**Portfolio III: Analytic Personal and Professional Essay**

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**ANALYTIC PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL ESSAY**

Since Portfolio II, I have continued to engage in my professional community. I have served as a special educator in Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) and provided professional development in culturally responsive classroom management and adapted behavioral interventions. As a professional development facilitator, I established a Professional Learning Community (PLC) for novice educators with 1-5 years of experience. The focus of the PLC is to support novice teachers in increasing their self-efficacy as culturally responsive educators and employ a culturally responsive classroom management framework.

While working on an independent study the Summer of 2023, a Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self Efficacy (CRCMSE) survey (Siwatu, 1997) was distributed to examine the CRCM self-efficacy/readiness of PGCPS novice educators. The CRCMSE Scale was developed based on two different theories, CRCM and social cognitive theory. With schools and classrooms becoming increasingly diverse, research has not addressed issues germane to students from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Weinstein et al., 2004). The current research on educator agency, self-efficacy, perceived support, and strategies to prepare educators for work with diverse learners must continue. A lack of teacher preparation continues to exacerbate issues of behavior management and discipline. Teachers expressing ill-preparedness for working with diverse populations may experience increased anxiety when teaching in classrooms with students from various cultures and languages (Milner, 2008).

The CMCRSE scale was used as the tool to assess pre-service teachers’ CMCRSE beliefs, and design interventions to increase their knowledge, skills, disposition, and self-efficacy beliefs. Siwatu (2017) built this original scale on the underpinnings of Bandura’s (1997) professional development conceptual framework. This data collection on 40 preservice teachers was used as a diagnostic measure to identify tasks that educators were most efficacious and least efficacious implementing. Using a Likert scale, responses equated to *completely confident*, *moderately confident*, and *not confident at all* across 35 reflexive questions. The data was analyzed and the strength index and mean (Appendix 1) were calculated. Follow up interviews were coded for emergent themes. The self-efficacy strength index was calculated by taking the respondents (R) total score and dividing it by the number of items on the self-efficacy measure. This measure indicates the strength of each teacher’s beliefs across the measured domain.

Teachers' failure to understand how culture contributes to behavior and the role of culture in teaching and learning is believed to have contributed to trends such as differential discipline administration. In response to these trends and disparities, Weinstein et al. (2004) called for the implementation of CRCM practices. She identified five essential components of culturally responsive classroom management (CRCM):

* recognition of one’s own ethnocentrism and biases;
* knowledge of students’ cultural backgrounds;
* understanding the broader social, economic, and political context of our educational system;
* the ability and willingness to use culturally appropriate classroom management strategies; and;
* a commitment to building caring classroom communities.

More than strategies recommended in classroom-management literature are required to create a safe and productive learning environment for diverse student populations. Safe classroom environments require drawing from literature on culturally responsive classroom management, psychologically supportive classroom environments, and building trust and resilience (Bondy et al, 2007).

The data analysis consisted of four steps: (1) an analysis of descriptive/psychometric characteristics of the respondents; (2) a strength index (Bandura, 1997) will be calculated (Total points / # of questions.); (3) item specific responses will be analyzed; (4) global scores will be analyzed (adding up the scores for each item to generate a total score). Self-efficacy strength index scores are less commonly seen in published teacher self-efficacy studies, but this index indicates the strength of each teacher’s self-efficacy beliefs with a measured domain. The index is also easily calculated and interpreted. Like global scores, the strength index fails to identify tasks that teachers are not confident in, so item specific scores are a critical focus in this analysis.

The respondents generated culturally responsive self-efficacy scores between 56-99. Scores below 70 indicated that the respondent had a low strength index and low culturally responsive self-efficacy (*Table 1)*.

Afterward, several respondents of the [Culturally Responsive Classroom Management survey](https://forms.gle/dnkB5StY3qH8zJ2i7) indicated that they were interested in becoming part of a PLC for [culturally responsive educators](https://gmuedu-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/jbanks21_gmu_edu/ETRiiKUg_lBLssKoLTWr-rMBCfC-J6AXj4V0j-EaXZWCwA?e=KK5QZt). Seven educators indicated their desire to join a community that supports culturally responsive practices in elementary and secondary education in the PGCPS system. Those respondents have become active members of the PLC. Our first monthly meeting of the collective was in June 2023. We meet monthly and support each other via email, shared articles, meet-ups, professional development opportunities, and practices. The foundation of The PLC is anchored in the four key components of culturally responsive teaching: affirmation, validation, cognition, and processing (Hammond, 2014).

**Table 1**

*Four Key Components of Culturally Responsive Teaching*

**Pillar**  **Definition**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Affirmation**  **“I See You”** | Affirm the child, recognize and accept them as they are. Nurture their multiple identities -- as a learner, person of color, as a boy or a girl. Affirm the child that none of these aspects are in conflict with you. |
| **Validation**  **“There are 2 Americas”** | Validation is about acknowledging the socio-political context students live in.  The process of validation flips the traditional view of classroom instruction and learning as a neutral process removed from the concepts of power, politics, history and context and instead uses these issues tools of instruction and discourse. |
| **Cognition**  **“I Get It”** | Using CRP as a cognitive aid means using the student’s culture as a reference point for helping them understand concepts. Learning theory, neuroscience and culturally responsive teaching converge. |
| **Processing**  **“I Remember"** | While the cognitive understanding component helps a student “get it”, information processing is about helping him “hold on to it”. It is about helping the student internalize content to the level of automaticity where he can quickly locate and retrieve information from his memory banks |

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The learning community defines CRT as “an educator’s ability to recognize students’ cultural displays of learning and meaning-making and respond positively and constructively with teaching moves that use cultural knowledge as a scaffold to connect what the students know to new concepts and content in order to promote effective information processing” (<https://sitesed.cde.state.co.us/mod/book/tool/print/index.php?id=8030>). We have worked on making sure students feel welcome, safe, and becoming “warm demanders” (Hammond, 2014). A warm demander is a teacher who communicates personal warmth toward students and simultaneously requires students to work towards ambitious standards and high expectations (Delpit, 2013). The teacher provides concrete guidance and support for meeting the standards, particularly corrective feedback, opportunities for information processing, and culturally relevant meaning making. (Hammond, 2014).

**Areas of Academic Growth**

As an educator and an administrator in the public school system, I have grown in the area of cultural competence, cultural responsiveness, and transitioning families from involvement to engagement. Academically, I can put current research into practice and build capacity in educators with current literature. I was able to implement my own qualitative research study utilizing a survey. I engaged with stakeholders to pursue permission for my research, and ultimately strengthen the professional practice of other novice educators in very diverse classrooms.

**Scholarly Achievements**

As I continued to work with the PLC, interview respondents to the CRCM survey and independent study, and conducted personal interviews, I realized that those areas of interest are important to me, but not my area of passion. During this time of exploration, I reaffirmed an area of both interest and passion, and that is Black caregivers' perceive the symptoms of ASD and how such experiences impact their recommendation of related services and academic interventions. I want to share the lived experiences of Black caregivers of children with ASD to provide an additional resource to families traversing this ASD journey.

I revisited Chapters 4, 5, and 6 of the report, and my area of interest crystallized. In these chapters, the team explored areas of diagnosis and treatment that not only sparked my interest but became an area of absolute passion for me. The chapters that had the greatest personal impact were, *Framing the Experiences of BIPOC Children and Adults in Accessing or Engaging in Treatment for ADHD Symptoms*, *Stigmas About ADHD in BIPOC Communities that Could Influence Seeking Treatment*, and discussed *Racial Differences in Diagnosis of BIPOC Children.* As I begin my research, I want to further the culturally and contextually responsive approach to how parents perceive ASD and how their experiences impact their involvement in the co-construction of the educational plan and services for their child. I want to center my research to give voice to parents and empower them to both embrace and resist ableist notions of normalcy and construct powerful trajectories for their child.

As a special educator and special education administrator, I have a passion for helping families understand their child’s disability diagnosis, access school and community support and services, and be their child’s number one advocate. Daily, I encounter caregivers that want to support their child but don’t want the label or stigma associated with special education. Some accept the diagnosis and services, some are moved to inaction in a hazy, state of denial, and many revoke services. I want to give voice to families who have received an ASD diagnosis, give power to their voice and experience, so that their lived experience may help other families experiencing the same diagnosis.

Designed for the CHADD report, I recently revisited *Figure 1* that pictorially represents the layers of influencers that impact the under-representation of ADHD diagnoses in diverse communities and depicts the barriers to care and treatment. This figure shows that the factors that impact diagnoses are numerous and layered. The structure of the corresponding chapter examined these layers by, first, exploring the factors that influence BIPOC children as “behavior problems.” The contribution of historical narratives and negative stereotypes of Black children, an overview of the influences that impact differences in teacher and parent behavior rating scales, and finally, the racial effect of disciplining behavior versus treating externalized behavior was examined. Perceptions and Attributes Impacting Care and Treatment in the African American Community are found in *Appendix A3*.

As I studied this graphic *(Appendix A3)*, I summarized that each of these attributes has a layer impacted by personal perspectives within the medical community. Perspectives about discipline, ‘appropriate’ behavior (Epstein et al., 2005; Kang and Harvey, 2020), biases, stereotypy, and beliefs about ethnic groups, and perspectives on troubling history all impact how black people perceive, trust, or distrust the medical community (Bussing et. al, 2003; dosReis et. al, 2007), and react after receiving a disability diagnosis. This is the *thread* that I like to refer to. Still, it has not been until now that I understand intersectionality and desire to research Black caregivers' perceptions of ASD symptoms and how those influences recommendations for related services and interventions. I find immense fulfillment in every IEP meeting, where I help a tearful parent understand their child’s disability, assure them that their child is perfect just as they are, and connect them to resources to assist the family in understanding the diagnosis and supporting their child. I feel a sense of calling to educate and encourage my community around understanding disability, finding power in difference, knowing that a disability diagnosis is not a death sentence, but an opportunity to understand how your child’s brain works and learn the power and promise of advocacy. I understand that early identification and programming for a child educationally is critical to making educational gains. This research will expose common beliefs that caregivers may hold that limit care.

By far, independent studies and research studies have proven invaluable in shaping my research interests. It is my desire to conduct a qualitative research study, utilizing narrative inquiry, to interview Black families of children with Autism diagnoses. I want to research their initial perception, and the impact of those perceptions on selection of related services and interventions.

**Appendix A**

Classroom Management Culturally Responsive Self-Efficacy Survey Means

This data collection on preservice teachers was used as a diagnostic measure to identify tasks that educators were most efficacious and least efficacious implementing. Using a Likert scale, responses equated to *completely confident*, *moderately confident*, and *not confident at all* across 35 reflexive questions. The data was analyzed, and the strength index and mean were calculated. Follow up interviews were coded for emergent themes. The self-efficacy strength index was calculated by taking the respondents (R) total score and dividing it by the number of items on the self-efficacy measure. This measure indicates the strength of each teacher’s beliefs across the measured domain.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Items** | **Mean Score**  (n= 40) |
| I am able to assess students' behavior with the knowledge that acceptable school behaviors may not match those that are acceptable with a student's home culture. | 79.46 |
| I am able to use a culturally responsive discipline practices to alter the behavior of a student who is bring defiant. | 77.23 |
| I am able to create a learning environment that conveys respect for the cultures of all students in my classroom. | 89.30 |
| I am able to use my knowledge of students' cultural background to create a culturally compatible learning environment. | 81.46 |
| I am able to establish high behavioral expectations that encourage students to produce high quality work. | 82.43 |
| I am able to clearly communicate classroom policies. | 92.89 |
| I am able to structure the learning environment so that all students feel like a valued member of the learning community. | 90.66 |
| I am able to use what I know about my students' cultural background to develop an effective learning environment. | 87.61 |
| I am able to encourage students to work together on classroom tasks, when appropriate. | 89.35 |
| I am able to design the classroom in a way that communicates respect for diversity. | 92.53 |
| I am able to use strategies that will hold students accountable for producing high quality work. | 80.58 |
| I am able to address inappropriate behavior without relying on traditional methods of discipline such as office referrals. | 83.69 |
| I am able to critically analyze students' classroom behavior from a cross-cultural perspective. | 82.53 |
| I am able to modify lesson plans so that students remain actively engaged throughout the entire class period or lesson. | 82.17 |
| I am able to redirect students' behavior without the use of coercive means (i.e., consequences or verbal reprimand). | 80.38 |
| I am able to restructure the curriculum so that every child can succeed, regardless of their academic history. | 77.97 |
| I am able to communicate with students using expressions that are familiar to them. | 81.58 |
| I am able to personalize the classroom so that it is reflective of the cultural background of my students. | 84.15 |
| I am able to establish routines for carrying out specific classroom tasks. | 91.69 |
| I am able to design activities that require students to work together toward a common academic goal. | 88.84 |
| I am able to modify the curriculum to allow students to work in groups. | 89.46 |
| I am able to teach students how to work together. | 87.48 |
| I am able to critically assess whether a particular behavior constitutes misbehavior. | 81.35 |
| I am able to teach children self-management strategies that will assist them in regulating their classroom behavior. | 81.48 |
| I am able to develop a partnership with parents from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. | 86.61 |
| I am able to communicate with students' parents whose primary language is not English. | 70.10 |
| I am able to establish two-way communication with non-English speaking parents. | 70.41 |
| I am able to use culturally appropriate methods to relate to parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. | 77.30 |
| I am able to model classroom routines for English Language Learners. | 73.76 |
| I am able to explain classroom rules so that they are easily understood by English Language Learners. | 74.46 |
| I am able to modify aspects of the classroom so that it matches aspects of students' home culture. | 71.74 |
| I am able to implement an intervention that minimizes a conflict that occurs when a students' culturally based behavior is not consistent with school norms. | 73.84 |
| I am able to develop an effective classroom management plan based on my understanding of students' family background. | 80.05 |
| I am able to manage situations in which students are defiant. | 84.07 |
| I am able to prevent disruptions by recognizing potential causes for misbehavior. | 84.97 |

Figure A1. Mean scores from survey respondents.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **R** | **SI** | **R** | **SI** |
| **1** | 75.14 | **21** | 63.74 |
| **2** | 78.86 | **22** | 91.14 |
| **3** | 77.29 | **23** | 99.14 |
| **4** | 91.57 | **24** | 74.14 |
| **5** | 74.86 | **25** | 88.57 |
| **6** | 96.94 | **26** | 84.86 |
| **7** | 86.86 | **27** | 75.14 |
| **8** | 63.74 | **28** | 78.86 |
| **9** | 91.14 | **29** | 77.29 |
| **10** | 99.14 | **30** | 91.57 |
| **11** | 74.14 | **31** | 74.86 |
| **12** | 88.57 | **32** | 96.94 |
| **13** | 84.86 | **33** | 86.86 |
| **14** | 56.00 | **34** | 63.74 |
| **15** | 75.43 | **35** | 91.14 |
| **16** | 56.86 | **36** | 99.14 |
| **17** | 90.00 | **37** | 74.14 |
| **18** | 76.43 | **38** | 88.57 |
| **19** | 96.94 | **39** | 84.86 |
| **20** | 86.86 | **40** | 82.39 |
| *Note: R=respondent SI=Strength Index* |  |  |  |

Figure A2. Strength Indices of the Respondents

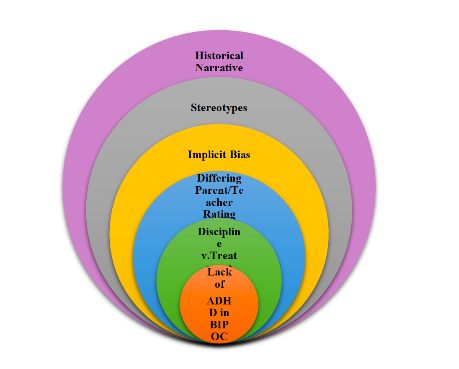


Figure A3. Factors influencing parent perception

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