Cultural Responsiveness Matters: Exploring the Connections Between Teacher Self-Efficacy and Their Engagement in Culturally Relevant Practices

by

Kendria Boyd

Bachelor of Science, Hampton University, 2002

Master of Arts, Hampton University, 2011

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This dissertation was presented

by

Kendria Boyd

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and approved by

Dr. Frances Ivey, Deputy Superintendent, PhD

Dr. Dana Thompson Dorsey, Associate Professor, School of Education

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Lori Delale-O'Connor, Associate Director, Research and Development

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Kendria Boyd, EdD

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The purpose of this inquiry was to better understand the connections between teachers' self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. This study took place at an alternative high school situated at a school district in an urban Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory served as the study's theoretical framework, as well as a conceptual framework for considering how cultural responsiveness in teaching a culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse student population might be connected with teachers' self-efficacy. Eight teachers (pseudonym) were selected to participate in this study by the variance of scores from their survey questionnaire on teacher self-efficacy. Upon purposefully selection, participants were then invited to participate in an interview. In these interviews, I sought to understand the connections between teachers' self-efficacy and their ability to engage in culturally relevant practices. The three main themes that emerged include: (1). Building relationships, (2). Making cultural connections, and (3). Engagement in culturally relevant practice. Primary findings suggest that: (1). Teacher self-efficacy matters for student experiences, (2). The importance of teachers building and establishing relationships with families, and (3). Teachers need to know what cultural relevance is and how to engage in culturally relevant practice. Implications for research and practice are offered.

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Preface

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1.0 Introduction

According to Nieto (2005), most culturally and linguistically diverse students and their White teachers live in different worlds and do not fully understand or appreciate each other's life experiences. Those teachers, in particular, must both confront their biases that get in the way of student learning and feel efficacious about their teaching practices in order to support students who are culturally, linguistically, and racially different from them. This phenomenological study investigates the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. Drawing from interview and questionnaire data from eight teachers in an alternative high school setting in the Southeast, I seek to better understand the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. I will use the following questions to guide my study:

1. What are the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers in a non-traditional school setting that serves a culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse population of students?

2. How do teachers in a non-traditional school setting that serves a culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse population of students engage in culturally responsive practices?

The goal of this study is to inform teachers about self-efficacy beliefs that are linked with the behaviors that influence their decision making and classroom practices through self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness.

1.1 Problem Statement

As schools become increasingly more diverse, culturally responsive practices are one of the ways that educators can meet the needs of this linguistically, culturally, and racially changing student population. For the purpose of this study, the term diverse refers to any racially or ethnically minoritized students, as well as students for whom English is not their first language. According to Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis (2016), *minortized* students are "individuals from racially oppressed communities that have been marginalized because of their non-dominant race, ethnicity, religion, language, or citizenship" (p. 1275). Research shows that during the same 10 year span (2002-2013), as White (59% to 51%) and Black (17% to 16%) student enrollment decreased, Latinx enrollment increased from 18% to 24% in public schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). In fall 2015, the student population shifted to a majority minority student population, with the number of non-White students comprising over 50% of the U.S. elementary and secondary school population (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). It is estimated that by fall 2024, Black students will comprise 15% of the school population, Latinx students 29% and White students, a projected 46% of public school students in the United States, (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Thus, understanding how to meet the needs of diverse students is and will continue to be a fundamental aspect of teachers' jobs.

While the student population in the United States is becoming increasingly diverse, the teaching population does not culturally, racially, or linguistically reflect the student population. Table 1 below illustrates the racial demographics of teachers from 1987 to 2012 and demonstrates that across that 25-year time period, White teachers consistently made up over 80% of the teaching force. Adding to this trajectory, during the 2015-16 school year, about 80% of all public school teachers in the United States were non-Hispanic White, 9% were Hispanic, 7% were non-Hispanic

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Black, and 2% were non-Hispanic Asian (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). The demographic mismatch between student and teacher populations has caused concern among researchers, policy makers, educators and families, as research has shown that both student and teacher factors play a significant role in student achievement (Skiba et al. 2011). For instance, both student and teacher race, socioeconomic status, and cultural background influence student achievement, as does the structure of the school, teacher preparation and professional development experiences (Mette, Nieuwenhuizen, & Hvidston, 2016). In 2015, the total student population enrolled in public schools in the United States was 50,094,000 (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). The percentage of English Language Learners enrolled in 2015 was 9.5% of the total student population (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). On the other hand, the total teacher population was 3,827,100 with White teachers representing 80% of this population (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). When considering the percentage of teachers who are White compared to the percentage of students who are culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse, it is important that teachers engage in practices that are culturally relevant. Teachers must be prepared to deliver culturally relevant curricula and teach in ways that are meaningful to students who are culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse. Culturally relevant teaching will "require teachers to both be able to validate students' personal experiences and cultural heritages" and also teaching content in ways that are relevant and meaningful to culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students (Gay, 2018, p. 143).

Table 1 Percent of Teacher Demographics in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools by Race: Selected Years, 1987-88 through 2011-12

Race/Ethnicity Percentage Distribution of Teachers							
Race/ Ethnicity	1987-1988	1990-1991	1993-1994	1999-2000	2003-2004	2007-2008	2011-2012
White	86.9%	86.5%	86.5%	84.3%	83.1%	83.1%	81.9%
Black	8.2%	8.3%	7.4%	7.6%	7.0%	7.0%	6.8%
Hispanic	3.0%	3.4%	4.2%	5.6%	7.1%	7.1%	7.8%
Asian	0.9%	1.0%	1.1%	1.6%	1.2%	1.2%	1.8%
Pacific Islander	----	----	----	----	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%
American Indian/ Alaska Native	1.0%	0.8%	0.8%	0.9%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
Two or more races	----	----	----	----	0.7%	0.9%	1.0%

Note. Adapted from Schools and staffing survey (SASS), "Public school teacher data file," 1987-88 through 2011-12; "Private school teacher data file," 1987-88 through 2011-12; and "Charter school teacher data file," 1999-2000 by the U.S. Department of Education.

Research points out that one way to support students who are culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse is for teachers and school leaders to engage in a variety of culturally responsive practices (Gay, 2018). According to Mayfield and Garrison-Wade (2015), culturally responsive practices are those practices that acknowledge students' cultures and use that knowledge to create an inclusive learning environment where educators are regularly engaged in self-reflection about their personal beliefs and biases, students' cultural identities are nurtured, and both student and educator cultural competency is developed. Some examples of culturally responsive practices that appear in research include the following: incorporating students' cultures and experiences in the instruction, building connections with families, embracing diversity within and across cultures,

setting high expectations for students, providing students ample time to succeed, and actively addressing teachers' belief systems (Gay, 2010a).

Teachers' "feelings of self-efficacy" are also connected with their cultural responsiveness (Gay, 2018, p. 78). Self-efficacy is one's confidence level in his or her ability to successfully accomplish a task and produce positive outcomes (Bandura, 1997). It is the teacher's belief system regarding whether or not they believe they can help students, regardless of challenges they may face. For example, teachers with high self-efficacy believe that they can support their students despite major barriers that the students may face. They recognize these barriers and believe in their abilities as educators (Bruce, Esmonde, Ross, Dookie, & Beatty, 2010). On the other hand, teachers with low self-efficacy do not believe in their ability or skillset to support these students (Gay, 2018). Some teachers will blame the low performance of students on their intellectual ability or their home life, instead of their teaching methods (Gay, 2018).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The objective of this study is to better understand the connections between teachers' self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. As indicated above, the student population in the United States has become increasingly more racially and ethnically diverse, while the teaching population has remained primarily White. Since teachers in the United States do not culturally, racially or linguistically reflect the students that they teach, it is critical for teachers to make the instruction relevant to the student's culture and experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1995). To address these demographic shifts and the associated implications for culturally, linguistically and racially diverse students, this phenomenological study explores the connections between teachers'

self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. According to Mertens (2015), in phenomenological studies, the researcher focuses on understanding how people are experiencing a particular phenomenon in their consciousness, rather than from the researcher's point of view. To get a better understanding of the connections between teachers' self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices, the following research questions will guide my study:

1. What are the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers in a non-traditional school setting that serves a culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse population of students?

2. How do teachers in a non-traditional school setting that serves a culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse population of students engage in culturally responsive practices?

I will conduct surveys and engage in interviews with educators about both their feelings of self-efficacy as well as their classroom practices.

1.3 Setting of Study

I have chosen an alternative school to conduct my study because "appropriate educational services in the alternative setting continues to be a critical issue in the United States" (Mann & Whitworth, 2017, p. 25). Before looking at a traditional school, I want to get a better understanding of the connections between teachers' self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices in an alternative setting since alternative schools "address the needs of students that cannot be typically met in a traditional school" (Mann & Whitworth, 2017, p. 25). There are unique challenges at alternative schools and teachers need appropriate knowledge and skillsets to address these challenges (Mann & Whitworth, 2017). Some of the challenges are the following: risk of

school failure or dropping out of school, emotional and behavior difficulties (Perzigian, 2018), excessive absences (Mann & Whitworth, 2017), and court placed due to disciplinary infractions (Kennedy & Soutullo, 2018). According to Kennedy and Soutullo (2018),"educators' perceptions, beliefs, biases, and subjectivity in sanctioning students to alternative schools, plays a key role in the discipline gap between White students and Black and Brown students" (p. 11). Some of the perceptions, beliefs, and biases of traditional school educators' are that students in alternative schools are "problem" students and that they are rightfully segregated from "non-problem" students (Kennedy & Soutullo, 2018, p. 12). However, according to Perzigian (2018), alternative schools that are culturally responsive experience more success with student achievement, "students have a closer, and caring relationship with their teachers, and students receive more positive behavior supports that are significant factors in their success" (p. 1). Additionally, the alternative school that I refer to in this study is my place of practice. The work that I do is embedded around the practices and services at this alternative school so I have a connection and insight to the culture of this type of setting.

This study takes place at an alternative high school located in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the United States. This school setting serves as a "second chance" for students to achieve academic success when they have been removed from their initial school settings. Table 2 illustrates the racial demographics of students, while Table 3 illustrates other subcategories of importance regarding the student population. The racial demographics of the students who attend the school are: 9% Asian, 19% Black, 62% Hispanic, and 7% White. Additionally, 41% of the student population is designated as economically disadvantage (receiving free and reduced price lunch), 58% of the student population is classified as English Language Learners, and 9% of students have been identified as students with a disability.

Table 2 Student Racial Demographics

Racial Demographics (Students)				
Population	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White
Alternative School	9%	19%	62%	7%

Student Enrollment = 350 students

Table 3 Percentage of Students in Other Categories

Population	Economically Disadvantage	English Language Learners	Students with a Learning Disability
Alternative School	41%	58%	9%

Note: Student Enrollment = 350 students

While the student population is racially, ethically, culturally, linguistically, and socio-economically diverse, the teacher population is not reflective of this diversity. Table 4 illustrates the racial demographics of the teachers. The racial demographics of the teachers at this alternative school setting are 63% White, 33% Black, and 3% Asian. As the student population in this school setting becomes increasingly more diverse, there is a clear need to understand teachers' feelings of self-efficacy around instructing these students, as well as supporting them in developing culturally relevant practices. Teacher self-efficacy considers not only teachers' feelings about their ability to successfully execute effective practices for culturally and linguistically diverse students, but also how this efficacy influences their decision making for subsequent opportunities, which reflects effort and determination with tasks (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998).

Table 4 Teacher Racial Demographics

Racial Demographics (Teachers)			
Population	White	Black	Asian
Alternative School	63%	33%	3%

Note: Total Teachers = 33

1.4 Significance of Study

This study explores the need to understand the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. This understanding is critical, in particular because of the cultural, racial, and linguistic differences between the teacher and student populations in the United States. Culturally responsive practices involves teachers constantly learning about different races, ethnicities and cultures, while also becoming more conscious of themselves as cultural beings and cultural actors in regard to teaching (Gay, 2010). It further involves engaging in courageous conversations about race and equity for culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students (Gay, 2010). This study will demonstrate ways in which teachers are or are not engaging in practices that are culturally relevant in one alternative high school setting.

Mertens (2015) emphasized the importance of cultural competence in the following statement:

> Cultural competence is not a state at which one arrives; rather, it is a process of learning, unlearning and relearning. It is sensibility cultivated throughout a life-time. Cultural competence requires awareness of self, reflection on one's own cultural position, awareness of others' positions, and the ability to interact genuinely and respectfully with others (p. 23).

In this statement, Mertens conveys the need for White teachers to validate and affirm students whose backgrounds and experiences differ from their own. Race, culture, experiences and cultural history shape people and their judgement of others. Despite individual's best intentions, assumptions and judgements are made about others based on racial stereotypes and preconceived notions (Paterson, 2017). Culturally and linguistically underserved diverse students

are frequently viewed as defiant, disrespectful, and disruptive (Hollie, 2012). Often the experiences and understandings that culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students bring to the classroom are viewed as deficits rather than assets (Hollie, 2012). In addition, teachers are often not supported in recognizing their biases in order to be responsive (Hollie, 2012). I hope that this inquiry will shed light on the connections between teachers' understandings and classroom practices in relation to their self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness.

1.5 Study Delimitations

This study seeks to better understand the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practice. This study contributes to the established theory of self-efficacy and extends this knowledge within the field of cultural responsiveness. However, this study does not seek to evaluate how teacher self-efficacy contributes to student achievement. Instead, this study explores how teacher self-efficacy connects to their engagement in culturally relevant practices. Although there is significant literature on teachers' self-efficacy and how it influences student performance, this study will not examine that connection. Additionally, this study does not seek to prove or disprove a theory, but rather to examine teachers' decision- making and classroom practices through the theoretical lens of self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness within the setting of an alternative high school.

1.6 Conclusion

Ladson-Billings (1994) describes culturally responsive teaching as "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 382). Much of the literature references Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory of Self-Efficacy to examine the importance of teachers' belief systems and their engagement in culturally relevant practice for students who are culturally, linguistically, and racially different from themselves. According to Gay (2010), teachers' beliefs are a critical component of culturally responsive teaching. Teachers must continue to reflect deeply on their practices and biases that can get in the way of student learning (Nieto, 2005). With this study, I hope to contribute to a better understanding of the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in practices that are culturally relevant.

2.0 Literature Review

It is estimated that by fall 2024, Black students will comprise 15% of the school population, Latinx students 29% and White students, a projected 46% percent of public school students in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). In the 2015-16 school year, 80% of all public school teachers were non-Hispanic White. In the same time period, 9% were Hispanic, 7% were Black, 2% were Asian, and 1% were two or more races. Additionally, American Indian/Alaska Native and Pacific Islander each represented less than 1% of public school teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). This comparison between teachers and culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students (students for whom English is not their first language or racially and/or ethnically minoritized students) demonstrates a need for teachers to engage in culturally responsive practices because the teacher population does not culturally, racially or linguistically reflect the students who they teach. This review of literature seeks to explore the connections between teachers' self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices within which I ground this study. Specifically, I will explore two major areas in the literature: (1). Teacher self-efficacy beliefs and (2). Teacher engagement in culturally relevant practices. I will provide an overview of the self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997), which will serve as the study's theoretical framework, as well as a conceptual framework for culturally responsive teaching that will help to frame practices that are culturally responsive as it relates to serving students who are culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse.

2.1 Teacher Self-Efficacy Beliefs

It is difficult to retain talented teachers. Indeed, "25% of new teachers do not return for their third year, and more than 40% leave the profession within five years" (Milner & Woolfolk Hoy, 2003, p. 263). Teacher departure from the profession has been attributed, in part, to low self-efficacy (Milner & Woolfolk Hoy, 2003, p. 263). Given the high rates of departure from the profession, there is a need to understand teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and their association with theacher persistence. Self-efficacy is the belief in one's abilities to achieve a goal or outcome (Bandura, 1997). "Teacher efficacy stems from the beliefs teachers hold about their abilities to positively impact student achievement" (Gay, 2018, p. 78). Self-efficacy is task-specific and varies based on the activity (Bandura, 1997). For example, teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy set high expectations for themselves and their students (Gay, 2018). Additionally, teachers with high levels of self-efficacy take responsibility for student achievement and are resilient when they encounter challenges or difficulties (Gay, 2018). On the other hand, teachers with low levels of self-efficacy are more likely to doubt their abilities to support their students (Gay, 2018).

2.1.1 Sources of Teacher Self-Efficacy Beliefs

There are three sources of self-efficacy that can directly influence teachers: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, and verbal persuasion (Bandura, 1997). According to Bandura (1997), mastery experiences are prior experiences in which an individual has experienced success. For example, if a first-year teacher has a successful year with student performance, he/she may develop a strong sense of self-efficacy in his/her teaching ability. Vicarious experiences involve a person observing others' successes or accomplishments and believing that they can succeed as

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well (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997). For instance, a teacher who is not proficient with a certain teaching strategy, observes another teacher who is highly proficient with the teaching strategy of interest, and thus feels more comfortable in implementing what he/she has observed in his/her own classroom. Finally, verbal persuasion occurs when someone convinces or encourages a person to perform a task and the person feels he or she is capable of performing the task (Bandura, 1997). For example, praise by administration serves as a catalyst for teachers to pursue challenging leadership opportunities.

2.1.2 Development of Teacher Self-Efficacy

Development of teachers' sense of efficacy, and positive beliefs in teachers' abilities to effectively teach culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students are necessary aspects of both teacher education programs and teacher learning in actual school contexts (Delale-O'Connor Alvarez, Murray, & Milner, 2017, p. 179). According to Loucks-Hoursley, Love, Stiles, Mundry, and Hewson (2003), teachers' sense of efficacy must be a component of professional development to improve student learning. Bray-Clark and Bates (2003) illustrated four key elements through professional development that are effective in supporting teachers' self-efficacy: First, they point to professional development focused on school improvement goals in which teachers share both responsibility for goals and accountability for results with administrators and support staff. For example, teachers are able to collaborate and share resources, ideas, and suggestions to support one another in accomplishing school goals. A second effective professional development technique for supporting the development of teacher self-efficacy is requiring teachers to implement a professional development plan. Such plans enhance self-efficacy in teachers because they allow the teachers to identify the skills or abilities they want to improve, as

well as how they will improve, monitor progress, and indicate how they will recognize when improvement has been made (Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003, p. 19). Third, integrating a school system of support and feedback that provides information to improve teacher skillsets support self-efficacy. For example, teachers may receive regular progress reviews with administration and peer evaluation teams observe teachers and provide feedback for performance improvements. Additionally, there is built-in time during teacher workdays for learning and for teachers to collaborate and receive feedback (Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003, p. 19). Finally, schools that support self-efficacy development through professional development have elements in place that sustain positive efficacy beliefs and ongoing examples that showcase efficacy beliefs and performance. For instance, teachers can receive recognition for their development gains, and share what they learned with colleagues. For instance, teachers gain special recognition by conducting workshops for colleagues, inside and outside the school, and have the opportunity to present at state and national conferences (Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003, p. 19).

Teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy are more likely to push more and achieve successful outcomes for their students. They believe in their ability to help students succeed despite obstacles that may arise. Additionally, teachers' experiences contribute to their level of self-efficacy whether in the form of personal experience, learned experience, or motivation from others (Bandura, 1997). Also, schools that provide effective professional development that supports self-efficacy may assist with the development of teachers' sense of efficacy. Overall, teacher self-efficacy plays a role in how teachers think, believe, and act which can influence their students' achievement (Sharp, Brandt, Tuft, & Jay, 2016, p. 2432).

2.2 Teacher Engagement in Culturally Relevant Practices

The number of culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students (students for whom English is not their first language or minoritized students) is increasing throughout schools in the United States (Kaylor & Flores, 2007). Teacher engagement in culturally relevant practices helps support and meet the needs of this linguistically, racially, and culturally changing student population. Culturally relevant practices empower culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students and embrace their cultures, backgrounds and experiences in the school environment and classrooms (Hollie, 2012). Infusing the curriculum and classroom with activities that are culturally relevant is connected to improvements in academic engagement and achievement (Garcia & Okheidoi, 2015).

2.2.1 Culturally Relevant Practices (Dimensions)

James Banks (2004) developed five dimensions of multicultural education which laid the foundation for culturally relevant teaching: *Content Integration, Knowledge Construction, Equity Pedagogy, Prejudice Reduction, and School Culture*. As described by Banks, *Content Integration* occurs when teachers make a conscious effort to include different cultures that are represented in the classroom into the curriculum. For instance, the teacher makes a presentation that uses examples from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate a key concept in a lesson or activity. *Knowledge Construction* involves teachers helping students navigate the curriculum by understanding, investigating, and deciphering the cultural assumptions or perspectives of the content they are teaching (Banks, 2004). For example, a teacher may introduce a new lesson on Pearl Harbor and the teacher wants students to talk about what they know about the word "pearl".

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After students provide their examples, the teacher has students read to what the author says about the term "pearl" and whether it aligns with what they were thinking or their assumptions about the word. In *Equity Pedagogy*, teachers change their approach or methods to ensure that diverse student groups' and genders' needs are met to access and achieve the curriculum. For example: a teacher may differentiate the instruction by using a wide range of strategies, such as: small group, cooperative groups, scaffolding, role-playing, storytelling, discovery, etc. (Banks, 2004). *Prejudice Reduction* is working to decrease prejudice in the classroom through teachers helping students to develop positive attitudes towards different races and to embrace acceptance. For example, teachers can frequently use positive images of different ethnic groups to help students have more positive attitudes towards other groups. The last dimension, *School Culture*, is an ongoing process of school-wide commitment towards equity for all students (Banks 2004). As an illustration, school faculty and staff work together to engage in practices that change school culture to ensure that culturally and linguistically diverse students experience equality.

According to Ladson-Billings (1994), culturally relevant teaching consists of three principals: *Academic Achievement, Cultural Competence, and Sociopolitical Consciousness. Academic Achievement* involves teachers holding high academic expectations for students and meeting students where they are to support them academically (Ladson-Billings, 1994). For instance, teachers differentiate the instruction or lessons to ensure that the needs of all students are met. *Cultural Competence* requires that teachers understand their own cultural backgrounds as well as that of their students (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Cultural competence includes teachers affirming student cultures and using those positive experiences in the classroom, such as students working on a class project that reflects positive images from their cultural heritages (Gay, 2018). *Sociopolitical Consciousness* requires teachers to educate themselves and their students on the

sociopolitical issues that impact their students and include these topics or issues in their teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1994). To illustrate, teachers have their students participate in roundtable discussions on current events and then share their thoughts.

As noted above, schools in the United States are becoming increasingly more diverse, but the teachers do not reflect the diverse student population that they serve. Because of this disparity between the racial backgrounds of the students and the racial backgrounds of the teachers, it is important for teachers to engage in practices that are culturally relevant (Ladson-Billing, 1994). According to Gay (2018), for many students there is a disconnect between their school and their cultural backgrounds. Teachers who engage in culturally relevant practices support student learning by helping culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students gain academic achievement, and become culturally competent and socio-politically conscious (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

2.2.2 The Evolving of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) laid the foundation for the work of culturally relevant pedagogy. These ideas regarding culturally relevant pedagogy have continued to evolve in the following three areas: social justice pedagogy, reality pedagogy, and culturally sustaining pedagogy. First, social justice pedagogy addresses social inequality in which teachers and students serve as agents of social change (Breunig, 2016 p. 4). The focus is to change current inequalities in society by preparing marginalized communities to be strong future leaders (Breunig, 2016 p. 4). Social justice pedagogy shifts the focus from cultural diversity (i.e., multicultural education) to issues of social justice, making social justice and activism the central focus of teaching and learning (Breunig, 2016 p. 4). Next, reality pedagogy is an approach to teaching and learning that

was first introduced by Christopher Emdin (2014). In reality pedagogy, teachers gain an understanding of students realities and use this as a starting point for instruction by using the "5 C's" (Emdin, 2014). The "5 C's" consist of the following:

1. Cogenerative dialogues: Discussion between teachers and students on how to improve the classroom (Emdin, 2014).

2. Coteaching: Students are provided with an opportunity to learn the content and then teach the class (Emdin, 2014).

3. Cosmopolitanism: Students decide how the class functions and what will be taught (Emdin, 2014).

4. Context: Student's cultures are seen in the classroom (Emdin, 2014).

5. Content: Teachers address their "limitations" for the content and work on building their content knowledge with students (Emdin, 2014).

Finally, Django Paris (2012) forwarded the work of Ladson-Billings through the connection of culturally sustaining pedagogy. Culturally sustaining pedagogy embraces cultural equality by "fostering and sustaining the linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (Paris, 2012 p. 93). Culturally sustaining pedagogy requires that teachers' pedagogies are more than responsive or relevant to the culture experience and practices of culturally, linguistically, and racially students. It requires that teachers support culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students in "sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence" (Paris, 2012 p. 95).

From the three areas above, the work of culturally relevant pedagogy continues to evolve to ensure teaching and learning focus on pedagogies that are driven by social justice, understanding of culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students' realities, and is sustaining.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

2.3.1 Self-Efficacy Theory

Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). The theoretical groundwork for teacher efficacy has been influenced by Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory states that individuals with high self-efficacy are likely to view tasks that are difficult as something to master rather than participating in task-avoidance (Bandura, 1997).

As stated above, according to Bandura (1997), there are four sources of self-efficacy beliefs: Mastery Experiences, Vicarious Experiences, Verbal Persuasion, and Emotional and Physiological States. Bandura (1997) states that the first source of self-efficacy is mastery experience. When an individual has a direct experience of mastery or personal performance accomplishment, these experiences create a strong sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). For instance, an individual takes on a new challenge and succeeds. On the other hand, vicarious experiences occur through modeling. As an example, seeing and observing other's successes or even people who are considered role models, raises self-efficacy in individuals, suggesting that they too can achieve the same level of success (Bandura, 1997). The third source of self-efficacy

beliefs is verbal persuasion, which is the influence that individuals have over others. Verbal persuasion is a validation to someone that he or she has what it takes to be successful, and this influences self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). An example of verbal persuasion is teachers saying to students that they believe in the students, and that the students can accomplish anything that they set their minds to. Verbal persuasion can encourage or motivate students, as well as validate their belief in their ability to succeed. The last source of self-efficacy beliefs is emotional and physiological states, which promote that the state an individual is in, will determine his or her self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1997), individuals with high self-efficacy believe that they can conquer through challenges or obstacles; however, people with low self-efficacy will allow setbacks to overtake them and will start feeling self-doubt.
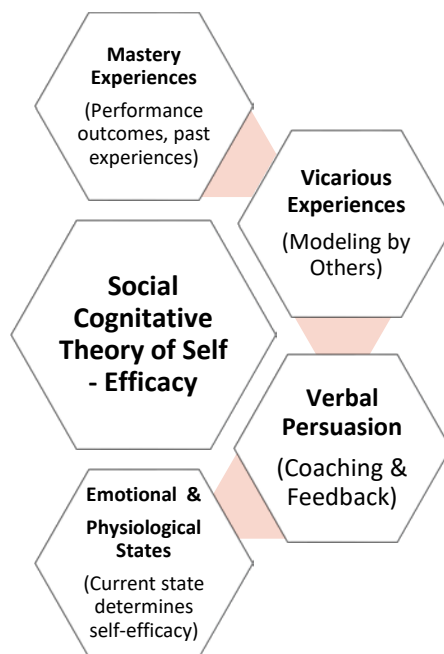
Figure 1 Social Cognitive Theory of Self-Efficacy

Note: **Reprinted from Self-efficacy: The Exercise of Control by A. Bandura (1997). New York, NY: Freeman**

According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is developed by external experiences. Mastery, vicarious, verbal persuasion, and emotional and physiological states are all experiences that can determine a person's ability to succeed or accomplish a task (Bandura, 1997). I seek to better understand the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices; therefore, I have chosen to use the self-efficacy theory as my theoretical framework for this study.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

2.4.1 Culturally Responsive Teaching

As mentioned above, Gay (2010) defined culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural knowledge, past experiences, frames of references, and performance styles of culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students to make learning culturally relevant. Student achievement for students of color continues to be disproportionately low in all academic areas, but according to Gay (2010), all students can achieve academic success when a student's cultural experiences is included in daily instruction. In further research, Gay (2015) explained there are four necessary components that are essential to culturally responsive teaching: teacher beliefs, professional teacher preparation in culture diversity, teacher demographics similar to the student's demographics, and teacher skillsets. Culturally responsive teaching is important in developing social justice standards and embracing diversity, because students bring with them a set of values, beliefs, and knowledge from their homes and environment cultures that may not be the norm of the dominant society (Ebersole, Kanahele-Mossman, & Kawakami, 2016).

Culturally responsive teaching validates and affirms culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students by acknowledging who they are, teaches students to celebrate and appreciate their own cultural heritage as well as other cultures, and it incorporates multicultural resources and materials in all subjects taught (Gay, 2010). Culturally responsive teaching differs from traditional teaching because it is transformative (Gay, 2010). It respects the cultures and experiences of students who are culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse, and it uses their experiences for teaching and learning (Gay, 2018).
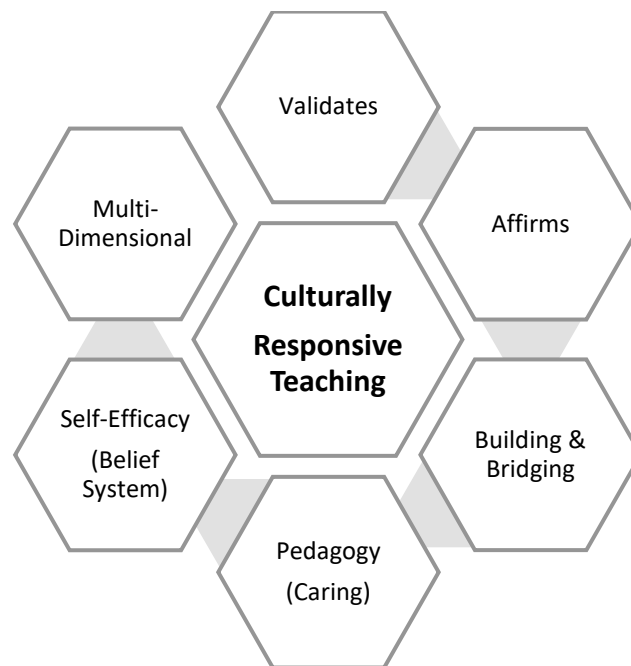
Figure 2 Culturally Responsive Teaching

Note: **Reprinted from Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice by G. Gay (2010).**

New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Culturally Responsive Teaching, exhibits the following attributes:

1. Validating and Affirming – According to Gay (2018), validating and affirming acknowledges the cultural heritages of culturally and linguistically diverse students, and teaches them to understand and praise their own cultural heritages and others. For example, teachers' use a variety of images, such as: pictures, symbols, or other visual representations that reminds culturally and linguistically diverse students of their homes, communities, and values (Shade, Oberg, & Kelly, 2004).

2. Building and Bridging – Building is understanding and recognizing the behaviors of culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students and using those behaviors to build rapport and relationships (Hollie, 2012). An example is teachers who are "building stock and making investments" in their students (Hollie, 2012, p. 28). Bridging is providing culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students with the academic and social skills they will need to have success beyond school (Hollie, 2012). For instance, "Bridging is evident when culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students demonstrate that they are able to successfully navigate school and mainstream culture" (Hollie, 2012, p. 29).

3. Pedagogy – According to Rychly and Graves (2012), culturally responsive pedagogy is "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (p. 44). For example, pedagogy is illustrated through teachers use of a variety of instructional strategies to meet the needs of culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students, such as: setting expectations, small group, learning stations, storytelling, role-playing, etc.

4. Self-efficacy (Belief System) – This encompasses the beliefs that teachers hold about their ability to positively impact academic achievement for culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students (Gay, 2018). For example, teachers who possess high self-efficacy believe in their ability to make a difference in their students despite obstacles (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

5. Multi-Dimensional – According to Gay (2018), teachers must be multi-dimensional (various strategies and approaches) in their practices in order to be culturally responsive. Multidimensional culturally responsive teaching involves various educational approaches, such as curriculum content, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, instructional techniques, establishing inclusion, etc. (Gay, 2018). In order to do this well, teachers must be "committed, competent, confident, and have content about cultural pluralism" (p. 69).

Note: Cultural pluralism refers to cultural and linguistically diverse students maintaining their cultural identities and acceptance of their values and practices.

2.5 Conclusion

There are many components that are necessary in implementing culturally responsive practices in the education setting. The increase in diverse students matriculating in schools in the United States has emphasized the importance of promoting a school culture that is culturally responsive in both research and practice. Because, as Bray-Clark and Bates (2003) pointed out, "teacher self-efficacy may be a key mediating factor between a school's climate and professional

culture and its educational effectiveness" (p. 15), there is a need to understand the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers as research has shown.

Drawing from the above literature, I intend to conduct a study addressing the following research questions:

1. What are the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers in a non-traditional school setting that serves a culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse population of students?

2. How do teachers in a non-traditional school setting that serves a culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse population of students engage in culturally responsive practices?

3.0 Methodology

The methods chapter begins with a statement of the purpose of the study, the research questions the study aims to address, and the researcher's epistemology and reflexivity (Section 3.1). Following this, I present an overview of the local context of the study (i.e., the selected district: Section 3.2). In subsequent sections, I present an overview of the study design (Section 3.3), study participants, including a summary of data collection and research activities, details of the data analysis (Sections 3.4), and a discussion of the anticipated limitations (Section 3.5).

3.1 Research Questions

3.1.1 Research Topics and Questions

The objective of this study is to better understand the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. As demonstrated in the literature above, the terminology of culturally relevant practices is manifold. Gay (2010) uses the term "culturally responsive teaching" and explains it as the teacher's use of the students' cultural backgrounds and understandings to create a more effective instructional experience that will engage students in their learning and improve academic achievement. Ladson-Billings (1994) describes "culturally relevant practices" as a way of teaching that "empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using culture to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 382). Both these and the work of other researchers exploring and applying

"cultural relevance" to education share the need to bridge the gap between the school and the everyday lived experiences within the students' home and communities (Gay, 2010: Hollie, 2012: Ladson-Billings, 1995). Further, as part of this work, it is important that teachers apply culturally responsive pedagogy in their practices to make sure what they are doing is culturally relevant for culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students (Ladson-Billings, 1995). For instance, connected to these ideas, Ford (2010) described culturally responsive pedagogy as "an obligation to address a need so that students experience success" (p. 50). Culturally responsive pedagogy involves teachers eliminating barriers to learning and achievement to ensure culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students reach their potential, as well as teachers proactively working to understand, respect, and meet the needs of students whose cultural backgrounds differ from their own (Ford, 2010, p. 50).

According to Bandura (1997), teacher self-efficacy is manifested by their experiences. Whether teachers' self-efficacy beliefs are high or low will determine whether they believe in their ability to accomplish a certain task (Bandura, 1997). For example, teachers who exhibit a high level of self-efficacy, feels efficacious in their ability to support students who may be struggling in school, whereas teachers with a low level of self-efficacy feel threatened by their ability to support students who are having difficulty with academics (Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003). Hattie (2012) stated that teacher efficacy has the greatest impact on student achievement because teachers are confident in their abilities, persistent through challenges, and innovative in their practices. In order to better understand the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices, I will explore the following questions to guide my research:

1. What are the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers in a non-traditional school setting that serves a culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse population of students?

2. How do teachers in a non-traditional school setting that serves a culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse population of students engage in culturally responsive practices?

3.1.2 Researcher's Epistemology

Before approaching my research, it was important for me to position the work within a specific epistemology. Epistemology is a theory of knowledge. According to Mertens (2015), epistemological assumption centers on the meaning of knowledge through cultural lenses and the power dynamics of what is legitimate knowledge. It is critical for researchers to figure out which paradigm will influence their study, as well as guide their research. Therefore, it was important for me to examine my own epistemological assumptions before beginning the study.

The transformative paradigm is associated with physiological assumptions that address inequality and injustice by using culturally competent strategies (Mertens, 2015). While Mertens (2015) did not provide a specific set of methods or approaches to conduct transformative research, her work does make a valuable contribution to the literature on research with culturally different and marginalized people, as it builds upon the principles of culturally responsive research. While my research focuses on both general education and special education teachers' belief systems and cultural responsiveness, I look to better understand the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices for students who are culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse. Transformative researchers consciously position themselves with marginalized groups in a collective effort to bring about social transformation (Mertens, 2015). Additionally, the transformative paradigm analyzes inequities based on race or ethnicity, gender, disability, and sexual orientation (Mertens, 2015). I bring my own values and viewpoints to my

research, described in greater depth below, which aligns with a transformative view; I believe this approach will serve to strengthen my work.

3.1.3 Researcher's Reflexivity

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described researcher's reflexivity as an ongoing process of reflection by researchers on their values and the recognition and understanding of how their assumptions or biases can affect their research. My approach to research is through a transformative paradigm as it relates to cultural competency. Mertens (2015) offered the following regarding such an approach:

> Cultural competence requires awareness of self, reflection on one's own cultural position, awareness of others' positions, and the ability to interact genuinely and respectfully with others. Culturally competent evaluators refrain from assuming they fully understand the perspectives of stakeholders whose backgrounds differ from their own (p. 23).

My role as an African American educator is one that I do not take for granted because I was once the Black student who spent my k-12 school years being taught by teachers who did not look like me. Fortunately, I had family members who were educators with whom I could identify. Additionally, the curriculum did not involve images that looked like me; nor did it include my culture or other cultures besides the cultures of my White classmates. When I reflect, I think about the few African American teachers who I did have. Whenever my teacher resembled me, I remember being so proud. I wanted to be just like them and make them proud. It was not until I became an adult working in education that I began to see the inequities, injustices, and the lack of access for students of color that impacted the demographics of my K-12 experience. Additionally, in my professional experience I have observed teachers who were not as caring or empathetic

towards children who were culturally and linguistically different from them. I do not think – or at least I hope – that these teachers were trying to be intolerant or actively bigoted, but instead perhaps they did not understand how to serve students whose racial identity, language, and culture were different from their own. Further, resources and trainings were not readily available to them regarding how to be more culturally responsive in their practices.

During this research, I refrain from assuming that I fully understand the perspectives of teachers' decision-making for culturally responsive practices; but instead, I approach this study to better understand the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices.

3.2 Study Context

3.2.1 School District

The study is situated at a school district in an urban Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. There are currently approximately 185,000 students enrolled in district schools. The demographic population for this district's student enrollment is: 21% Asian, 11% Black, 27% Hispanic, and 41% White. Additionally, 29% of the student population are designated as economically disadvantage (free and reduced lunch), 29% of the student population are classified as English Language Learners, and 14% that have been identified as students with a disability.

The study will be conducted at an alternative high school within this school district. This alternative high school is composed of approximately 350 students and serves grades 9th through 12th. The racial demographics of the students who attend the school are: 9% Asian, 19% Black,

62% Hispanic, and 7% White. Additionally, 41% of the student population are designated as economically disadvantage (free and reduced lunch), 58% of the student population are classified as English Language Learners, and 9% have been identified as students with a disability.

Students are either enrolled by electively choosing to attend this alternative school or they are placed by the court system (hearing office) due to disciplinary infractions. I provide general information rather than specific details (and will use pseudonyms for both the locations and the participants throughout) to maintain respondents' confidentiality. These tables are also seen above in Chapter 1 for the Alternative School data.

Table 5 Student racial demographics

Racial Demographics (Students)				
Population	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White
District	21%	11%	27%	41%
Alternative School	9%	19%	62%	7%

Note: District Student Enrollment = 185,000 students
Alternative High School Student Enrollment = 350 students

Table 6 Percentage of students in other categories

Population	Economically Disadvantage	English Language Learners	Students with a Learning Disability
District	29%	29%	14%
Alternative School	41%	58%	9%

Note: District Student Enrollment = 185,000 students
Alternative High School Student Enrollment = 350 students

3.3 Methods

3.3.1 Inquiry Design

The inquiry design is a phenomenological study that investigates the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. Phenomenology is based on the work of philosopher Edmund Husseri, who described this method as understanding how human beings experience a certain phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The philosophy of phenomenology focuses on the experience itself and how experiencing something is transformed into a person's consciousness (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). In a phenomenology study, "the readers should come away with the feeling that they better understand the phenomenon that someone experiences" (Creswell, 2013 p. 62). I have chosen a phenomenology approach for this study as I desire to come away with a better understanding of the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. I will draw data from questionnaires and interviews about teachers' beliefs and classroom practices as connected with their self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness. This design will frame my study to answer the question whether cultural responsiveness and teacher self-efficacy influence teachers' decision-making and classroom practices. Additionally, this design will serve as a theoretical perspective to compare and contrast the culturally responsive beliefs and teacher self-efficacy beliefs of special education and general education teachers serving in a non-traditional school setting that is culturally and linguistically diverse.

3.3.2 Participants

The term participants is commonly used by qualitative researchers to describe individuals participating in a study (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, p. 188). Qualitative research is based on the belief that people construct knowledge as they engage in and make meaning of an activity, experience, or phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, p. 23). Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon (Crestwell & Poth, 2018). For phenomenological studies, Crestwell and Poth (2018) recommended a heterogeneous group of 3-15 participants who have experienced the targeted phenomenon. My goal is to have eight participants in the study both for comparison purposes and because of the possibility of attrition. Participants will be selected based on their willingness to participate and the range of responses from the preliminary questionnaire on self-efficacy. In particular, I hope to select three participants who score high, three who score low, and two who score in the moderate range on the preliminary self-efficacy questionnaire (*See Appendix C*).

There are no interventions involved in the study, instead the focus is on documenting and better understanding educators' culturally relevant practices. This research study poses a minimal risk to the anticipated research participants and does not involve vulnerable populations, such as children. I will be engaged in practices that are deemed low-risk by institutional review boards, namely, a basic online survey and interviews. Further the content of these procedures do not focus on sensitive topics. Each potential participant will receive a recruitment letter (*See Appendix A*) explaining the study and a consent form (*See Appendix B*) that explains the consent process. As is outlined, I will inform all potential participants that participation is purely voluntary, and that they may choose to discontinue their participation in the study at any time. I will collect basic demographic information (e.g., gender, race, years as an educator, age). No sensitive information

will be recorded. I will ensure participants that their data will be kept confidential and private by masking their names and assigning an ID# for all reports and data collected. All stored data will have an ID# and not the participant's name. All of their responses will be kept confidential, and data will be stored securely in a locked location. I will not associate any information that they provide with their names in reports. Additionally, since potential participants are my colleagues, I will advise them that my purpose is to better understand the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. I will also ensure that the interviews are conducted in a private space, such as an office with the door closed to protect their privacy and confidentiality.

Interested individuals will be sent a link to an online questionnaire (*See Appendix C*) and will be informed that they may be contacted two additional times, - once, to participate in an interview, and another time to take part in the presentation of the findings. Once potential participants have filled out the questionnaire, I will review the scores and, if there is enough variation in these scores, group surveys (high, low, medium) and randomly select within each category. I will follow up with potential participant and inform them if they have been selected and ask if they are still willing to participate. Over the course of the 4-month project, I will send the participants one email with up to two reminders (*See Appendix E and F*) with the questionnaire link. Individuals who do not respond by participating or unsubscribing will receive two follow-up emails with friendly reminders asking for their participation (*See Appendix E and F*).

In addition to the questionnaires, I will conduct a one-time, face-to-face interview that will explore teacher self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness (*See Appendix G*). Participants will respond to open-ended questions that examine their viewpoints on culturally relevant practices, cultural differences in their students, and reflective practices. Interviews will be recorded and

conducted in an office or conference room. I will reach out to the participants via email to schedule interviews at a time that is mutually convenient and then ask if they would like to participate in a final meeting to discuss research findings (*See Appendix F*). Participants who wish to hear more about the research study will have the opportunity in a formal setting to discuss the areas of success as well as areas of development based on the findings of the questionnaires and interviews. Although there are no financial benefits to participating in this project, knowledge from this study may benefit the participants in their decision-making and classroom practices through self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness.

Table 7 Estimated sample size calculation for survey data

	Eligible Participants	Sampling List/Frame	#Sampled	Anticipated Sample Size with 80% Response Rate
General Education Teachers	40	15	6	5
Special Education Teachers	3	2	2	1
Total	43	17	8	6

3.3.3 Data Collection

Questionnaires and interviews are selected as the main data collecting strategies. Methodological triangulation, using more than one method to gather data, will increase the validity of the study and balance the strengths and weaknesses of each method. The goal of this inquiry is to understand teachers' decision-making and classroom practices through self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness.

3.3.4 Questionnaire

Participants will be asked to complete a Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale that explores teacher self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). This questionnaire will be used to select participants from the range of responses. Topics include culturally relevant practices, decision-making, and self-efficacy. Questionnaires will be sent by email and interviews will be conducted a few weeks after. The purpose of the questionnaire is to better understand the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices (*See Appendix C*). Additionally, the questionnaire will include an unconscious bias section (*See Appendix C*). The purpose of this section is to understand teachers' awareness of their unconscious bias. The questionnaire instrument includes 34 questions and will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. In total, 24 questions will focus on teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices, while the remaining 10 questions will focus on the teachers' awareness of their unconscious bias. The questionnaire consists of Likert scales (rating and ranking scales).

3.3.5 Interview

As a participant of the study, respondents will be asked to complete a one-time, face to face interview that will explore their feelings of self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness. Participants will respond to eight open-ended questions that examine their viewpoints on culturally relevant practices, cultural differences in their students, and reflective practices (*See Appendix G*). Sampled participants will include general education and special education teachers.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis will include a three-step process of coding: Open coding, involves coding the data for major categories of information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). From this coding, axial codes emerge, which identify core categories or "core phenomenon" to the related categories, and then selective coding is used to identify themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Recorded interviews will be transcribed, and selected sentences, or items relevant to the inquiry questions will be selected and grouped in categories so that I can identify dominant themes.. Each unit of data will have its own unique coding. Coding will help identifying patterns in the research. Some example of patterns of teacher self-efficacy that I anticipate are the following: efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional strategies, and self-reflection.

3.5 Limitations

One primary limitation of this study is that it is situated in a single locale which restricts generalizability of the findings. Additionally, research is only being conducted at an alternative school, which further limits the opportunity to compare findings/results of a traditional school setting. Also, this alternative school has a small population of teachers compared to the traditional school that has a larger population of teachers. Due to the small sample size of this study, there is a possibility that it may be difficult to find significant relationships within the data.

Finally, there are limitations associated with my role as an employee at the site where the study will be conducted. I have professional relationships with my colleagues, some of whom will be potential participants in this study. Prior to interviewing participants, I will explore my own

experiences to ensure that I am aware of my own personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions. This process from phenomenological research has influenced qualitative researchers by suggesting they examine their biases and assumptions about the phenomenon of interest before embarking on a study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

4.0 Findings

This chapter presents findings from interviews of six general education teachers and two special education teachers who participated in this study. In these interviews, I sought to understand the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. First, I outline how the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers in a non-traditional school setting, serving a culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse population of students influenced the ways they attempted to create positive experiences for students. The data revealed that building relationships from a place of trust, caring, and understanding is crucial in educating the "whole" child. Next, I explain the challenges that teachers face as they engaged in culturally relevant practices. Though teachers reported that they have self-efficacy about their ability to engage in culturally relevant practices, seven out of eight teachers did not have the belief that they are who they say they are in their ability to engage in culturally relevant practices.

4.1 Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Teachers in a Non-Traditional School Setting Serving a Culturally, Linguistically, and Racially Diverse Population of Students

To understand the participating teachers' connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices, I wanted to explore their professed thoughts and feelings about their self-efficacy and their ability to engage in culturally relevant practices. This project was also an effort to clarify and identify any particular barriers or challenges for engaging in culturally relevant practices and self-efficacy. To do this, I spent over 6 hours conducting in-

depth interviews with eight current teachers in an alternative school setting. To protect participant identities, I used a pseudonym to identify each participant. Due to the sample demographics, the location would be identifiable if race was included; therefore, this information was omitted. Table 8 presents an overview of the participants' demographics.

Table 8 Participant Profile

Pseudonym	Endorsement	Gender	Age Range	Years of Experience
Alice	Special Education	Female	50-64	20 to 25 years
Jeremiah	General Education	Male	26-49	5 to 10 years
Kramer	General Education	Male	50-64	5 to 10 years
Elizabeth	General Education	Female	26-49	1 to 5 years
Henry	General Education	Male	50-64	20 to 25 years
Eli	General Education	Male	26-49	20 to 25 years
Gretchen	General Education	Female	50-64	15 to 20 years
Tamar	Special Education	Female	26-49	10 to 15 years

4.2 Participant Introductions

Introductions will briefly highlight the participants' years of teaching experience and why they chose to teach at an alternative school.

4.2.1 Alice

Alice has between 20 to 25 years of teaching experience with serving students with disabilities. She chose to work at an alternative school because it was smaller, and she felt that she could personally reach more students.

4.2.2 Jeremiah

Jeremiah has between 5 to 10 years of teaching experience serving students on the secondary school level. Jeremiah indicated that he was a student that did not like school and he struggled with academics. He stated that it wasn't that he was not intelligent enough, but he did not have teachers who knew how to "tap" into his potential and intellect. Because of his own experiences in school, he chose to teach at an alternative school because he felt that he understood the needs of struggling students and could make a major difference in these students lives.

4.2.3 Kramer

Kramer has between 5 to 10 years of teaching experience serving students on the secondary school level. Kramer chose to work for an alternative school because he could relate to the students who felt that they did not "fit in" at a traditional high school. He stated that he attended a large traditional high school during his formative years, and that he felt like an outsider. He explained that an alternative setting gives him the opportunity to empower students because he did not want any student to feel less valued.

4.2.4 Elizabeth

Elizabeth has between 1 to 5 years of teaching experience serving students on the secondary school level. She indicated that the alternative school chose her. She stated that she loves the students and that is why she has continued to stay and serve in an alternative setting.

4.2.5 Henry

Henry has between 20 to 25years of teaching experience serving students on the secondary school level. He stated that after he retired from the military, he chose to serve students in the alternative school setting because he wanted to help troubled students realize that they matter.

4.2.6 Eli

Eli has between 20 to 25 years of teaching experience serving students on the secondary school level. He chose to teach at an alternative setting because he felt that his skillsets were better served with a population of students that may need more support.

4.2.7 Gretchen

Gretchen has between 15 to 20 years of teaching experience serving students on the secondary school level. She chose to teach at an alternative school because she wanted to transition from a traditional school to an alternative setting.

4.2.8 Tamar

Tamar has between 10 to 15 years of teaching experience serving students with disabilities. She stated that she chose to teach at an alternative school because she had a lot of anger when she was in high school. She stated that she had this one teacher who never gave up on her, and it was

the tenacity of this teacher that saved her life. She indicated that her service to students attending an alternative setting, is her way of "paying it forward".

4.3 Themes

When summarizing the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices, in the interview data, I used a three-step process of coding: First, I read through the transcribed interviews to begin the process of open coding. I read the data several times and then I started highlighting impactful statements or ideas throughout the text. From this coding, axial coding emerged to help me identify relationships among the open codes. Based on the open codes, teachers believed in their ability to build relationships with students emerged as the axial codes. Next, I used selective coding to select themes. I was guided by the following themes that existed in the literature for selection: Teacher self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997); cultural responsiveness through pedagogy (Gay 2010); and engagement in culturally relevant practices (Ladson-Billing, 1994). From this analysis, three major themes emerged, as presented in Table 9. The themes were: 1. Building Relationships, 2. Making Cultural Connections, and 3. Engagement and Ability.

Table 9 Thematic Description of Findings

Theme	Description
Building relationships	Participants discussed their thoughts about fostering a caring environment by building relationships and teacher accessibility.
Making cultural connections	Participants discussed cultural competence by learning student cultures and storytelling.
Engagement and ability	Participants discussed their ability to engage in culturally relevant practices, as well as their inability to engage.

4.3.1 Creating a Caring Environment by Building Relationships: "Students don't care about how much you know until they know how much you care."

When participants were asked how they indicate to their students that they care about them, five out of the eight participants stated that they create a caring and supportive environment for students. For example, Elizabeth and Tamar explained that being caring and supportive has helped them "build and sustain positive relationships" with their students. Tamar also indicated that she felt students perform better when they are surrounded by teachers who are caring and understanding. Almost verbatim, Alice, Gretchen, and Elizabeth described that they have created a caring environment by "greeting each student with a caring voice" before the students enter the classroom each day. Eli added that he has been able to achieve positive outcomes for student success because "students don't care about how much you know until they know how much you care".

4.3.1.1 Building Relationships: "I do the most important thing: I build relationships first, and I teach second."

When participants were asked in what manner they demonstrated to their students that they are a caring individual, each participant unanimously referenced "building relationships". I noticed that this was an important area for the participants. Six of the eight participants indicated that before they can do anything with their students, they must "build a relationship". The other two participants stated that they continue to find ways to "build relationships" with their students. Tamar emphasized the following: "I do the most important thing: I build relationships first, and I teach second." According to Duncan-Andrade (2009), "Effective teaching depends most heavily on one thing: deep and caring relationships" (p. 191).

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From my discussion with the participants, there were three focal areas that derived from building relationships: (1) knowing students, (2) teacher accessibility, and (3) relationships with families.

Knowing Students

During my conversation with the participants, four of eight participants shared that they became familiar with their students mainly by conversation. Both Eli and Henry stated that they share information about themselves and build a rapport with students. Elizabeth stated that she tries to get to know her students and becomes familiar with them in and out of school. Gretchen indicated that she spends time getting to know her students by building a rapport and offering conversation outside of school.

On the other hand, three of eight study participants shared that they get to know their students through their actions. For example, Jeremiah engages with them, notices them, and always speaks to them or provides a handshake. Kramer stated that he is always patient with them. Tamar stated that she gets to know her students by her actions. She explained that she believes in interacting with them and being hands-on with the students.

Alice, however used both conversations and actions in getting to know her students. She stated that she became familiar with her students by making sure she greets them with a caring and cheerful voice. Additionally, she engages her students in conversation as a way for her to get to know her students.

Jeremiah explained how he felt about getting to know his students:

I think it's about creating relationships with the students and getting to know them. If they like you, they will want to come to your class. I had a student that told me the other day that this is her favorite class and it's the reason why she comes to school early in the morning.

The teachers' positive experiences with getting to know their students confirms Gays (2018) assertion that the caring relationships between students and teachers begins with the pedagogy of culturally responsive teaching.

Teacher Accessibility

Five of the eight participants stated that one of the ways that they build positive relationships with their students is being accessible. Even though five of the eight participants stated that they are accessible for the students, only three participants were available anytime and two of the participants had limited accessibility, meaning that they were not accessible

Henry, Elizabeth, and Gretchen were accessible to students at any time of the day. Henry stated that he is available 24 hours, 7 days a week online. He provides his cell phone in case of an emergency. Elizabeth had the same methods of being accessible as Henry, but she also noted that students can always spend their lunch period with her if they want to talk. Gretchen stated that she makes herself available before and after school, as well as during school. She also indicated that she provided one-on-one assistance to students after instruction.

Eli and Alice indicated that they have a scheduled time that they are available to see students. Eli stated accessibility is very important. He provided that he has a drop-in schedule: such as, off period times and during lunch. Alice stated that she is accessible to support student during regular school hours.

Jeremiah, Kramer, and Tamar did not have any schedule time allotted for students as the other teachers noted. However, Tamar stated that she makes herself visible for her students.

Establishing Relationships with Families

When teachers were asked about familiarity with their students' caregivers, they did not feel efficacious with establishing relationships with families. Henry, Kramer, Tamar, Gretchen, and Alice all believed that it was important to have a relationship with parents for different reasons, but they all agreed that it was difficult to establish because the students were older. Henry, Kramer, and Alice indicated that it is important to build a partnership with families in order to support the students. Tamar stated that it is very important to become familiar with the families because the family behaviors can be a direct reflection of the student's behavior. Gretchen indicated that it is important to build a relationship with parents to ensure that they are included in the education process.

While the above-mentioned participants felt that it is important to build a relationship with parents, Elizabeth does not feel that building a relationship with parents is urgent because there is a disconnect at this alternative school with parents' engagement in their children's education.

Eli and Jeremiah had similar views as Elizabeth but they both felt that there is not an urgency to build relationships with parents because many of the students are older. Eli and Jeremiah felt that family engagement and partnerships are more vital when students are younger.

In the conversations, the teachers did not indicate their efforts to involve families in the school, but instead, focused on why family involvement was not significant. According to O'Donnell and Kirkner (2014), "special efforts must be made to encourage family involvement among diverse populations, as well as teachers taking the time to learn and understand about the

different cultures and families" to effectively serve culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students (p. 214).

4.4 Teachers Engaging in Culturally Relevant Practices

Another focus of this project was how teachers engaged in culturally relevant practices. Within this inquiry, I sought to understand the participants understanding of culturally relevant practices. The inquiry was also an effort to clarify and identify any particular barriers or challenges to engagement in culturally relevant practices. According to Lee (2007), culturally responsive practices emphasize that teachers use students experiences to maximize students' opportunity to learn. In this section, I explore two main themes that emerged through this process: (1) making cultural connections and (2) engagement and ability. These themes worked together to describe how teachers in a non-traditional school setting, serving a culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse population of students understand and attempt to engage in culturally relevant practices. Additionally, these themes pointed to the shortcoming some teachers faced in engaging in culturally relevant practices.

4.4.1 Making Cultural Connections: "Embracing Our Differences"

When teachers were asked how they engaged in culturally responsive practices, the common practice was story-telling, that is, they had students share their stories so that they could learn about different cultures, and student experiences, as well as expose their classmates to these

experiences. Study participants discussed how they felt that they embraced different cultures in the classroom by giving the students opportunities to share and learn about each other's cultures

4.4.1.1 Learning About Student Cultures

When making cultural connections, six out of eight participants stated that they respected different cultures, but they had very little engagement with cultures other than their own. Two of the eight participants indicated that they engaged in deliberate learning about the different cultures that were present in the classroom. Eli, Henry, Elizabeth, Tamar, Gretchen, and Alice respected the different cultures, but had very little engagement with those cultures. For example, Eli stated that he is flexible to the student culture needs and concerns while helping them with their education goals. Henry and Gretchen stated that they try to make sure that they are not offensive. Alice and Elizabeth stated that they promote respecting all cultures. Tamar indicated that she asks students informal questions to breakdown stereotypes. But none of these study participants discussed learning about cultures and experiences, rather they took generic, often color- or culture-blind approaches to teaching. They each talked about broad issues of "respect" and "flexibility" extended to all students, with culture as one of the categories receiving this respect but did not engage in inquiry or practice connected to teaching students of a particularly racial or cultural background.

During my conversations with the participants, I noticed that most of their perceptions towards culture were shallow rather than demonstrating a deeper understanding of all that students' culture and culturally relevant pedagogy should entail. For example, Eli, Tamar, Gretchen, and Alice view of culture focused more on tolerance or respect. Alice in particular demonstrated a color and culture "blind" perspective and stated that "I don't see color or cultures, I only see people." Whereas, Tamar tries to adapt to whatever the students believe: "I just try to adapt to

their norms and respect whatever beliefs that they have." Eli felt that helping his diverse students reach their goals would meet their cultural needs:

> "I'm empathetic for whatever their situation is, and then helping them get closer to what their goal is. I think that is a human thing to do, and it kind of transcends cultural needs. It's just a human thing to do".

Indeed, while these points touched upon culture, they did not indicate that these teachers focused on working to understand and engage students' cultures.

On the other hand, Elizabeth uses media outlets to learn about culture:

> "I have my students watch CNN 10, which is just a student news clip that's every day for 10 minutes so we can be in tune with what's going on in the world".

Henry response to culture was to ensure that he recognized different cultural events throughout the calendar year:

> "We look at Black History month, we look at Women's History month, we look at Hispanic Heritage month. We try to look at the different cultures, and we try to give students some insight into truly what makes America great. It's not the amount of money we have, but we can celebrate our differences".

The participants' shallow views of culture made clear the difference between engaging in culturally relevant and responsive teaching and merely acknowledging or accounting for difference in your classroom. Aronson and Laughter (2016) described Gay and Ladson-Billings frameworks for delving deeper into students' culture as requiring the following: academic skills and concepts, critical reflection, cultural competence, and critique of discourses of power. Culturally relevant educators build on the cultural contexts that students bring into the classroom, and they bridge the students' "cultural references" to academic skills and concepts (Aronson & Laughter, 2016, p.

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167). Culturally relevant educators engage students in using critical reflective practices to reflect on their lives, cultures and heritages. Also, teachers engage in strategies and activities in the classroom that are inclusive of all cultures that are represented (Aronson & Laughter, 2016, p. 167). Culturally relevant educators establish a classroom culture in which students learn about and embrace their culture, and the other cultures in the classroom (Aronson and Laughter, 20116, p. 167). Culturally relevant educators actively pursue "social justice for all members of society" through critique of discourses of power (Aronson & Laughter, 2016, p. 167). Engaging culture in this way requires not only a deep understanding, but a regular commitment to making it a part of the classroom.

In contrast, two of eight participants stated that they made sure to engage their students' cultures. Jeremiah and Kramer both reported that they get involved in their student's cultures by showing an interest in what they are involved in culturally, as well as participating in activities that their students are involved in: music, dance, or festivals, etc. For example, Jeremiah stated:

"I make it my duty to have conversations with my students about their cultures so that I can learn more and show an interest in their cultures and heritages".

Kramer engaged in his students' cultures by attending various "international festivals" that his students were involved in, participated in "salsa dancing" with his Latinx students, and hosted a "hip-hop rap off" contest in class.

While the majority of the participants in the study focused more on cultivating respect around culture, these two participants deliberately tried to learn about their students varied experiences. This information aligns with the literature that focus on validating and affirming student cultures (Gay, 2018).

4.4.2 High Expectations: "Each student is different and each student expectations look different"

When I asked the participants about setting high expectations, three participants stated that they set high expectations, while four participants stated that they allow the students to set their own expectations. In contrast, Kramer did not believe in setting high expectations for his students.

Eli, Henry and Tamar each stated that they set high expectations, although they did so in ways that differed from each other. Eli stated that he set the bar of expectations beyond student's current understanding of their ability. He clearly communicates the teacher's expectations with the student. Henry stated that he expects participation and discussion of his students and Tamar indicated that she sets expectations based on the student needs. Similarly, Elizabeth, Jeremiah, Alice and Gretchen also had high expectations, however they stated that they based their expectations on the students achieving high academic standards and self-accountability. In contrast, Kramer did not set high expectations for his students. He felt that "high expectations" are added pressures on students". Rather than setting high expectations for his students, he instead assists them with establishing values that will help them to persevere and not give up.

One of the attributes of culturally relevant practices is communicating high expectations to students ((Ladson-Billing, 1994). This information is important because the conversations with the teachers indicated that they all have their own "way or method" for setting expectations for their students but their level of high expectations were not aligned with the attributes of culturally relevant practices. Furthermore, seven of eight teachers did not expresse that they clearly defined their expectations with their students, but instead, they expressed that their expectations were for their whole class.

4.4.3 Highly Effective Teaching: "We Need to Reach Students Where There Are"

Four study participants stated that they felt they were highly effective teachers, while the other four participants felt that they were somewhat effective. This effectiveness connected with their perceived abilities to set up positive learning environments, build positive relationships, and engage in culturally relevant practices. The participants discussed these aspects of their teaching in a variety of ways, including both their practices (for instance, lesson planning and goal setting) and outcomes (for instance, positive evaluations). Tamar felt that she was highly effective because of her ability to build relationships. Henry felt that he was effective because his evaluations were high. Additionally, Elizabeth felt that she was effective because her students achieve high standardized scores and because of her evaluations. On the other hand, Jeremiah and Gretchen felt that they were somewhat effective because they stated that there is always room for improvement. Kramer is somewhat effective because he stated he is only effective if the student is motivated.

In discussing what it looks like to set up a positive learning experience, seven participants stated that they were successful in building a positive learning experience. However, one participant stated that he encountered challenges with setting up a positive learning experience.

In setting up positive learning experiences, Henry, Alice, Tamar, and Jeremiah stated that they made sure to differentiate instruction to ensure that all student needs are met.

Similarly, Kramer mentioned that he does not organize his lesson in a way that could possibly create anxiety. Instead, he focuses on making sure that children are comfortable in their learning. He indicated that his goal in teaching—one that he felt that he was meeting-- is to eliminate fear and embrace learning.

In contrast, Eli expressed his challenges with setting up a positive learning experience. He stated that it is difficult for him to set up a positive learning experience because of the 4x4 (four

classes for the fall and spring semester), schedule of the alternative school. He felt that he has to rush through the curriculum because it is much more fast paced than the traditional school.

While they approached it in different ways and varied in their perceived effectiveness, all of the participants in the study were aware of the importance of establishing, positive learning environments for highly effective teaching. While most of them did not align it with being culturally responsive, much of the literature connects the importance of these two approaches.

4.4.4 Inability to Engage in Culturally Relevant Practice

Culturally relevant practice provided a clear challenge and served as a source of confusion for the participants in this study. When participants were asked if they engaged in culturally relevant practices, four of eight participants said yes. However, when they were asked how they engage in culturally relevant practices, all eight participants stated that they did not know how to engage or that they did not engage at all. Adding to the clear confusion, seven participants indicated that they did not know what culturally relevant practices were. After receiving an explanation of culturally relevant practices, participants stated that they still did not know how to do this work. Three participants referred to culturally relevant practices as being culturally sensitive or aware. In contrast, one participant, Gretchen knew exactly what culturally relevant practices were and she admitted that she does not engage because she does not have the time due to the structure of her content.

Similarly, when participants were asked the source of their ideas or resources they used to engage in culturally relevant practices, they indicated they did not really have them because they did not engage in these practices.

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Even though some teachers believed they were engaging in culturally relevant practices at the onset of the conversation, additional probing made it clear that they were not engaged in the work, they did not have resources, and they were uncertain of their ability to engage in this work. Seven of eight teachers stated that they did not know what culturally relevant practices were. When I defined and described culturally relevant practices, seven of the eight teachers indicated that they did not engage in culturally relevant practices; nor, did they know where to access resources to engage or how to engage. However, Gretchen knew exactly what culturally relevant practices were, as well as how to engage in them. Gretchen explained that she "does not engage in culturally relevant practices" because of the 4x4 schedule of classes. The 4x4 schedule is a semester schedule that requires students to complete a yearlong course in a semester. Gretchen felt that this schedule does not allow her the flexibility to engage in anything outside of the content because "standardized scores are everything" with meeting school accreditation.

4.5 Conclusion

Through in-depth interviews with educators at an alternative school, this chapter explored teacher self-efficacy, effective teaching, and engagement in culturally relevant practices. In particular, this chapter thoroughly addressed the question of: What are the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers in a non-traditional school setting that serves a culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse population of students and how do they engage in culturally responsive practices? The findings of this chapter illustrated the perspectives of both general and special education teachers with varying levels of teaching years of experience. The findings revealed that participants displayed a strong self-efficacy belief towards building positive relationships with the culturally,

linguistically, and racially diverse students that they serve from a non-traditional school setting. In particular, teachers used storytelling or sharing stories to connect with students and learn more about them. However, more than half of the teachers took a culture and color-blind approach to setting high expectations and setting up their classroom norms. Further, when pushed to consider cultural responsiveness, many teachers were clear that outside of engaging students' stories, they did not explicitly engage in culturally relevant teaching practices. Importantly, the findings in this chapter suggest that many of the teachers are uncertain of what it means to be culturally responsive in their teaching and further do not know where to access resources to engage in culturally relevant practices. This information is important because teachers felt efficacious in their practice but did not know how to be culturally responsive.

5.0 Discussion

The purpose of this inquiry was to better understand the connections between teachers' self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. This study took place at an alternative high school situated at a school district in an urban Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. For this study, I interviewed eight teacher participants who were purposefully selected by the scoring of their survey questionnaire on teacher-self efficacy. Participants were selected by the variance of scores (3 high, 3 low, and 2 medium) and then they were invited to participate. To protect participant identities, I used a pseudonym to identify each participant. Due to the sample demographics, the location would be identifiable if race was included; therefore, this information was omitted. From chapter 4 above, Table 8 presents an overview of the participants' demographics.

Table 10 Participant Profile

Pseudonym	Endorsement	Gender	Age Range	Years of Experience
Alice	Special Education	Female	50-64	20 to 25 years
Jeremiah	General Education	Male	26-49	5 to 10 years
Kramer	General Education	Male	50-64	5 to 10 years
Elizabeth	General Education	Female	26-49	1 to 5 years
Henry	General Education	Male	50-64	20 to 25 years
Eli	General Education	Male	26-49	20 to 25 years
Gretchen	General Education	Female	50-64	15 to 20 years
Tamar	Special Education	Female	26-49	10 to 15 years

In these interviews, I sought to understand the connections between teachers' self-efficacy and their ability to engage in culturally relevant practices. Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory served as the study's theoretical framework, as well as a conceptual framework for considering how cultural responsiveness in teaching a culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse student

population might be connected with teachers' self-efficacy. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I discuss the three key findings, as well as their implication for research and practice.

5.1 Key Findings

The present study was designed to get a better understanding of the connections between teacher's self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. During my review of transcribed interviews, I found that teachers indicated high levels of self-efficacy for creating a caring environment by building relationships with their students. However, their self-efficacy to engage in culturally relevant practices was low, as they were not familiar with the term or how to even engage in this work. Furthermore, they appeared to associate culturally relevant instruction with teaching cultural tolerance or respect towards all differences. These three key findings are covered in this section, as well as the associated implications for teachers, school and district leaders, and teacher educators.

5.1.1 Key Finding #1: Teacher Self-Efficacy Matters for Student Experiences

Teacher self-efficacy matters for student experiences. As indicated in Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory states, individuals with high self-efficacy are likely to view tasks that are difficult as something to master rather than participating in task-avoidance (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy beliefs, which can come from mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, or emotional and physiological states influence what teachers feel they are capable of

doing in their classrooms and, in turn, the ways they engage with their students and families, plan and deliver their lessons, and organize their classrooms (Bandura, 1997).

During my conversation with the teachers, they felt highly efficacious when it came to creating caring environments by building relationships with their students who are culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse. As indicated in chapter 4, the participants displayed self-efficacy in their ability to engage and validate their students with their actions and words—they got to know students and indicated they felt comfortable both hearing and incorporating their stories into classroom experiences. They talked about the importance of these relationships, with a few of the participants making it clear that relationships were at the core of their teaching or even came "before" engagement in anything else. I found that teachers felt efficacious in their ability to connect with students, despite being in a culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse school.

Research has shown that positive teacher-student relationship is a necessary element for creating a caring culture and climate (Gurget, 2015). Teachers who have the self-efficacy to establish a caring classroom environment are more responsive to their students (Gurget, 2015). Furthermore, positive relationships with students," help maintain the needed trust required for an effective caring culture in the classroom" (Milner et al., 2019, p. 114).

5.1.2 Key Findings #2: Establishing Relationships with Families

The second key finding of this study illustrates the teachers' low self-efficacy for establishing relationships with families. Delale-O'Connor et al. (2017) noted that culturally responsive approaches also includes aspects of creating a caring classroom that is developed through engagement of families (p. 180). The teachers clearly believed in their self-efficacy to build relationships with culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students, but they did not

believe in their ability to engage their families. They felt that building relationships with families was not significant because most of the students were older. Additionally, they felt that it was difficult to engage families because they viewed the families as not actively involved in their children's education. In contrast, two of the participants felt that family involvement was important but only for the younger students of the school.

Family involvement through school partnerships with families has been beneficial in the success of culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students (Goodman & Hooks, 2016, p. 33). One of the components that culturally responsiveness teaching focuses on is validating and affirming the families and backgrounds of culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students (Gay, 2010). It is important for teachers to build relationships with families because they are an extension of the students' lives and they bring knowledge and experiences that can add to the classroom learning opportunities (Milner et al, 2019, p. 128). Teachers' validation of students' experiences, background, and cultures is integral in schools and classroom practices (Farinde-Wu, Glover, & Williams, 2017, p. 297), as is engagement of families on their own terms rather than through the lens of teacher expectation (Delale-O'Connor & Graham, 2019). Although culturally responsive teaching extends to the development of meaningful relationships between school and families (Farinde-Wu, Glover, & Williams, 2017, p. 297), teachers in the study did not necessarily connect their relationship building with culturally relevant practices.

5.1.3 Key Findings#3: Teachers Need to Know What Cultural Relevance is and How to Engage in Culturally Relevant Practice

The third key finding focuses on the importance of teachers knowing how to engage in culturally relevant practices. As noted in the literature, culturally relevant practices consist of three components: (1) academic achievement, (2) cultural competence, and (3) sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Culturally relevant practices encompass these three components to ensure that culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students are engaged in academic rigor, that they feel affirmed and validated in their backgrounds and identities, and that they are empowered to recognize and identify the inequalities that impact them in society (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

In this study, I found that teachers exhibited the academic component of culturally relevant practices of setting high expectations for their students. However, when participants were asked if and how they engaged in culturally relevant practices, they indicated that they did not know how to engage in culturally relevant practices. It is important that teachers know how to engage in culturally relevant practices because "teachers abilities to implement culturally relevant practices in their classroom can enhance students success, help to develop and maintain student's self-identities, and foster cultural awareness among culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students" (Gichuru, Riley, Robertson, & Mi-Hwo, 2015, p. 46).

Although teachers felt efficacious in their practice and worked to build relationships with students, they did not feel efficacious in their ability to connect with families. Furthermore, they did not believe in their ability to bridge the gaps between their practice to support students who are culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse. Even when one of the teachers, Gretchen, knew exactly what culturally relevant practices were and how to engage in them, she did not believe in

her ability to engage in these practices because she felt that the curriculum, school schedule, and the structure of the pacing did not allow her to add anything extra to the classroom experience beyond teaching the content as is.

5.2 Implications for Research

Current research has brought attention to schools becoming more culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse in the United States, but teacher demographics do not correspond to this diverse population of students. The primary purpose for this inquiry was to understand the connections between teachers' self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory served as the study's theoretical framework. This study was guided by the conceptual framework for culturally responsive teaching which helped to frame practices that are culturally responsive in relation to serving students who are culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse. Based on the results in this study, three recommendations for future research are to: (1) conduct a study on the need to build partnerships with families and communities, (2) study schools that have been successful with culturally responsive teaching, and (3) conduct study on trainings or professional developments that have been successful with helping teachers engage in culturally relevant practices for culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse population of students

Families may include many individuals as caregivers for students: mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, cousins, foster parents, neighbors, etc., and it is important that teachers are aware of these roles and respect them (Milner et al, 2019, p. 120). Teachers may not realize the importance of including families or may feel uncertain about these connections (Delale-O'Connor & Graham,

2019), but partnering and building a relationship with families can have positive benefits for students (Milner et al, 2019, p. 120). For example, research has suggested that creating a caring environment that is inclusive to familie can improve graduation rates, attendance, and student achievement (Milner et al, 2019, p. 120). During my conversations with the teacher participants, they emphasized their ability to create a caring environment by building relationships with students, but did not feel that same self-efficacy towards building relationships with families. A recommendation that I would have for research is to conduct a study on building partnerships with families and communities to engage in culturally relevant course content. For instance, what might caregivers be able to contribute to the development of a culturally relevant classroom? How might families' knowledge and expertise be engaged in the classroom?. Research has shown that the more teachers become familiar with students' "familial and community context", and connect those attributes to the classroom learning objectives, the more responsive their classroom experiences will be (Milner et al, 2019, p. 120).

Similarly, educators and researchers would benefit from additional studies focused on of schools that have been successful in implementing culturally responsive practices. As mentioned in the literature, the conceptual framework for culturally responsive teaching states that culturally responsive teaching uses the cultural knowledge, past experiences, frames of references, and performance styles of culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students to make learning culturally relevant (Gay, 2010). From my interviews with the teachers, it was clear that they did not understand how to do this work, nor did they feel that they had the resources to engage in culturally relevant practices. Studies highlighting best practices across contexts would be beneficial for educators and educational leaders to see and learn from. During my conversations with the teachers, I noticed that many believed that they were engaging in culturally relevant

practices until I asked them how they engage and where they get their resources. Teachers were unable to show or talk about their practices, and all participants stated that they were not engaging in culturally relevant practices, nor did they know what those practices were. As stated in the literature, culturally relevant practices empower culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students and embrace their cultures, backgrounds and experiences in the school environment and classrooms (Hollie, 2012). Infusing the curriculum with classroom activities that are culturally relevant is associated with improvements in academic engagement and achievement (Garcia & Okhoidi, 2015).

Finally, conducting a study on trainings or professional developments that have been successful with helping teachers engage in culturally relevant practices for a culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse population of students will help other school districts and schools that may have experienced challenges or struggles in this area of cultural relevance.

5.3 Implications for Practice

This inquiry has practical implications for school districts as they seek to implement practices that are culturally responsive to support students who are culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse, as well as teacher education programs working to train the next generation of educators. I challenge school districts to better understand the cultures, background, and family history of their students and importantly to support their teachers, staff and leadership in implementing this knowledge into practice. In this inquiry, I sought to understand the connections of teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. When teachers believe that they can motivate students, they can create positive experiences for students and

improve student achievement (Bandura, 1993). Efficacious teachers set high expectations for themselves and their students, thus establishing an environment in which students are able to thrive inside and outside of the classroom (Gay, 2010). With a changing and diverse population of students that is not reflective of the teachers who teach them, it is important for teachers to engage in practices that are culturally responsive (Gay 2018). Recommendations for practices that will support teachers include: 1. Developing and engaging in self-reflective practices, 2. Partnerships with families and communities, 3. Trainings and professional developments on culturally responsive practices, 4. Hiring process for teachers and leaders, and 5. Learning to hear and incorporate the voices and experiences of students in classrooms.

Teacher self-efficacy stems from the beliefs that teachers hold about their abilities to positively impact student performance and achievement (Gay, 2018, p. 78). What teachers believe and feel about their students is important (Hollie, 2012). Critical self-reflection is a deeply reflective process in which teachers examine their self-efficacy, perspectives, mindsets, and beliefs they hold that shape how they approach their teaching methods for serving students who are culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse (Milner et al, 2019). One of the ways that school districts can implement self-reflection practices is to have teachers integrate critical reflective practices into their work by adding a reflective autobiography into their routine as they plan for the beginning of a new school year or a new semester (Milner et al, 2019). As Milner, et al (2019) pointed out, "Writing a critical, self-reflective autobiography requires that teachers think about past experiences relating to their race, gender, and socioeconomic status to critically examine how their past experiences influence their work as teachers" (Milner et al, 2019, p. 63). Teachers in this study made it clear that they were efficacious in building relationships with culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students, but did not believe in their self-efficacy to engage in

culturally relevant practices for them. This recommendation is an effort to ensure that teachers are constantly critically reflecting on their educational practices for supporting students that are culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse.

During my conversation with teachers, teachers felt efficacious in building relationships with their students, but did not feel that same self-efficacy in building relationships with families. Many of the teachers did not believe in their ability to engage families because they felt that families were not actively involved in their student's education. Additionally, they felt that the students were older at this alternative site and that family involvement was not significant unless students were younger. My second recommendation for practices is that school districts have workshops to train schools and teachers on how to build partnership with families and communities, as well as having school activities to engage families and communities. It is important for teachers and schools to establish partnerships with families because they are "rich sources of knowledge" about the students, ands they add to a caring classroom environment (Milner et al., 2019, p. 125).

In the study, participants made it clear that they were limited in their ability to engage in culturally relevant practices. My third recommendation for practices is that school districts provide ongoing in-depth training and professional developments on how to do the work of engaging in culturally relevant practices. One way to do this is to have teachers participate in implicit bias trainings. This type of training identifies the "unconscious prejudices" that teachers may have about the diverse population of students that they serve (Applebaum, 2019, p. 129). Examining teacher biases can be a lengthy process, but ongoing engagement in this practice can help teachers to be more conscious of their thoughts or biases that they may hold (Milner et al., 2019, p. 105). Additionally, schools should participate in professional developments that focuess on deeper

cultural practices and continually reinforce these professional development opportunities regularly to both have opportunities to practice, to ask questions, and engage resources (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Students bring a range of languages, literacies, and cultural practices into their schools (Hollie, 2012). Schools can approach this rich diversity through the lens of culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy is an extension of culturally relevant pedagogy, which transforms schools to support the aspects of culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students' languages, literacies, and cultural heritages (Paris, 2012 p. 95). Some examples of instruction methods that are culturally sustaining: integrating culturally responsive texts, including oral tradition of storytelling, and adding a print-rich environment that includes all cultures and heritages (Hollie, 2012). Culturally responsive texts allow culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students to relate their experiences to academics and then they are able to make better connections to mainstream (traditional) texts (Muhammad & Hollie, 2012, p. 126). Many cultures throughout the world have a "rich history" with the art of storytelling (Muhammad & Hollie, 2012, p. 126). Including oral tradition of storytelling is a way for teachers to connect to students culturally and build literacy skills for culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students (Muhammad & Hollie, 2012, p. 126). Also, adding a print rich environment that includes all cultures and heritages allows culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students to see themselves, their families and communities in the school environment, and in turn makes them feel accepted and validated (Muhammad and Hollie, 2012, p. 139). What is important across these practices in the understanding that culturally sustaining pedagogy takes time, reflection, and, above all, being deeply attuned to culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students. Culturally sustaining pedagogy should not be done alone, but instead, with the students, their families and communities (Puzio, 2017, p. 231). In this way, deep and ongoing, professional development and

support would allow educators to not only understand what culturally responsive and sustaining practices look like, but to try them in their classrooms, receive feedback, and engage as a community.

According to Aronson and Laughter (2016), it is important for school districts to invest in teachers who are "prepared and equipped with the necessary tools" that are needed to effectively support culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students (p. 167). This idea leads me to my fourth recommendation for practice which is to connect culturally relevant teaching to hiring processes for new teachers. Prospective teachers would have to demonstrate their knowledge and ability to engage in culturally relevant practices during the screening process for hiring new candidates. For example, school districts can include a writing prompt in the hiring process, to assess a prospective candidate's knowledge, beliefs, or experiences with culturally relevant practices. According to Balter and Duncombe (2005), when hiring new teachers, most districts consider the candidate's college degree, endorsements, or professional references for the screening process, but few consider using writing samples to assess their writing skills (p. 12).

My final recommendation for practice is to include the student voice in both understanding and developing classrooms that are culturally sustaining. Student voice refers to the beliefs, values, perspectives, and cultural backgrounds of students (Harris et al., 2014, p. 1). Including students is a way for the school district to understand their experiences. Also, the school district can compare the students' experiences in each school and region. Do students feel that their school is culturally responsive? What experiences inside and outside of their classrooms contribute to their assessment? Listening closely to what students say about their school experiences can be beneficial to schools for understanding student experiences and rethinking educational or instructional practices (Harris et al., 2014, p. 1). For instance, teachers pointed to the value of getting to know

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students in their classrooms, but stopped short of connecting this to culturally relevant and sustaining practice.

5.4 Conclusion

In this study, I sought to better understand the connections between teachers' self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. This study found that these teachers did not believe in their self-efficacy to engage in culturally relevant practices; nor did they have the knowledge or understanding of what the meaning of culturally relevant practices is. However, the teachers had a high self-efficacy for creating a caring environment by building relationships with their students. The teachers made it very clear that building and sustaining relationships with their students was one of the ways that they created positive experiences for their students, however they did not connect this to broader culturally relevant or sustaining practices. School districts must continually work to ensure that teachers are supported and trained to effectively engage in culturally relevant practices. This study reinforced the idea that while teacher self-efficacy matters, it may not be connected to their understanding of, and engagement with culturally responsive practices. Teachers need to know what culturally relevant practices are, and how to engage in them, as well as have access to resources and support for this work.

5.5 Demonstration of Excellence

The outcomes of this inquiry will be shared with members of the school district of my place of practice. In particular, I will present the following for this study: participant selection, methods, findings and implications. Among those in attendance at the presentation will be the interview participants, school principal, and school administrators. Division leadership representatives and investigators will also receive the results of this study and will be invited to the presentation. The presentation will provide a greater understanding of the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. Additionally, this presentation will include suggestions for future research.

Appendix A Recruitment Letter

Dear Teachers:

I am conducting a study as a doctoral student in the University of Pittsburgh's Social and Comparative Analysis of Education Program. The objective of this study is to better understand the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. Completion of this study will fulfill the dissertation requirements for my doctoral degree, but it is also my hope that it contributes to the development of teacher's self-efficacy and culturally relevant practices.

You are being asked to consider participation in this study based on your role as a special or general education teacher. Participating in this research study is voluntary. It is up to you whether you choose to participate or not. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled if you choose not to participate or discontinue participation.

As a participant of the study you will be asked to complete a questionnaire that explores teacher self-efficacy and culturally relevant practices. The questionnaire will be conducted online and will require approximately 5-10 minutes of your time. Additionally, you may be asked to complete the following: a one-time face to face interview with me that will explore teacher self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness. Both the questionnaire and interview will be administered at different times. First, the questionnaire will be administered, and then the interview within a few weeks afterwards. Interview participants will receive an invitation to a presentation of the study results. Additionally, the research data collected will be shared with school administrators and division leadership investigators; however, this information will be shared in a de-identified manner (without identifiers).

There are no direct benefits for participation in this study, nor is there any compensation attached. Your participation is purely voluntary, and you may choose to discontinue the inquiry study at any time. There are minimal risks associated with participation. This study has received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Pittsburgh, which was previously requested and granted prior to this invitation.

Should you wish to receive results of the study, you may request a copy by contacting me at KDB70@pitt.edu. Your information will be confidential and will not be connected to your name. Even your de-identified information will be treated as confidential. The data collected will only be available to me as the researcher, as well as my Advisor and Committee Chairperson, Dr. Lori Delale-O'Connor. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you can also contact Dr. Delale-O'Connor at 412-624-1332 for additional information.

If you agree to participate, please contact me at KDB70@pitt.edu.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and willingness to contribute to this study.

Respectfully,

Kendria Boyd

Social and Comparative Analysis of Education Doctoral Candidate

Appendix B Consent to Act as a Participant in a Research Study

Study Title:
CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS MATTERS: Exploring the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices.

Principle Investigator
Kendria Boyd is the principle investigator (PI) of this dissertation. She may be contacted with any questions, issues, or concerns at 757-561-8056 (C) or KDB70@pitt.edu. Additionally, Dr. Lori Delale-O'Connor serves as Kendria's advisor and committee chair. She may be contacted with any questions or issues at 412-624-1332 (W) or loridoc@pitt.edu.

INTRODUCTION:
You are being asked to consider participation in this study based on your role as a special or general education teacher. The objective of this study is to better understand the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. As a participant of the study you will be asked to complete a questionnaire that explores teacher self-efficacy and culturally relevant practices. The questionnaire will be conducted online and will require approximately 5-10 minutes of your time. Additionally, you may be asked to complete the following: a one-time face to face interview with me that will explore teacher self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness. Both the questionnaire and interview will be administered at different times. First, the questionnaire will be administered, and then the interview within a few weeks afterwards. Interview participants will receive an invitation to a presentation of the study results. Additionally, the research data collected will be shared with school administrators and division leadership investigators; however, this information will be shared in a de-identified manner (without identifiers).

STUDY RISKS:
This research study poses a minimal risk to the anticipated research participants and does not involve protected populations.

STUDY BENEFITS:
Knowledge from this study may benefit the participants in their decision making and classroom practices through self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness.

PRIVACY (Person) and CONFIDENTIALITY (Data):
No sensitive information will be recorded. All data will be kept confidential and private by masking your name and assigning you an ID# on all reports and data collected. All stored data will have an ID# and not your real name. All responses will be kept confidential, and data will be stored securely in a locked location. Your interview will be coded using the Dedoose coding software. All the information you provide will be transcribed and kept in a secure location.

- *I will do my best to keep your personal information private but confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. You will not be identified by name or other identifiable information in any report or presentation.*

- Internet Transmission: *I will do everything possible to protect your privacy and confidentiality but information transmitted over the internet is insecure and no method of electronic storage is perfectly secure therefore absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed*

WITHDRAWAL FROM STUDY PARTICIPATION:

You can, at any time withdraw from this research study

- *To formally withdraw from this research study, you should provide a written and dated notice of this decision to the principal investigator of this research study and email it to* KDB70@pitt.edu*.*

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:

- *Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. If there are any words you do not understand, feel free to ask us. The investigators will be available to answer your current and future questions.*

Consent to Participate:

The above information has been explained to me and all of my current questions have been answered. I understand that I am encouraged to ask questions, voice concerns or complaints about any aspect of this research study during the course of this study, and that such future questions, concerns or complaints will be answered by a qualified individual or by the investigators listed on the first page of this consent document at the telephone numbers given. I understand that I may always request that my questions, concerns or complaints be addressed by a listed investigator. I understand that I may contact the Human Subjects Protection Advocate of the IRB Office, University of Pittsburgh (1-866-212-2668) to discuss problems, concerns, and questions; obtain information; offer input; or discuss situations that occurred during my participation. By signing this form I agree to participate in this research study. A copy of this consent form will be given to me.

_____

Participant's Signature

_____

Date

Appendix C Preliminary Self-Efficacy Questionnaire

Research Study Title: CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS MATTERS: Exploring the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices.

Dear Teachers:

I am conducting a study as a doctoral student in the University of Pittsburgh's Social and Comparative Analysis of Education Program. The objective of this study is to better understand the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. You are being asked to consider participation in a survey/questionnaire that explores teacher self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness. Additionally, you may be asked to complete the following: a one-time face to face interview with me that will explore teacher self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness.

Participation in this survey/questionnaire is completely voluntary and involves minimal risk. You can withdraw from the study at any time. The research data collected may be shared with investigators conducting other research; however, this information will be shared in a de-identified manner (without identifiers). There will be no direct benefits for participating in this study; however, it is my hope that it contributes to the development of teacher's practices through self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness practices.

Your access link to the survey is below and it should take you just 5-10 minutes to complete.

This link is unique to you, so it won't work if you forward it on to anyone else!

Your link to take the survey is here: {Qualtrics will add access details}

All information provided will remain confidential, and your name linked to Study - PRO18070476, will only be accessible to me. No reports will link what you say to your name, department, or institution/organization that you represent. All data received from you will be given an ID#. All stored data will have your ID# and not your real name. All of your responses are confidential, and data will be kept under lock and key. I will not associate the information you provide with your name in reports.

Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Pittsburgh, was previously requested and granted prior to this invitation.

If you come across any questions you wish not to answer, you may skip it and move onto the next question. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Kendria Boyd at KDB70@pitt.edu.

Thank you for your time and participation in this survey/questionnaire.

Kendria Boyd, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate, Social and Comparative Analysis of Education
School of Education
University of Pittsburgh

Teacher Beliefs	**How much can you do?**

Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.

| | Influence | | | | | | | Deal |

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
12. How much can you do to foster student creativity?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
15. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
16. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
19. How well can you keep a few problem students form ruining an entire lesson?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
21. How well can you respond to defiant students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)

Figure 3 Teachers' Sense of Self-Efficacy Scale[1] (long form)

Developers: Megan Tschannen-Moran, College of William and Mary Anita Woolfolk Hoy, the Ohio State University.

Note: Because this instrument was developed at the Ohio State University, it is sometimes referred to as the *Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale*. We prefer the name, *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale*.

Implicit Bias Section:

1. I attempt to appear non-prejudiced in order to avoid disapproval from others.
    o   Very strongly disagree
    o   Strongly disagree
    o   Moderately disagree
    o   Slightly disagree
    o   Slightly agree
    o   Moderately agree
    o   Strongly agree
    o   Very strongly agree

2. I try to hide any negative prejudicial thoughts in order to avoid negative reactions from others.
    o   Very strongly disagree
    o   Strongly disagree
    o   Moderately disagree
    o   Slightly disagree
    o   Slightly agree
    o   Moderately agree
    o   Strongly agree
    o   Very strongly agree

3. I try to act non-prejudiced because of pressure from others.
    o   Very strongly disagree
    o   Strongly disagree
    o   Moderately disagree
    o   Slightly disagree
    o   Slightly agree
    o   Moderately agree
    o   Strongly agree
    o   Very strongly agree

4. According to my personal values, using stereotypes is OK.
    o   Very strongly disagree
    o   Strongly disagree
    o   Moderately disagree
    o   Slightly disagree
    o   Slightly agree
    o   Moderately agree

o   Strongly agree
o   Very strongly agree

5. Being non-prejudiced is important to my self-concept.
   - o   Very strongly disagree
   - o   Strongly disagree
   - o   Moderately disagree
   - o   Slightly disagree
   - o   Slightly agree
   - o   Moderately agree
   - o   Strongly agree
   - o   Very strongly agree

6. If I acted prejudiced, I would be concerned that others would be angry with me.
   - o   Very strongly disagree
   - o   Strongly disagree
   - o   Moderately disagree
   - o   Slightly disagree
   - o   Slightly agree
   - o   Moderately agree
   - o   Strongly agree
   - o   Very strongly agree

7. I am personally motivated by my beliefs to be non-prejudiced.
   - o   Very strongly disagree
   - o   Strongly disagree
   - o   Moderately disagree
   - o   Slightly disagree
   - o   Slightly agree
   - o   Moderately agree
   - o   Strongly agree
   - o   Very strongly agree

8. I attempt to act in non-prejudiced ways because it is personally important to me.
   - o   Very strongly disagree
   - o   Strongly disagree
   - o   Moderately disagree
   - o   Slightly disagree
   - o   Slightly agree
   - o   Moderately agree
   - o   Strongly agree
   - o   Very strongly agree
9. Because of my personal values, I believe that using stereotypes is wrong.
   - o   Very strongly disagree
   - o   Strongly disagree
   - o   Moderately disagree

- o   Slightly disagree
- o   Slightly agree
- o   Moderately agree
- o   Strongly agree
- o   Very strongly agree

10. Because of today's PC (politically correct) standards, I try to appear non-prejudiced
- o   Very strongly disagree
- o   Strongly disagree
- o   Moderately disagree
- o   Slightly disagree
- o   Slightly agree
- o   Moderately agree
- o   Strongly agree
- o   Very strongly agree

Project Implicit at Harvard University (https://implicit.harvard.edu

Appendix D First Reminder Email Invitation to Participate in Survey Protocol

From: KDB70@pitt.edu

To:
Subject: REMINDER: Survey of **Research Study Title:** CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS MATTERS: Exploring the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices.

You may have already received an e-mail inviting you to participate in this survey. If you have already completed and returned the questionnaire, please accept my thanks and delete this e-mail as no further involvement is required for this questionnaire. If you have not completed the questionnaire, please take the time to consider helping me with this important research.

You are being asked to consider participation in an online questionnaire that explores teacher self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness. The objective of this study is to better understand the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices.

Participation in this survey/questionnaire is completely voluntary and involves minimal risk. You can withdraw from the study at any time. The research data collected may be shared with investigators conducting other research; however, this information will be shared in a de-identified manner (without identifiers). There will be no direct benefits for participating in this study; however, it is my hope that it contributes to the development of teacher's practices through self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness practices. All information provided will remain confidential. No reports will link what you say to your name, department, or institution/organization that you represent.

Your access link to the survey is below and it should take you just 5-10 minutes to complete.

This link is unique to you, so it won't work if you forward it on to anyone else!

Your link to take the survey is here: {Qualtrics will add access details}

If you come across any questions you wish not to answer, you may skip it and move onto the next question. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Kendria Boyd at KDB70@pitt.edu. Thank you for your time and participation in this survey/questionnaire.

Kendria Boyd, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate, Social and Comparative Analysis of Education
School of Education
University of Pittsburgh

Appendix E Final Reminder Email Invitation to Participate in Survey Protocol

From: KDB70@pitt.edu

To:
Subject: REMINDER: Survey of **Research Study Title:** CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS MATTERS: Exploring the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices.

You may have already received an e-mail inviting you to participate in this survey. If you have already completed and returned the questionnaire, please accept my thanks and delete this e-mail as no further involvement is required for this questionnaire. If you have not completed the questionnaire, please take the time to consider helping me with this important research as today is the last day for participation.

The objective of this study is to better understand the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. Participation in this survey/questionnaire is completely voluntary and involves minimal risk. You can withdraw from the study at any time. All information provided will remain confidential. No reports will link what you say to your name, department, or institution/organization that you represent.

Your access link to the survey is below and it should take you just 5-10 minutes to complete.

This link is unique to you, so it won't work if you forward it on to anyone else!

Your link to take the survey is here: {Qualtrics will add access details}

If you come across any questions you wish not to answer, you may skip it and move onto the next question. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Kendria Boyd at KDB70@pitt.edu. Thank you for your time and participation in this survey/questionnaire.

Kendria Boyd, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate, Social and Comparative Analysis of Education
School of Education
University of Pittsburgh

Appendix F Email to Schedule Interview - Protocol

From: KDB70@pitt.edu
To:
Subject: REMINDER: Survey of **Research Study Title:** CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS MATTERS: Exploring the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices.

You are being asked to consider participation in a one-time face to face interview that explores teacher self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness. The objective of this study is to better understand the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices.

Participation in this interview is completely voluntary and involves minimal risk. You can withdraw from the study at any time. The research data collected may be shared with investigators conducting other research; however, this information will be shared in a de-identified manner (without identifiers). There will be no direct benefits for participating in this study; however, it is my hope that it contributes to the development of teacher's practices through self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness practices. All information provided will remain confidential. No reports will link what you say to your name, department, or institution/organization that you represent.
Your interview session will last between 45-60 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded with your permission. Please see the following times below to confirm your availability. [Range of dates and times]

 If these times are not convenient for you, please email me at KDB70@pitt.edu to provide me with some dates and times to choose from.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Kendria Boyd at KDB70@pitt.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kendria Boyd, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate, Social and Comparative Analysis of Education
School of Education
University of Pittsburgh

The purpose of this 45-60 minute interview is to better understand the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary and there will be no compensation for your time today. I do not have any assumptions but my purpose is to better understand the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices. Participants can withdraw from this study at any time.

Everything you say will remain confidential, meaning that I will only be aware of your answers. The purpose of this is so that I will know whom to contact should we have further follow-up questions after the interview.

All information provided will remain confidential, and your name linked to Study - PRO18070476, will only be accessible to me. No reports will link what you say to your name, department, or institution/organization that you represent. All data received from you will be given an ID#. All stored data will have your ID# and not your real name. All of your responses are confidential, and data will remained under lock and key. I will not associate the information you provide with your name in reports. There is minimal risk for your participation in this research. The research data collected may be shared with investigators conducting other research; however, this information will be shared in a de-identified manner (without identifiers).

Given these conditions, do you agree to participate in today's interview?

[If YES, continue. If NO, stop interview and thank them for their time.]

With your permission, I will record our conversation since it will be difficult for me to write down everything while simultaneously carrying an attentive conversation with you. Do I have your permission?   [*If YES, start recording. If NO, start scribing*]

Do you have any questions before we begin?

This research study is being led by Kendria Boyd in the Doctorate of Education program at the University of Pittsburgh.

Each participant will be provided a demographic questionnaire to complete (See questions below).

For Classification Purposes Only
What is your gender identification (Male/Female/Other, Prefer not to answer)?
What is your age (18-25, 26-49, 50-64)?
What is your Ethnic Background (American Indian/Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African-American, Hispanic/Latino, White/Caucasian, Other)?

How many years have you been teaching (0-3, 4-7, 8-10, 11-15, 16 or more)?
What are you certified as: (General Education Teacher or Special Education Teacher)?

1. In what manner do you indicate to your students that you are a caring individual?

2. When examining cultural differences in your students, point out how you demonstrate cultural respect, understanding and racial or cultural lack of prejudice? Why is it important to be familiar with parents of your students?

3. Interaction with students is important. Give some examples of how you are accessible. How do you demonstrate interest in your students outside of the classroom? Do you have fun with your students? Give some examples that may help other teachers.

4. Explain the term 'high expectation' in reference to your students. Could you elaborate on your ideas of student responsibility?

5. Elaborate if you could on the role of reflective practice. Reflective practice is the time involved in thinking about how you are going to teach the diverse group of individuals we call our students. Could you reveal how you spend extra time to set up a positive learning experience for your students?

6. Classroom management is one of the most important aspects in student learning. Give some examples of how you set up your classroom for learning in respect to managing the classroom in regard to: Routines? Procedures for daily activities? Transitions? Monitoring the classroom?

7. Do you feel you are a highly qualified, effective teacher? Why?

8. Do you engage in culturally relevant practices? How do you engage in culturally relevant practices? Where do you get your ideas or resources to engage in culturally relevant practices?

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Appendix H Invitation to Participate in the Results Findings - Protocol

From: KDB70@pitt.edu

To:
Subject: INVITATION: **Research Study Title:** CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS MATTERS: Exploring the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices.

Thank you for participating in this study about teacher self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness. The objective of this study is to better understand the connections between teacher self-efficacy and their engagement in culturally relevant practices.

I am sending this invitation to invite the following: all participants who participated in the interview, School Principal, School Administration, Division Leadership, and the Division Review Screening Committee to participate in a final meeting on [Day, Date, Time], to discuss research findings. During this presentation, I will review the results of the following patterns and themes from the study: teacher self-efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and self-reflection. Additionally, I will ask for your feedback during the discussion. If you wish to participate in this discussion, please contact me at KDB70@pitt.edu. All information provided will remain confidential. No reports will link what you say to your name, department, or institution/organization that you represent.

Furthermore, your information will be confidential and will not be connected to your name. Even your de-identified information will be treated as confidential. The data collected will only be available to me as the researcher, as well as my Advisor and Committee Chairperson. Dr. Lori Delale-O'Connor. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you can also contact Dr. Delale-O'Connor at loridoc@pitt.edu.

Thanks again for your participation in this research study.

Kendria Boyd, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate, Social and Comparative Analysis of Education
School of Education
University of Pittsburgh

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