoidance as a coping mechanism to escape the learning environment. The second theme is the negative impact on learning and growth that results from students being suspended.

Limitations

There were many limitations to this study. While all participants agreed to be interviewed on Zoom, there were a few minor technical difficulties. For example, one participant lost connectivity during the session, causing the session to pause momentarily until that participant was able to reconnect. The inability to read participants' body language was the second limitation of this study. While all participants did have their cameras on during the interview, there were instances where it was difficult to perceive participants' body language due to improper lighting or other aesthetic issues. The third limitation was the varying levels of experience despite all of the participants being school leaders or educators in New York state schools.

Some participants were new to education, and some were veteran educators or school leaders. Some participants worked in community schools that served students with special needs. While others worked in schools that primarily served general education students. Students with special needs are defined as students who have learning and behavioral needs (Agran et al., 2020). Participants also had various levels of familiarity with restorative justice practices. For some, they had been recently introduced to restorative justice practices. For others, they had been engaging in and with restorative justice practices for many years. Since this was a phenomenological study, another limitation was the verification of participants' authenticity and plausibility. Another limitation would be researcher bias and the ability to ensure that bracketing was used throughout the study. Collecting and analyzing data was time-consuming and challenging, given this research relied on qualitative data.

Implications

The importance of this qualitative phenomenological study was to gather the lived experiences of educators and school leaders regarding restorative practices and exclusionary disciplinary practices to determine the implications of both restorative practices and exclusionary disciplinary practices, particularly for Black students. The purpose was to examine whether restorative practices impacted exclusionary disciplinary practices by evaluating the lived experiences of teachers and school administrators. The findings of this research aligned with the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2 as well as previous research on this topic. Data from earlier studies showed that implementing restorative justice practices led to a decrease in the number of students who are suspended or expelled because restorative practices provide tools that educators and students need to help students manage some of the behavioral issues that may lead to suspension or expulsion (Samimi et al., 2021). Joseph et al. stated that restorative justice practices lead to the development of a positive relationship between students and staff members, which inevitably leads to a decrease in referrals that may lead to suspension or expulsion (Joseph et al., 2021).

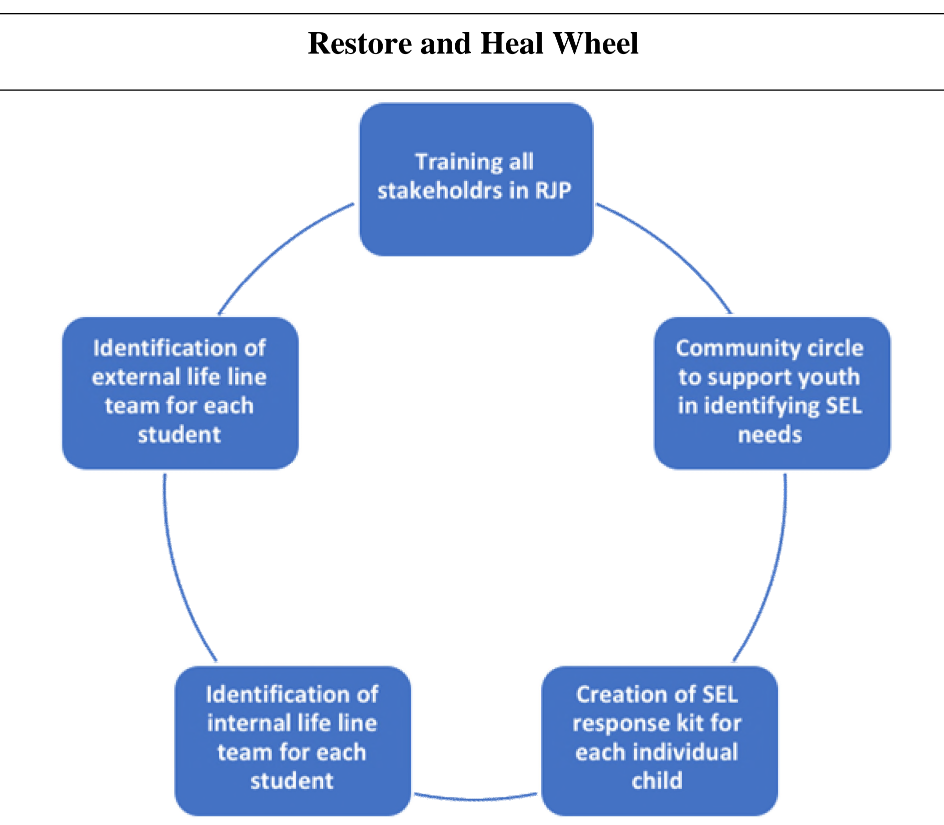
Recommendations for Future Research

There are three recommendations for future research. The first recommendation would be to conduct a qualitative narrative study that compares the lived experiences of Black girls at schools that implement restorative justice practices to the lived experiences of those who attend schools that do not implement restorative justice practices.

The second recommendation for future research would be conducting a phenomenological qualitative study by actively participating in a restorative circle. As a participant observer actively participating in a restorative circle, the researcher would have a unique opportunity to authentically and intimately analyze the lived experiences of other participants while drawing on his or her own lived experiences as a participant.

The third suggestion for future research would be to analyze the effectiveness of the Restore and Heal Wheel depicted in Figure 1. A mixed methods approach can be done to determine whether the implementation of the Restore and Heal Wheel has any impact on the major elements of school culture. Quantitative data can be collected and analyzed to determine whether there are changes in academic performance for students before and after implementation. For schools that continue to use exclusionary disciplinary practices, quantitative data can be collected to determine the effect of the Restore and Heal Wheel on the rate of suspensions and expulsions. Qualitative data can be collected and analyzed regarding students' and staff's lived experiences regarding the school environment before and after the execution of the Restore and Heal Wheel. Barriers to implementation presented in this research included mindset, time, and resources. Participants also alluded to the inconsistency regarding support with restorative justice practices. Figure 1, the Restore and Heal Wheel addresses all of those barriers.

Figure 1



CONCLUSION

The following barriers to implementation should be well examined before and during the rollout of restorative justice practices: mindset, time, availability of resources, and stakeholder involvement. While it may not be possible to formally train all stakeholders in the implementation of restorative justice practices, all stakeholders must be aware of this practice. There has to be a common language in schools, at least. Additionally, a collaborative effort between community entities and schools can help establish some of the groundwork needed to engage students in restorative justice practices. Schools do not exist in isolation or remain unaffected by external influences. Therefore, it may be worth it for school leaders to leverage the impact of that influence when it comes to restorative justice practices.

In conclusion, restorative justice practices can effectively disrupt the overuse of exclusionary disciplinary practices, thereby disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline. However, the complexity of developing an execution plan poses a challenge to many schools. Resources have to be available, including consistent and sustainable training and support for all stakeholders. Restorative justice practices should not be a program but rather a practice that integrates both pedagogical and social/emotional instruments. It should knit together, with the strongest thread, all elements of school culture needed to empower the whole child.

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Vol 10, No 1
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BOOK REVIEW

Shaylyn Marks
California State University, Bakersfield

"These Kids are Out of Control:" Why We Must Reimagine "Classroom Management" for Equity
H. Richard Milner IV, Heather B. Cunningham, Lori Delale-O'Connor, Erika Gold Kestenberg
Publisher: Corwin
Pages: 186
Price: $31.95
ISBN: 978-1483374802

Citation:
Milner, H. R., Cunningham, H. B., Delale-O'Connor, L., & Kestenberg, E. G. (2019). *"These kids are out of control" Why we must reimagine "Classroom Management" for Equity.* Corwin, A SAGE Publishing Company

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As student populations continue to diversify at an exponential rate, issues of cultural dissonance between students and their teachers become increasingly problematic in American schools. Despite the growing diversity of student populations, teacher demographics have remained stagnant (Milner et al., 2019). The cultural disconnect between teachers and students have been cited as a major source of conflict in classroom spaces (Irvine, 2003). As such, "conflicts are often couched in misinterpretations that seem to be shaped by the socioeconomic, cultural, racial, and ethnic inconsistencies that may exist between teachers and students" (Milner et al., 2019). Conflicts such as these fuel the cultural dissonance present in many classrooms across America, leading to inequitable classroom management practices that disproportionately identify historically minoritized students. Research demonstrates that inequities exist and are embedded in

traditional classroom management practices, and that these practices consistently and disproportionately identify and work against students of color (Milner, 2019; Robbins, 2021; Muhammad, 2020). Recent research identifies detrimental emerging patterns of disproportionate office referrals and high probability of subjective infractions as well as disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates for students of color when compared to their white peers, highlighting inequitable undercurrents within traditional classroom management practices (Milner et al., 2019, Boutte, et al., 2021). While schools are designed to be pipelines for opportunity, they have been reduced to pipelines to prison for many historically marginalized groups of students. In fact, instead of attending college, Black males are five times more likely to go to prison (Howard, 2016). With consistent data identifying a plethora of social justice issues embedded within traditional classroom management practices, we must critically analyze and scrutinize classroom management practices with an equity-centered lens (Milner, 2019). That said, we must disrupt these patterns of inequities that are embedded in traditional systems of classroom management practices.

In traditional classroom spaces, Black students are more likely to be disciplined for subjective violations of classroom rules, such as dress code violations and disrespect, as opposed to their White peers, who when disciplined, are disciplined for objective violations (Milner et al., 2019). Unfortunately, all too often, the resultant of violating these rules is the removal of students from the learning environment, stripping them from the very opportunities schools are designed to provide. To combat these patterns of discipline, educators need to recognize that "Creating such spaces of learning, where students are able to build their learning identities, means that educators understand (a) punishment referral patterns, (b) teacher and student congruence and dissonance, and (c) institutional and systemic barriers" (Milner et al., 2019). It is important to note that the language of punishment is intentionally used to illustrate the contrast between discipline and punishment. Punishment-based practices are harmful rather than helpful. In traditional classroom management systems, punishment in the form of removal from learning spaces is a widespread practice that causes harm rather than an opportunity to learn from mistakes. Additionally, punishment referrals are often the consequence of students failing to comply with rules they are simply asked to blindly adhere to, reinforcing the element of control in traditional classroom management practices. When looking at the similarities between punishment referrals within school systems and punishment patterns in society at large, there is a striking resemblance of "prison-like" consequences for students in that they resort to exclusionary practices in an attempt to control behavior (Milner et al., 2019).

Unfortunately, Black students are most often adversely affected by these traditional policies and consequences. Most punishment referrals that originate in the classroom are grounded in subjective interpretation and disproportionately affect Black students as well as students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Milner et al., 2019). The consequence of punishment referrals that originate in the classroom and result in the removal of students from learning spaces reduces students' access and opportunities for learning, adversely affecting student achievement (Milner et al., 2019). When traditional classroom management practices result in the removal of students from learning contexts, students are not only being punished for what educators have deemed

inappropriate or poor behavior but are also stripped away access to the curriculum and the learning environment. Additionally, "too often students are looked upon as the sole problem when teachers actually contribute to conflicts that occur in the classroom; consequently, punishment referrals persist" (Milner et al., 2019). According to Milner (2019), "Because White teachers and students of color possess different racialized and cultural experiences (Milner, 2015), incongruence may serve as a roadblock for academic and social success" (p. 20). While well-intentioned, many White educators adopt color-blind ideologies, claiming to not see color or recognize race, in an effort to create a neutral learning space. Unfortunately, educational spaces are never politically, racially, or otherwise neutral. Treating the classroom as a neutral space ignores the inherent power dynamics present in classroom spaces and ignores the dynamic set of assets students bring to the classroom. As Delpit (1988) states, "to act as if power does not exist is to ensure that the power status quo remains the same" (p. 292). In ignoring the cultural values and racial or ethnic identities of students, educators are missing important dimensions of their students' identities, which hinders their opportunities to be successful in the classroom (Milner et al., 2019). To effectively engage students, this practice must be eradicated.

Championing the rights of minoritized populations of students, *"These Kids Are Out of Control"* addresses the inequities and disparities embedded in traditional classroom management practices. In an effort to empower Black youth and begin to close the discipline gap that currently exists between Black youth and their white peers, the authors argue for educators to critically examine and reframe the management practices used in traditional classroom spaces, stating, "Understanding classroom management in context must be coupled with clear links to issues of justice, equity, inclusion, and diversity" (Milner et al., 2019, p. 11). To effectively engage in this work, educators need to have the space to shape ideologies and develop their agency by interrogating and disrupting anti-Black policies and practices that have plagued schools since their inception (Marks, S. & Sandals, D., 2021, p.1). *"These Kids Are Out of Control"* is a necessary text and resource to allow educators a starting point in engaging in these critical self-reflective practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

"These Kids Are Out of Control:" Why We Must Reimagine "Classroom Management" for Equity is a necessary and timely addition to the scholarship in classroom management practices. This text provides valuable insights, backed by research, to assist educators in how they can "engage in self-reflection about their own power and privilege" as a means to transform their practice (Milner et al., 2019, p. 1). As educators use the text to assist their critical self-reflection, the authors promote practices to facilitate building cultural background knowledge, build upon student and community assets, and co-construct curricula and instructional practices to cultivate a more inclusive and inviting classroom space in response to the "humanity of student needs" (Milner et al., 2019, p. 4). Offering both the theoretical and pedagogical principles, *"These Kids Are Out of Control"* directly tackles issues of equity as they pertain to classroom management practices. The book starts with a strong rationale for culturally responsive classroom management practices, citing staggering

statistics in regards to discipline, referrals, and punishments for Black youth in comparison to their White peers. As such, the remainder of the text outlines effective practices and strategies to implement in classroom spaces, supporting educators on their journey of critical self-reflection.

As a standalone text, this book is a necessary resource for educators and teacher education preparation program courses. *"These Kids Are Out of Control"* provides compelling arguments, backed by substantial research and evidence, to reimagine classroom management practices and policies. Offering insightful pedagogical practices to begin dismantling the status quo, the authors provide a compelling argument for culturally responsive classroom management practices. For those looking for additional resources to better understand the complexities of inequities embedded in classroom management practices, I recommend *Lost at School* and *Teaching for Black Lives*. While *Lost at School* offers a series of vignettes with commentary from the author on how to disrupt harmful classroom practices to empower students, while *Teaching for Black Lives* offers more insight into how to specifically support and empower Black students in classroom spaces. The three together offer valuable insights, pedagogical strategies, and questions for critical self-reflection.

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