

THE SPACE BETWEEN: EXAMINING TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES OF CULTURALLY
INFORMED THIRD-SPACE PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES AND THEIR IMPACT ON
EDUCATIONAL EQUITY FOR MARGINALIZED STUDENTS

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AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT
DISSERTATION

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To my husband, Tim: I could not have achieved this milestone without your unwavering love and support. I am eternally grateful.

DEDICATION

For my children: Seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly.

ABSTRACT

Issues of educational inequity remain salient for U.S. K-12 schools as student populations become increasingly culturally diverse. To dismantle hegemonic educational practices, scholars have promoted Culturally Relevant Pedagogy as an instructional approach for promoting a more inclusive learning space by validating the unique cultural funds of knowledge present within diverse classrooms. Scholarship has also suggested third-space pedagogical practices to encourage academic partnerships despite the competing cultural values present in diverse classrooms, thus developing more equitable, culturally hybrid, co-created learning environments where academic interactions differ entirely from the encounters traditionally experienced by privileged or marginalized cultural groups. However, scholarship provides few practical examples of how to implement culturally relevant third-space instructional techniques, especially in U.S. K-12 environments. As a result of the gap in the literature, this study employed a multiple explanatory case study approach to investigate U.S. teachers' sociocritical experiences with culturally relevant third-space pedagogical practices in diverse K-12 contexts. Results from this investigation identify examples of educational equity as a result of systemic and micro-third-space educator practices. The study also reports both obstacles and supports experienced by third-space practitioners, highlighting the importance of administrator and teacher advocacy in promoting equity for culturally marginalized students. Furthermore, this study identifies equitable third spaces as a product of properly supported Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Findings from this study add to the literature surrounding culturally relevant, third-space, and equity pedagogy in heterogeneous U.S. K-12 environments and serve to support pre-service teachers, current educators, administrators, and community stakeholders to prepare for, address, develop, and sustain equitable educational opportunities for culturally diverse students.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Ensuring all students have equitable access to an appropriate education is a concern for learning communities worldwide (Ainscow, 2016; UNESCO, 2016, 2020; Ydo, 2020). As globalization and advancing technology continue to dissolve boundaries between countries and cultural groups, issues of educational equity are no longer reserved geographically for the developing world (Anderstaf et al., 2021; Buchs & Maradan, 2021; Green & Edwards-Underwood, 2015). Instead, diversity in many forms is now a standard in classrooms around the globe, and educators must be equipped with the proper tools to meet the needs of a progressively diverse student population (Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Szelei et al., 2019; Welborn, 2019; Williams, 2018). Increasingly multicultural school environments illustrate the acute nature of educational inequity for members of marginalized groups (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2020). Without access to the voice, social power, and opportunities available to the privileged majority, marginalized students in K-12 settings continue to fall behind majority culture counterparts concerning educational outcomes (UNESCO, 2016, 2020). As a result, there is a need to address educational inequity for marginalized groups in practical, culturally relevant ways, especially in U.S. K-12 environments (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Hunter et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Williams, 2018).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy has gained momentum in the last thirty years as an instructional approach devised to address educational inequity (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Research by scholars Gay (2013) and Ladson-Billings (1995) have been foundational for the concept, calling attention to the achievement gaps between racial groups caused by monocultural instructional approaches,

particularly in the U.S. With Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, students' cultural backgrounds, values, behaviors, and approaches to education are at the forefront of educators' instructional decisions. By connecting to students' values and backgrounds, instructors embracing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy stand to make gains not only in closing academic achievement gaps but also in providing students from all backgrounds with the dignity and voice necessary for an appropriate education (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Allowing all cultural backgrounds to access dignity, voice, and power in an equitable classroom is a process requiring significant adjustments for both the teacher and the students (Biery, 2021; Jobe & Coles-Ritchie, 2016; Navarro et al., 2020; Patterson, 2019). Theories of navigating social spaces where culturally marginalized individuals have equal power and voice with the majority culture is a concept discussed by scholars Freire (2005) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Bhabha (2004) in *The Location of Culture*. Both Freire (2005) and Bhabha (2004) promote methods by which marginalized groups can access more just social experiences. Freire's (2005) work encourages marginalized groups to rise and take back the right to speak. However, Bhabha's (2004) theory promotes a concept of cultural hybridity known as *third space*, where social power belongs neither to one culture nor another but is negotiated and co-created between multiple cultures. In both the approaches of Freire (2005) and Bhabha (2004), the privileged and the marginalized each must navigate new social spaces in relationship to the other.

Third-space cultural hybridity in classrooms is a natural outcropping of culturally relevant instruction, and a growing body of literature discusses the phenomenon of co-created group culture as a method for establishing educational equity efforts within diverse educational

communities internationally (Anderstaf et al., 2021; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Gupta, 2020; Jobe & Coles-Ritchie, 2016; Ratnam, 2020; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). However, much of the current research on culturally relevant third-space pedagogy focuses on early childhood environments (Anderstaf et al., 2021; Burke & Crocker, 2020; Gupta, 2020; Ratnam, 2020; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021), with fewer examples in the K-12 educational sphere (Gutiérrez, 2008; Jobe & Coles-Ritchie, 2016; Johnston et al., 2021, 2022) or in U.S. contexts. Furthermore, third-space pedagogy is gaining momentum in some non-U.S. teacher preparation programs, but there is a notable need for more practical examples of culturally hybrid instructional techniques and how to implement the identified approaches (Gupta, 2020; Ratnam, 2020; Southern et al., 2020). Due to the noted gaps in the literature, this study aimed to identify and examine practical culturally relevant third-space pedagogical strategies by investigating teachers' perspectives of culturally relevant third-space instructional methods and the impact of such practices on equitable learning environments in diverse U.S. K-12 learning communities.

Statement of the Problem

Scholarship reveals the continued problem of educational inequity for culturally marginalized student groups both globally and in the U.S. (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2020). The literature also establishes a strong relationship between culturally relevant instruction and efforts to promote equitable learning environments for diverse student populations, especially emphasizing the importance of efforts informed by community funds of knowledge regarding the needs of underrepresented students (Boyd et al., 2022; Buchs & Maradan, 2021; de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Durán et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Riordan et al., 2019; Ticknor et al., 2020; Welborn, 2019; Williams, 2018). Research further demonstrates the potential for third-space pedagogical techniques for promoting cultural hybridity in diverse

educational settings, which may lead to more equitable learning opportunities for otherwise marginalized students (Gupta, 2020; Johnston et al., 2021, 2022; Ratnam, 2020; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021).

Third spaces have been the focus of educational research in a variety of descriptions, typically regarding themes of hybridity in purposes, partnerships, identity, or physical space (Beck, 2018; Behari-Leak & le Roux, 2018; Burke & Crocker, 2020; Burns et al., 2019; Jacobs et al., 2020). Many examinations of forms of third-space academic environments have been studied in early childhood and post-secondary institutions (Anderstaf et al., 2021; Behari-Leak & le Roux, 2018; Burns et al., 2019; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021; Woolf, 2020). However, despite the existing literature, limited research discusses third-space pedagogical practices as a specific outcropping of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Furthermore, there are minimal examples of studies examining culturally relevant third-space practices within the U.S. K-12 sphere and even fewer studies demonstrating practical examples of how to integrate culturally relevant third-space practices in diverse educational settings due to its highly abstract nature (Gupta, 2020; Ratnam, 2020).

In addition to the lack of practical K-12 examples of third-space instructional practices, the recent reality of COVID-19 era pedagogical shifts has provided an opportunity for educators to re-investigate educational inequity by examining and investigating practices which may not be serving all students well (de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Soudien, 2020). For instance, online educational spaces emerged as a necessary stopgap during pandemic-era schooling (de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Johnston et al., 2021, 2022). Although online learning environments encompassed both benefits and pitfalls, virtual interactions also demonstrated the potential for more opportunities for third-space practices to raise marginalized voices to a more equitable space

within the classroom (de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Johnston et al., 2021, 2022). However, the investigation of new approaches to equitable learning environments is still in process and has not yet been fully examined. As a result, this study's purpose was to investigate teachers' experiences with community-informed, culturally relevant third-space pedagogical practices to promote equitable learning environments for marginalized students in physical U.S. K-12 settings, giving particular attention to identifying practical examples of implementation. This study adds to the body of literature surrounding equity pedagogy, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, and third-space pedagogy by examining several cases of actual educator practices in diverse U.S. K-12 environments.

Background and Theoretical Framework

Implications resulting from increasingly diverse classrooms have been a topic of educational interest in recent years (Anderstaf et al., 2021; Ordonez, 2021; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). Similarly, the public's increasing attention on social justice issues has further illuminated the continued inequity existing in society and educational communities (Navarro et al., 2020; Um, 2019). To address social justice issues within education, scholarship surrounding the concept of culturally relevant instruction has aimed to promote a theoretical approach for shifting monocultural teaching mindsets toward more culturally inclusive practices, thus mirroring the diversity present within many classrooms (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Durán et al., 2020; Sanczyk, 2020; Um, 2019). However, while scholarship acknowledges the need to address educational inequity and suggests Culturally Relevant Pedagogy as a means to do so, there is a need for more practical, community-informed instructional methods for equity efforts to be successful (Acquah et al., 2020; Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Navarro et al., 2020; Ratnam, 2020).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is a concept espoused by academics concerned with how monocultural educational approaches have negatively impacted students from culturally marginalized populations (Biery, 2021; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The driving factor behind culturally relevant instructional approaches originates from data demonstrating achievement gaps between underrepresented student groups and students from privileged backgrounds, particularly in the case of African American students' achievements compared to Caucasian counterparts in U.S. schools (Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Although early scholarship surrounding the need for culturally relevant instruction focused on the achievement gap between African American and Caucasian students in the U.S., the concept has expanded to include the inequitable educational experiences of students from additional racial and ethnic backgrounds, as well (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Similarly, the concept of marginalization also has expanded to include varied presentations of socioeconomic status, religion, sexuality, and gender identity (Aronson & Laughter, 2020; Desai et al., 2020).

Scholarship by Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) combined and consolidated the shared premises among previous scholars' studies regarding Culturally Relevant and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and teaching techniques into a framework consisting of several foundational themes. The key tenets identified by Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) include Identity and Achievement, Equity and Excellence, Developmental Appropriateness, Teaching the Whole Child, and Student-Teacher Relationships. Educators who apply the principles from the framework take an essential step toward educational equity because educational leaders who understand students well directly impact student success (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Pollock

& Briscoe, 2019). The Principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy as identified by Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) will provide the theoretical framework for this study.

As classroom populations continue to change rapidly, educators' cultural competence is a desired attribute now more than ever (Desai et al., 2020; Wright, 2021). Beyond an understanding of appropriate instructional techniques, culturally competent educators possess a functional understanding of different cultures' values, behaviors, communication styles, approaches to formal education, and how such elements interact in group settings (Roe, 2019; Wright, 2021). Hofstede (2001) set forth several cultural dimensions highlighting the differences between cultures' behaviors, attitudes, values, and communication styles. Some of the many areas of difference between cultures include approaches to power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 2001). Additionally, issues of high-context vs. low-context communication styles and honor/shame constructs also differ among people groups and thus, have implications for classroom interactions (Hofstede, 2001). The presence of multiple cultures and student backgrounds in academic communities demonstrates the challenge of navigating diverse educational environments and further solidifies the importance of culturally competent educators (Love & Yesbeck, 2022; Roe, 2019; Wright, 2021).

Effective culturally relevant instruction relies on the increased cultural competence of educators, which has implications for educator preparation programs (Love & Yesbeck, 2022; Navarro et al., 2020; Ticknor et al., 2020; Williams, 2018). Teacher and administrator preparation programs have acknowledged the need for more training not only in effective culturally relevant practices but also in building conducive mindsets for pre-service educators to employ needed practices for combatting the inequity present in school systems (Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Navarro et al., 2020; Ticknor et al., 2020; Um, 2019; Williams, 2018). In recent

years, educator preparation programs have attempted to bridge the gap between highly abstract theory and actual practice by updating and adapting curricula, including more field experiences among diverse populations, and seeking out consultation from surrounding communities on how to best train educators for the urgent work of equitable education (Karabon & Johnson, 2020; Ratnam, 2020; Williams, 2018). Although educator preparation programs have adjusted curricula and field experiences to prepare more equitable educators, hearing best practices from teachers in the field is integral for training future educators to address the inequity inherent within diverse student populations (Navarro et al., 2020; Ratnam, 2020).

Along with bolstered educator preparation programs, community-informed educational approaches are necessary due to the highly contextual nature of cultural relevance (Durán et al., 2020; Sanczyk, 2020; Williams, 2018). Just as scholarship identifies the gap between theory and practice in educator preparation programs, there can be a similar gap between instructional practice and guidance from the community once educators enter the classroom (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Um, 2019). Partnering with the community to identify and address the needs of underserved student populations creates opportunities for more equitable educational interactions in K-12 settings (Anderstaf et al., 2021; Durán et al., 2020; Green, Castro, et al., 2020). Additionally, seeking stakeholder input from community members who are part of culturally diverse student populations gives voice and power to otherwise underrepresented, non-mainstreamed students (Durán et al., 2020; Green, Castro, et al., 2020). Furthermore, community involvement provides teachers and administrators with accountability for addressing culturally marginalized students' visible and non-visible needs (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Williams, 2018).

The nexus of educator preparation and community-informed practices connects naturally to Bhabha's concept of third space, which describes a hybridity of cultures (Bhabha, 2004; Gutiérrez, 2008). Although Bhabha's (2004) concept of third space originated from post-colonial India and describes the cultural interactions between the colonizer and the colonized, third space describes hybrid interactions between majority and non-majority groups, where neither group possesses cultural dominance over the other. Instead, dominant and non-dominant groups exist in a non-hierarchical, negotiated social relationship (Behari-Leak & le Roux, 2018; Gupta, 2020; Gutiérrez, 2008; Jobe & Coles-Ritchie, 2016; Johnston et al., 2021, 2022; Ratnam, 2020). Also called *hybridity*, third-space interactions promote awareness and acceptance of multiple cultural perspectives, thus necessitating social interactions where perspectives must be negotiated between groups (Bhabha, 2004).

In educational scholarship, third-space interactions have been identified as the necessary between-group negotiations of power and meaning, as seen in the relationships between university and cooperating schools in teacher preparation programs (Beck, 2020), literacy initiatives for ELL students (Gutiérrez, 2008), collaboration strategies for Latin@ [*sic*] secondary students in Caucasian-majority classrooms (Jobe & Coles-Ritchie, 2016), and the creation of a group culture among preschool-aged children in highly diverse learning environments (Gupta, 2020; Ratnam, 2020; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). However, like Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, the literature calls for additional workable examples of implementing third-space pedagogical techniques to bridge theory and practice (Gupta, 2020; Ratnam, 2020; Southern et al., 2020).

The active negotiation of cultural hybridity in classrooms where instructors employ third-space techniques represents an opportunity for addressing student diversity by giving equal voice to all parties, no matter the learner's social or cultural background (Jobe & Coles-Ritchie, 2016;

Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). Likewise, the elevation of marginalized student populations in a culturally relevant third-space educational model provides opportunities to address the gaps in equitable educational outcomes for underserved groups (Gupta, 2020; Ratnam, 2020). However, despite scholarship clearly articulating the need for more practical examples of implementing successful third-space instructional techniques, such examples must be community-informed and thus culturally relevant for educational equity to be possible (Gupta, 2020; Ratnam, 2020). Furthermore, Bhabha's (2004) notion of cultural hybridity also lends itself to the recognition of the instructor as a participant in a negotiated learning culture where success and equity are co-defined and co-created alongside students, instead of success being defined by the instructor in a top-down, power-laden approach to learning (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018; Alarcón & Bettez, 2021). Thus, through the application of Bhabha's (2004) third-space lens, findings from this study will add to the literature regarding culturally relevant instructional approaches by providing actionable examples of practices used in diverse U.S. K-12 educational settings to promote equitable, culturally hybrid mindsets and techniques for raising marginalized student voices to a place of legitimate, equal power.

Research Questions

Research questions direct the intent of a study and provide a scaffold for data reporting (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This study's research questions investigated the central concept of community-informed, culturally relevant third-space pedagogical techniques. Due to the diversity in today's U.S. K-12 classrooms, the need for equitable pedagogical approaches is paramount (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Welborn, 2019). Monocultural approaches to academics do not serve the diversity of student populations but instead result in achievement and equity gaps for culturally diverse students (UNESCO, 2016, 2020). For change to occur, educators,

educational leaders, and community stakeholders must acknowledge and address the equity gaps preventing culturally marginalized students from accessing academic success (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020). Furthermore, there is a need for functional, context-appropriate examples of how to implement equitable pedagogical practices from educators working in the field (Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Navarro et al., 2020). Thus, to examine the factors involved in successful, equitable, culturally relevant, third-space pedagogical practices for diverse U.S. K-12 classrooms, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What are teachers' reported experiences with culturally informed third-space practices in a U.S. K-12 setting?
2. How do U.S. K-12 teachers report using community funds of knowledge to integrate practical, culturally relevant third-space practices to inform more equitable learning environments?
3. What are teachers' perspectives on how culturally informed third-space pedagogical practices impact equitable learning environments for marginalized students in a U.S. K-12 setting?

Description of Terms

Clarifying potentially vague terms and developing a shared vocabulary promotes collaboration among scholars, allowing for precise and proper interpretation of study results (Kumar et al., 2019; Tobi & Kampen, 2018). To aid the understanding of data and results, the following definitions of terms describe the concepts addressed in this study:

Critical community building. Critical community building refers to educator and stakeholder efforts to join pedagogical practices and cultural competency to create an educational

environment where equitable connections are possible, community is valued, and marginalization is minimized (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021).

Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT is a theory promoting the cultural viewpoints of minoritized racial groups in response to the hegemonic systems and practices and historically privileged viewpoints of majority racial groups, particularly in the U.S. (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Cultural competency. Cultural competency is the understanding and navigating of numerous diverse cultures' linguistic, communicative, social, motivational, and academic differences (Wright, 2021).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP). CRP involves adjusting curriculum and teaching practices to include and address the varied needs and backgrounds of culturally diverse students, providing students with equitable access to academic success (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Cultural synthesis. Cultural synthesis refers to the purposeful bringing together of multiple cultures into a joint social environment, often to affect social change. The cultural hallmarks of each group are not blended into a new hybrid culture, but instead are acknowledged as separate and uniquely meaningful for such differences (Freire, 2005).

Culture. Culture refers to the behaviors, customs, communication styles, traditions, and worldviews associated with a people group (Hofstede, 2001; Roe, 2019).

Diversity. Diversity refers to the variety in the type, number, and complexity of social, ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, religious, or cultural backgrounds of individuals and groups in a social setting (Castillo-Montoya, 2019).

Equity. In education, equity refers to individualized treatment of students and fair access to academic success via culturally appropriate curriculum, instructional practices, and assessment methods (Bernstein et al., 2020; Javius, 2017; Portelli & Koneeny, 2018).

Funds of knowledge. Funds of knowledge refers to the specific cultural meaning, relevance, and assets existing within students' communities and families, which can inform culturally relevant educational approaches (Durán et al., 2020; Roe, 2019).

Hybridity. Hybridity refers to the combining of key attributes of multiple cultures where no one culture exists in domination over another but where a new, composite culture exists (Bhabha, 2004).

Inclusion. Educational inclusion refers to the enveloping of marginalized individuals or groups into mainstream or majority academic situations. Although inclusion is typically associated with special education, the concept is not necessarily limited to students with identified special education needs (Bea Francisco et al., 2020; de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Galloway et al., 2019; Ydo, 2020).

Marginalized students. Marginalized students are pupils who are relegated to a position as social outsiders due to differences in identity from mainstream or majority educational groups either socially, ethnically, culturally, religiously, socioeconomically, or academically (Navarro et al., 2020; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019).

Non-visible needs. Non-visible needs refer to students' basic needs not outwardly observable to others. Examples could include social-emotional needs, mental health, feelings of belonging, sexuality, or gender identity (Bauer et al., 2020; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019).

The Principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. The Principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy refers to a framework summarizing the general elements of Culturally Relevant

Pedagogy, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, and key elements of Critical Race Theory. The framework's principles are considered to be broadly applicable across numerous cultures (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

Privilege. Privilege refers to the social benefits and safeguards available to some individuals or groups who are identified as members of a majority population. In contrast, such advantages are unavailable to individuals or groups outside the majority identity (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).

Social justice. Social justice refers to addressing privilege, reducing hegemony, and improving equality and equity of access for underrepresented or underserved populations in societal areas like civil rights, healthcare, careers, finances, or education (Boyd et al., 2022).

Translanguaging. Translanguaging refers to the fluid mixing of multiple languages by multilingual students for the purpose of creating or understanding information, instead of strictly separating languages for different academic purposes or tasks (Fernández, 2019; Yilmaz, 2019). With translanguaging, no single language is privileged over another, and boundaries between languages remain flexible (Dutton & Rushton, 2023).

Third space. Third space refers to a non-physical location of societal interaction where majority and minoritized groups (often cultural, racial, or ethnic) interact with equal social power and legitimacy, actively negotiating the meaning of concepts, actions, and goals (Bhabha, 2004; Gutiérrez, 2008).

Visible needs. Visible needs refer to the outwardly manifested and observable needs of marginalized or minoritized students. Visible needs could be related to language, sexuality, racial or ethnic background, or academics (Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Sanczyk, 2020).

Significance of the Study

Educators, students, and stakeholders from U.S. communities of diverse populations seeking to increase equitable educational opportunities for all K-12 students stand to benefit from this study. A common limitation in most scholarship surrounding culturally relevant, social justice, or third-space pedagogy is the need for additional examples of how to move from theory to practice (Acquah et al., 2020; Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Gupta, 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Ratnam, 2020). This study aimed to add to the literature surrounding culturally informed third-space pedagogical practices by investigating what practices teachers in the U.S. K-12 field are attempting to use successfully. With reported examples of actual practice, U.S. educators, students, and stakeholders stand to gain more potential tools for fostering equitable learning environments within diverse learning communities at the K-12 level.

Additionally, pre-service educators and educator preparation programs also will benefit from this study. Novice teachers have demonstrated a lack of experience, practice, and fully developed mindsets when addressing inequity or social justice in diverse classroom settings (Karabon & Johnson, 2020; Ticknor et al., 2020; Um, 2019). Educator preparation programs acknowledge such limitations and have improved pre-service instruction by allowing more opportunities to experience diverse or inequitable situations (Karabon & Johnson, 2020; Williams, 2018). However, there is still a noted lack of practical examples for pre-service educators, especially concerning third-space pedagogical techniques (Gupta, 2020; Ratnam, 2020). Findings from this study aim to fill the void in the literature and to model practical examples of implementation which may be used in educator preparation programs.

Finally, promoters and scholars of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy also stand to benefit from this study due to the investigation of third-space instructional efforts as an augmentation of

Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) Principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy framework (Anderstaf et al., 2021; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). Third-space approaches to education take Culturally Relevant Pedagogy a step beyond appropriate curriculum choices and the fostering of productive school-home relationships by promoting the creation of a new, hybrid culture, where all groups have an equal voice in negotiating appropriate educational needs instead of the privileged majority's needs being the *de facto* approach to instruction (Gupta, 2020; Ratnam, 2020). Third-space approaches may impact how educational stakeholders view roles and responsibilities in the co-creation of equitable learning environments for all (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2020). Thus, additional areas of study regarding educational equity or culturally relevant instruction may be possible because of this initial study, especially as third-space approaches may be replicated in different social or geographical contexts to allow for the examination of the contexts' specific, community-informed practices.

Overview of Methods

This mixed-methods explanatory multiple case study investigated teachers' experiences with culturally relevant, third-space pedagogical practices in diverse U.S. K-12 learning communities. The researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze responses to the quantitative elements of the initial questionnaire and employed qualitative thematic analysis to process data from semi-structured participant interviews, reflective writing prompts, and artifacts of professional practice (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012; Lochmiller, 2021). Qualitative data analysis allows researchers to investigate notable occurrences of a practice within a specific context (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Maxwell, 2013). While case studies can include elements rarely generalizable beyond a the original context, this study's approach may be replicable for other researchers to investigate additional diverse educational environments for context-specific

examples of how teachers employ third-space pedagogical practices (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Maxwell, 2013; Moriarty, 2011).

In this study, the researcher employed purposeful and snowball sampling to identify educators who work within culturally diverse U.S. K-12 educational contexts and engage in culturally relevant third-space pedagogical practices. Participation was voluntary, and participating teachers were not susceptible to undue influence. Participants were recruited from two specialized online educational social media groups for U.S. K-12 teachers of English-language learners, and snowball sampling allowed for the recruitment of additional participants from other diverse educational environments unfamiliar to the researcher. All identifying participant details were assigned pseudonyms to protect the identities of participants, schools, and students.

The researcher employed a three-part mixed-methods research design to complete this multiple explanatory case study due to the highly contextual nature of participants' diverse settings and community situations (Maxwell, 2013). Part I of the study began with a demographic questionnaire which also included quantitative items meant to indicate a participant's experience with any culturally relevant or third-space instructional practices. Part II of the study included follow-up semi-structured interviews with individuals whose questionnaire responses indicated strong alignment with potential third-space instructional practices. The interviews allowed participants to elaborate on the strategies used within the educational environment. Part III of the study included three reflective prompts and artifact collection to triangulate and crystallize the data collected from the previous phases of the study and to allow participants to report current practices over a prescribed period of time. Part III of the study took place during September, October, and November of the 2023-2024 academic school year. In

addition to the initial questionnaire, utilizing qualitative data collection tools for this study allowed the researcher the flexibility to adapt the interview questions and probes to fit the contexts of the participants in order to gain access to relevant and meaningful data (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Maxwell, 2013). All data were coded, categorized, and situated within the themes of Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) *Principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*, which served as the study's theoretical framework, and through descriptive thematic and *in vivo* coding. Further specific details regarding the study's methodology will be discussed in Chapter III. Coding revealed several themes and concepts across all data-collecting methods, and specific information regarding the study's findings will be identified in greater detail in Chapter IV.

The following chapters will establish the basis for the study's procedures and findings, beginning with a review of the related literature in Chapter II. Chapter III will discuss the methods the researcher used to conduct the study and will identify the study's limitations. Furthermore, Chapter IV will provide the study's results. Finally, in Chapter V, the researcher will discuss the study's findings, interpret the data, provide suggestions for further research, and offer implications for professional practice.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

In 2015, UNESCO proposed a worldwide sustainable development goal of achieving equitable and inclusive education for all students by 2030 (UNESCO, 2016). However, in 2000, UNESCO previously set the same goal of achieving equitable education by 2015, with the first goal not being fully realized within the initial time frame (UNESCO, 2016). The necessity of UNESCO re-instituting another period of focused attention on developing equitable educational environments represents what has been clear for decades: inequity remains an enduring problem for the education field (Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Hunter et al., 2020; Prieto et al., 2018; Riordan et al., 2019; UNESCO, 2016). The unjust treatment of marginalized individuals due to race, socioeconomic status, gender, or cultural background has prevented students from accessing appropriate educational resources in the schools worldwide (Ainscow, 2016; Hunter et al., 2020; Prieto et al., 2018; UNESCO, 2016; Ydo, 2020). Despite international institutional and political efforts to ensure more equitable access for marginalized student populations, inequity persists (Ainscow, 2016; Ashford-Hanserd et al., 2020; Bea Francisco et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2016; Welborn, 2019; Ydo, 2020). As globalization continues, technology advances, and world events have led to many cultural diasporas, international boundaries have become more porous and classrooms have become increasingly diverse, exacerbating the issue of educational equity in many areas around the world (Anderstaf et al., 2021; Buchs & Maradan, 2021; Green & Edwards-Underwood, 2015). Educators must acknowledge students' increasingly diverse backgrounds, be informed about the distinctive hallmarks of different cultures, know what barriers to equity exist for marginalized groups, and understand critical elements of social justice for equitable educational opportunities to occur (Anderstaf et al., 2021; Beck, 2020; Buchs & Maradan, 2021; Navarro et al., 2020). Moreover, educators must reject marginalization and

ensure the voiceless have a voice in the educational process (Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Szelei et al., 2019; UNESCO, 2020; Welborn, 2019). Furthermore, educational shifts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic have made issues of inequity more acute, allowing an opportunity for educators to re-examine practices in order to set forth new, equitable instructional strategies (de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Soudien, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). Due to a lack of actionable examples of how to address educational inequity in today's rapidly changing and increasingly diverse classrooms, this study will examine existing practices of how culturally relevant pedagogy and third-space cultural hybridity support substantive, more equitable practices for students within K-12 educational environments, particularly in the U.S.

Background

Foundational concepts for this study's focus on equitable educational practices within diverse settings rest in the works of Hofstede (2001), Bhabha (2004), and Freire (2005). A prominent scholar in intercultural studies, Geert Hofstede, is credited with developing the Theory of Cultural Dimensions, measuring distinctive areas of cultural differences between people groups worldwide (Hofstede, 2001). Among the areas included in Hofstede's (2001) model are how different cultural groups engage in issues of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, long-term vs. short-term orientation, masculinity vs. femininity, and indulgence vs. restraint. Hofstede's (2001) model serves as a foundation for understanding crucial differences between cultural backgrounds, especially in diverse environments. Likewise, Hofstede's (2001) work provides a lens through which to view differences among people groups and how such differences may interact in a group setting.

Although Hofstede's (2001) work remains seminal, other scholarship has critiqued the concepts as potentially too simplistic, which may be part of its appeal and functionality

(Williamson, 2002). Additionally, members of the intercultural studies community have further critiqued Hofstede's work as assuming the values of a culture are always in alignment with the culture's practices (Javidan et al., 2006). Another critique centers on Hofstede's assertion that broad cultural values are present in every individual, which may not always be the case (McSweeney, 2002). While Hofstede's research does not represent an all-encompassing framework for cultural differences, the scholarship does provide a vantage point from which to begin an examination (Javidan et al., 2006; McSweeney, 2002). In this study, Hofstede's (2001) concepts will be used as a baseline for discussing cultural implications within diverse school and classroom environments.

Related to Hofstede's (2001) theory for understanding various cultural dimensions, Homi Bhabha (2004) is a key scholar noted in discussing the interstitial areas of connection between different cultural groups as third-space interactions, termed *hybridity*. Third-space interactions between cultural groups represent a philosophical location where participants from differing backgrounds engage in a co-creation of meaning, where neither group holds the dominant perspective and where both sides maintain crucial elements of cultural identities (Bhabha, 2004). Bhabha's (2004) scholarship speaks of colonial situations of power, where colonizer and colonized interact. However, the concept of *third space* discusses a theoretical setting where the typical power dynamics held by the colonizer are dismantled, allowing the colonized to implement similar cultural power toward the colonizer. The result is a situation of *hybridity* where both cultural groups can operate in an innovative, separate space—neither belonging to the empowered nor the powerless—and where new meaning is co-created between the groups. In terms of situations where many diverse cultures interact, Bhabha's (2004) work provides a

foundation for a potential zone of interaction where cultural differences can be mitigated, and supra-cultural hybridity is possible.

Some literature counters Bhabha's (2004) approach, however, as the concept of hybridity acknowledges a forced acceptance of a dominant, colonizing presence within a colonized culture (Freire, 2005; Gunaratnam, 2014; Yousfi, 2021). Yousfi (2021) believes having a hybrid culture strips indigenous cultures of dignity, power, or voice. Additionally, Freire (2005) describes a colonizer/colonized relationship not as a cultural co-creation but as a cultural conquest, leading to an inauthentic existence for the invaded group. Furthermore, any cultural mimicry of the invading group allows a persistent, outside, and oppressive presence to remain within the oppressed culture (Freire, 2005). Much like Hofstede's (2001) work, Bhabha's (2004) Third Space Theory does not represent a faultless guideline for how multiple cultures can interact without conflict. However, Bhabha's (2004) theory provides a reference point for evaluating how diverse cultural groups can interact to promote social justice and mitigate marginalization, which are crucial concerns for educational equity advocates (Green & Edwards-Underwood, 2015; Navarro et al., 2020).

Concerning diversity, social justice, and marginalization, the work of Freire (2005) is also foundational for understanding how marginalization has affected minoritized, non-dominant, or oppressed groups in society. According to Freire (2005), the dehumanization of oppressed groups has left marginalized peoples yearning for a fully human experience. However, Freire (2005) cautions the oppressed to not, in turn, attempt to oppress the oppressors but seek to restore the humanity of both groups. In this sense, Freire's (2005) theory aligns similarly with crucial concepts of Bhabha's (2004) description of third-space hybridity. According to Freire (2005), for the oppressed to fully regain humanity and no longer be marginalized, the

marginalizing system must be transformed entirely. However, Freire (2005) contends the transformation of oppressive systems cannot occur in a contentious or antagonistic relationship between oppressor and oppressed but instead must be achieved through solidarity and critical dialogue with each other. Furthermore, Freire (2005) refers to such transformation not as hybridity but as *cultural synthesis*, which rejects cultural invasion and aims to acknowledge—not deny—the differences between groups. According to Freire (2005), cultural synthesis allows for the organization of group efforts, which leads to the dismantling of oppressive cultural practices.

Although there are similarities between the works of Bhabha (2004) and Freire (2005), there are some areas of divergence, as well. For instance, Freire (2005) calls for the oppressed to lead the fight against oppression and transform societal structures. However, according to Bhabha (2004), third-space development is a mutual co-creation of shared social space between the colonized and the colonizer. Additionally, Freire (2005) promotes the rejection of the presence of forced oppressor constructs within the oppressed community. Furthermore, while Bhabha (2004) promotes a hybrid approach where the colonizer's presence is accepted as a part of a new social construct, Freire (2005) calls for a complete rejection of oppressor attributes and a transformation of the social space between the groups.

The works of Hofstede (2001), Bhabha (2004), and Freire (2005) provide foundational sociocritical lenses through which to examine the causes of and potential solutions for the problem of inequity in the educational system. The concepts discussed in the works of Hofstede (2001), Bhabha (2004), and Freire (2005) also converge in much of the research regarding Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Biery, 2021; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is an instructional model aiming to support students from diverse backgrounds by reducing monocultural, marginalizing approaches to education and

removing impediments to accessible educational opportunities (Biery, 2021; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Although Culturally Relevant Pedagogy originated from research surrounding the inequitable educational experiences of African American students in the U.S., in recent decades the concept has broadened to include the plight of other diverse, marginalized, minoritized, or otherwise protected student populations due to ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, sexuality, or gender identity (Aronson & Laughter, 2020; Desai et al., 2020; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) combined and organized previous scholarly findings regarding culturally relevant and culturally responsive pedagogical techniques into a framework including five main principles summarizing the areas in which educational inequity can be addressed.

Theoretical Framework

As a response to increasingly diverse school settings and No Child Left Behind legislation in the U.S., Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) sought to investigate different methods of multicultural education for promoting successful education for all students, not just learners from the majority culture. Among the approaches to multicultural education is Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP). Although CRP has been the focus of many scholars, as of 2011, a specific theoretical model addressing the theory's major principles did not yet exist. Due to the lack of a theoretical model and the need to prepare pre-service and in-service teachers to be able to engage every student in the classroom, Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) sought to synthesize the literature surrounding CRP with Critical Race Theory (CRT) to begin developing a theoretical framework for CRP to acknowledge the key principles of implementation.

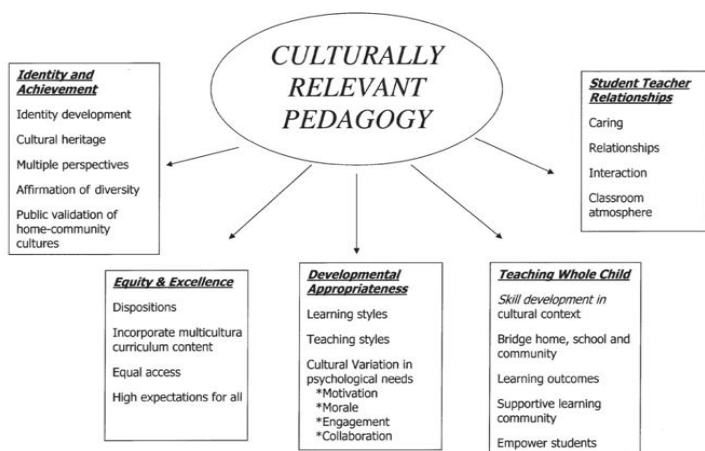
The Principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) investigation synthesized the literature of numerous

foundational scholars in the area of CRP since 1981, including Ladson-Billings (1995), Nieto (1999), and Gay (2000). Additionally, Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) included elements of CRT in the synthesis to address the issue of race beyond the general construct of culture. Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) conducted a thorough thematic analysis of prominent authors' works and narrowed the concepts to several foundational themes. As a result of thematic analysis, the researchers proposed five main themes of CRP: Identity and Achievement, Equity and Excellence, Developmental Appropriateness, Teaching the Whole Child, and Student-Teacher Relationships (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Mitton & Murray-Orr, 2021; Murray-Orr & Mitton, 2023). The core themes of CRP as identified by Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) have almost universal applicability across cultural, racial, and ethnic groups, thus allowing for broad application across educational environments concerned with cultural relevance (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

The Principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy



Note. Figure reprinted from “Toward a Conceptual Framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: An Overview of the Conceptual and Theoretical Literature,” by S. Brown-Jeffy and J. E. Cooper, 2011, *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 38(1), p. 72 (<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ914924>). Copyright 2011 by Shelly Brown-Jeffy and Jewell E. Cooper. Reprinted with permission (see Appendix A).

Identity and Achievement. Regarding the theme of Identity and Achievement, educational environments need to acknowledge the value of students' home cultures and affirm diversity as an asset (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Mitton & Murray-Orr, 2021; Murray-Orr & Mitton, 2023). Equally important, however, are teachers' abilities to recognize personal biases regarding students from differing racial or cultural backgrounds. Additionally, teachers must be able to identify and embrace variations of culture in the classroom because students from diverse backgrounds will see and experience the world differently. Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) also express the importance of eschewing colorblind approaches to diverse learning environments, as such approaches negate, not validate, the unique lived experiences of each group. Instead, teachers should take the opportunity to publicly acknowledge the value of having diverse cultural experiences in the learning environment.

Equity and Excellence. For the theme of Equity and Excellence, the synthesized literature showed the importance of giving all students what is needed while prioritizing students' cultural capital and maintaining high standards (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Mitton & Murray-Orr, 2021; Murray-Orr & Mitton, 2023). The notion of high expectations coupled with meeting students' unique learning needs again discourages colorblind approaches in academics. Instead, differentiated instructional approaches and multicultural material representing the backgrounds of all types of students add to the opportunity for all learners to access academic excellence. However, multicultural elements in the classroom must be consistent and meaningful, not simply brief celebrations of customs, food, or dress (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Hall, 1976). In this sense, meaningful inclusion of diverse cultural material in the classroom can serve as an opportunity to challenge the dominant culture's hegemonic possession of academic excellence (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

Developmental Appropriateness. The theme of Developmental Appropriateness encompasses the need to acknowledge children's cognitive and psychological needs as impacted by individual cultural backgrounds, giving particular attention to areas of morale, motivation, engagement, and collaboration (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Mitton & Murray-Orr, 2021; Murray-Orr & Mitton, 2023). Although general theories of child development can be applied to most students, a teacher must be careful to interpret how a student's culture may impact development, particularly in situations where racism has been prominent in a student's experience. Teachers must also be aware of the differing motivations for learning for each cultural background present within the classroom, adapting instructional techniques to include motivating approaches to reach all students. Furthermore, teachers must motivate all learners and adjust for developmental appropriateness while working within and pushing against standardized measurements of success in the U.S. testing culture. Advocating for alternative definitions of student success acknowledges the inequitable learning environments maintained by systemic issues within U.S. schools (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

Teaching the Whole Child. The theme of Teaching the Whole Child is similar to the theme of Developmental Appropriateness but includes the element of community involvement, acknowledging aspects like home-school connections and the importance of unlocking community funds of knowledge to spark learning (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Mitton & Murray-Orr, 2021; Murray-Orr & Mitton, 2023). Teachers must be aware of the psychosocial and emotional ways students and families will interact with academics, as interactions will likely differ from culture to culture. However, because cultures may differ in psychosocial and emotional interactions with academic achievement, educators must be careful not to stereotype students by cultural identification. Instead, teachers must still aim to treat each student as an

individual with unique needs. Making efforts to understand students outside of the academic environment also stands to significantly impact students' desire and motivation to learn (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

Student-Teacher Relationships. A natural connection to Teaching the Whole Child is the theme of Student-Teacher Relationships. From the literature, researchers summarized the theme of Student-Teacher relationships as caring and extending beyond the classroom, connecting learning to students' lived experiences (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Mitton & Murray-Orr, 2021; Murray-Orr & Mitton, 2023). As a result, teachers should aim to meet individual students' needs and help learners grow toward success. Teachers who make efforts to connect to students also promote success by validating students' lived experiences, inspiring and encouraging pupils to succeed. Furthermore, teachers who validate the lived experiences of students are able to broaden individual understanding and interpretation of situations impacting students' lives (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

Framework Limitations. There are some limitations to using the Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) framework. As of the original publication date, CRP had not been tested as a theoretical model, according to the framework's authors (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). However, Bettez et al. (2011) employed the framework in response to other scholars' work examining Caucasian hegemony in multicultural classrooms, although Cooper was a co-author on the publication. More recently, Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) theoretical framework appeared in scholarship by Mitton and Murray-Orr (2021) and again by Murray-Orr and Mitton (2023) in studies surrounding culturally diverse learning environments and asset-based pedagogical practices in Canada. However, Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) framework originally focused on educational issues specifically contextual to the U.S., thus limiting the

framework's effect geographically. Finally, the framework was developed in 2011 and thus could be updated to include more recent scholarship, particularly considering education equity issues exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) framework summarizes many of the key themes within CRP. However, several other concepts interact with the principles identified by Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) to provide a more robust understanding of the many underlying issues with the problem of educational inequity. The following sections will review the literature regarding additional concepts surrounding inequitable education through the lenses of culturally responsive instruction and third-space development. Subsequent sections will also identify areas of convergence between CRP and third space, pointing toward the potential of improving inequitable educational contexts through the purposeful incorporation of both approaches.

Central Themes of (In)Equitable Education

Equity issues persist in educational contexts worldwide (Ainscow, 2016; Ashford-Hanserd et al., 2020; Bea Francisco et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2016; Welborn, 2019; Ydo, 2020). Although issues of inequity are often context-specific, the following central concepts are generally identifiable themes across numerous contexts. Such themes interact with each other in multiple ways within the literature as scholars attempt to address the many root causes of instances where educational environments do not serve all students well.

Diversity

The terms diversity, equity, and inclusion are closely linked in education (Ainscow, 2016; Bernstein et al., 2020). Diversity is the representation of many individuals across race, ability, gender, socioeconomic class, culture, religion, and personal experiences (Castillo-Montoya, 2019). Although humanity consists of individuals and groups with various

backgrounds and characteristics, this heterogeneity poses a challenge in education (Cardoso Garcia & Michels, 2021; Portelli & Koneeny, 2018). Diversity represents the multiple sociocultural differences between individuals and groups, and differences mean typical standardized practices in education will not meet the needs of all students (Cardoso Garcia & Michels, 2021; Portelli & Koneeny, 2018). As such, diversity is a driving force for equitable practice in the classroom (Castillo-Montoya, 2019).

Equity

In education, equity seeks to address diversity by recognizing and responding to students' multiple, varied needs and complex identities (Portelli & Koneeny, 2018). However, equity differs from equality (Griffen, 2019; Portelli & Koneeny, 2018). Even before the seminal U.S. case of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), equality in education came into question, as the idea of equality is based on the myth of standardized measurements of success (Ashford-Hanserd et al., 2020; Griffen, 2019; Portelli & Koneeny, 2018). Equality promotes having the same opportunities available for every student but does not consider the vastly varied needs of individuals, which is an inherently inequitable stance (Portelli & Koneeny, 2018). In contrast, equity describes situations where each student receives the individualized tools or services needed to succeed (Portelli & Koneeny, 2018). With equity, differences and needs are considered and accounted for, allowing individual students to access the most appropriate opportunities for success (Bernstein et al., 2020; Javius, 2017; Portelli & Koneeny, 2018).

Inclusion

Equity is not possible without inclusion (Ainscow, 2016; Bernstein et al., 2020). According to Biesta (2009), inclusion is the primary purpose of democratic practice, seeking to ensure all group members have a voice. Inclusion comes in many forms in education, most

notably incorporating students with special education needs into typically developing learning environments (Bea Francisco et al., 2020). However, inclusion is also a general term describing any situation where marginalized groups join the majority (Bea Francisco et al., 2020; de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Galloway et al., 2019; Ydo, 2020). Inclusion takes on varied implementations across contexts, but in its broadest application, inclusion creates the foundation for equitable opportunities in education by promoting environments where the presence of all members is valued (Bea Francisco et al., 2020; Bernstein et al., 2020).

Marginalization

According to Portelli and Koneeny (2018), educational marginalization can occur when a standardized tool or success measurement is used for a non-standard population, thus identifying and alienating populations unable to meet the standard criteria. However, marginalization can also occur anytime a dominant or majority group is defined by culture, race, religion, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status (Navarro et al., 2020; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019). Marginalization can quickly become an issue of social justice if non-majority groups become oppressed, and thus lack the equitable opportunity to have a voice like majority counterparts (Freire, 2005).

Although inclusion is necessary for equity, the practice also represents the marginalizing of individuals: a binary representation of insiders/outside, center/periphery, and us/them deficit mentality where the marginalized somehow lack something possessed by a supposed standardized group (Cardoso Garcia & Michels, 2021; Portelli & Koneeny, 2018). According to some research, inclusion can be a double-edged sword, actively marginalizing students from a standardized core group while simultaneously acknowledging the need to address differences for equity to be possible (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018; Portelli & Koneeny, 2018).

Social Justice

Social justice describes efforts to combat hegemony, privilege, and oppression, especially regarding issues like race, class, gender, ability, and more, and is an important foundation for equity work (Boyd et al., 2022). In diverse settings, educational stakeholders benefit from the funds of knowledge made available through the varied backgrounds of individuals, and false standards of homogenized or typical success should be abandoned (Durán et al., 2020; Gay, 2013; Portelli & Koneeny, 2018). Marginalized groups must have equitable opportunities to access and experience quality education (Freire, 2005). According to social justice reform advocates, educational systems should be more participatory and plural, allowing all members to be valued and treated equitably (Navarro et al., 2020; Portelli & Koneeny, 2018). Just as inclusion and marginalization demonstrate the need for equity in heterogeneous educational spaces, social justice also promotes the dismantling of inequitable practices, not only in education, but also in society as a whole (Boyd et al., 2022; Cardoso Garcia & Michels, 2021; Portelli & Koneeny, 2018).

Preparing the Educational Landscape to Address Inequity

As the educational realm becomes increasingly diverse, educators must prepare for establishing equitable practices within school communities, especially in U.S. contexts (Fernández, 2019; Green & Edwards-Underwood, 2015; Navarro et al., 2020; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). Pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, administrators, and community members each have roles in creating, developing, and sustaining equitable educational opportunities for all students (Acquah et al., 2020; Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Riordan et al., 2019; Williams, 2018). The following sections review the literature surrounding the preparation of the educational landscape for addressing issues of inequity.

Pre-service Teachers

The importance of equipping future educators with tools to fight inequity cannot be understated, as “[d]eveloping leaders with the capacity and grit to intervene and turnaround inequitable outcomes for underrepresented children and youth is urgent work” (Williams, 2018, p. 49). A significant body of literature discusses how to prepare pre-service educators to address equity in the classroom and the greater school community (Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Navarro et al., 2020; Ticknor et al., 2020; Um, 2019; Williams, 2018). Studies have focused on how knowledge transfers into real-life teaching experiences once newly trained teachers enter professional practice (Navarro et al., 2020; Ticknor et al., 2020; Um, 2019). As a result, educator preparation programs are critically evaluating and redesigning curricula by developing and incorporating more components to build cultural competence (Navarro et al., 2020; Williams, 2018). Some post-secondary institutions also are implementing and evaluating redesigned cultural competency training by identifying ways emerging research and community desires could augment current practices (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Punti & Dingel, 2021; Williams, 2018). Through better training, future educators can possess the skills and understanding necessary to address areas of inequity within individual spheres of influence (Beck, 2020; Love & Yesbeck, 2022; Navarro et al., 2020; Ticknor et al., 2020; Williams, 2018).

Despite some universities’ efforts to adjust educator preparation programs to address educational inequity more fully, some newly graduated instructors experience uneasiness when teaching from an equitable stance in the classroom (Navarro et al., 2020; Um, 2019). In some cases, a new teacher’s discomfort might stem from not wanting to force a position on students or not wanting students to espouse the educator’s viewpoints (Um, 2019). In other situations, pressures from the administration or the community, a narrow curriculum, lack of mentoring, or

even political prohibitions make teaching from a position of equity and social justice especially challenging (Medina, 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Um, 2019).

Because of the gaps between instruction and practice, there is still a need to create training opportunities to help future educators develop increased skills for confidently addressing equity issues within classrooms (Gupta, 2020; Love & Yesbeck, 2022; Navarro et al., 2020; Ticknor et al., 2020; Williams, 2018). Due to increasingly diverse educational environments, one necessary skill for future educators is more robust cultural competence (Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Jacobs et al., 2020; Love & Yesbeck, 2022; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Sanczyk, 2020; Williams, 2018). Additionally, pre-service teachers (PSTs) need more opportunities to examine and interact with personal biases and privilege, developing an understanding of how societal positions affect equity in diverse school environments (Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Gupta, 2020; Jacobs et al., 2020; Sanczyk, 2020; Ticknor et al., 2020; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Otherwise, formal training divorced from cultural influences does not prepare future teachers for success (Gupta, 2020; Jacobs et al., 2020; Mburu, 2022).

Research has demonstrated promising results regarding assignments requiring university students to reflect critically on family heritage as a contributing factor to personal attitudes, values, beliefs, and understanding of race, social class, religion, and other elements of diversity (Acquah & Commins, 2017; Desai et al., 2020; Gorski & Dalton, 2020). Reflective assignments effectively allow student progress in cultural understanding and positive shifts toward more cultural competence (Desai et al., 2020; Gorski & Dalton, 2020). Furthermore, critical reflection allows opportunities for university students to evaluate issues of privilege, prejudice, discrimination, and the need to empathize with differing cultural, racial, religious, or socioeconomic groups based on participants' personal socialization or family upbringing (Desai

et al., 2020; Gorski & Dalton, 2020; Jacobs et al., 2020). Similarly, according to a study by Ismailov (2021), students who were able to engage in a more reflective examination of personal cultural influences also demonstrated more confidence engaging in cross-cultural communication tasks.

Literature has also demonstrated the benefits of purposeful cross-cultural collaboration in undergraduate courses, either by allowing students the opportunity to build cross-cultural relationships with each other or by promoting interactions with diverse school-age children in community programs (Jacobi, 2020; Jacobs et al., 2020). Such opportunities allow university students to challenge personal assumptions regarding individuals from differing social, racial, or cultural backgrounds (Jacobi, 2020; Jacobs et al., 2020; Janzen & Petersen, 2020). According to Jacobi's (2020) study, although there were reported benefits to university students collaborating cross-culturally, doing so had no significant effect on students' apprehension about collaborating cross-culturally in the future. As a result, when individuals experience anxiety about navigating communication tasks with individuals from other cultures or languages, the outcome can lead to a variety of undesirable effects like ethnocentrism or avoidance of others from differing cultural backgrounds (Jacobi, 2020). Despite partially contradicting findings in the literature, opportunities such as the ones in Jacobi's (2020), Desai et al.'s (2020), and Ismailov's (2021) studies demonstrate potential as methods for increasing undergraduate student self-reflection, using students' personal experiences in course assignments, and allowing students to learn from each other's worldviews to promote more cultural competence and awareness of self and others. Ultimately, opportunities for pre-service teachers to develop sociocritical skills before entering the profession is paramount, as many scholars promote the development of a critical pedagogy as

necessary for educational equity (Abacioglu et al., 2020; Alarcón & Bettez, 2021, Beck, 2020; Durán et al., 2020; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Jacobs et al., 2020; Welborn, 2019).

Problems with Abstraction. Due to its highly abstract nature, PSTs often conflate equity with the concepts of equality and differentiation (Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Ticknor et al., 2020). Thus, while PSTs might progress toward an evolving understanding of equity during educator preparation programs, PSTs will likely not fully grasp or be prepared for the gravity of equity issues once a professional position is acquired (Fortney & Atwood, 2019, Navarro et al., 2020; Ratnam, 2020; Ticknor et al., 2020). In fact, many PSTs may advance and regress during the development of an equity ideology depending on influencing factors such as work context, noteworthy conversations, experiences, or newly gained knowledge (Ticknor et al., 2020). Consequently, the underdeveloped nature of PSTs' understanding of equity is a progressive endeavor, not a final pronouncement (Ticknor et al., 2020).

Because helping PSTs develop abstract concepts of equity can be challenging, instruction should be as explicit, actionable, and observable as possible (Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Ratnam, 2020; Ticknor et al., 2020). At times, the struggle to provide concrete examples of how to address equity issues in the classroom may reflect the inexperience of the instructor's training PSTs (Navarro et al., 2020; Ratnam, 2020). Issues of equity often change rapidly to reflect societal changes; thus, teacher educators may be able to provide theory only, not actionable examples or experiences, of how to engage in best practices (Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Hunter et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Ratnam, 2020). As a result, future educators need to hear from professionals working in diverse settings about what does and does not work to create equitable educational environments (Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Navarro et al., 2020; Sanczyk, 2020).

Preparation in Effective Strategies. Although rapid societal shifts might outpace the equitable practices necessary for addressing such shifts, PSTs can benefit from practicing some general strategies for creating equitable environments, including a variety of culturally responsive pedagogical approaches (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Fernández, 2019; Hunter et al., 2020; Love & Yesbeck, 2022; Mburu, 2022; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Williams, 2018). Small group work and activities emphasizing classroom community-building are vital for influencing student engagement and supporting equitable environments (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Fernández, 2019; Sanczyk, 2020). Additionally, teachers must commit to learning about, valuing, and understanding students' backgrounds and experiences while simultaneously recognizing personal biases and privilege (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Hunter et al., 2020; Sanczyk, 2020; Ticknor et al., 2020; Williams, 2018; Yilmaz, 2019). Another strategy to promote equity in the classroom includes providing a culturally and racially diverse curriculum reflective of students' lives and experiences (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Hunter et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Sanczyk, 2020). However, adjustments to curricula are not always easy or supported, which can be problematic for equity efforts (Cho, 2018; Navarro et al., 2020).

Building a positive community where students feel comfortable and respected is also a crucial strategy for creating equitable learning environments (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Ratnam, 2020; Sanczyk, 2020; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). Additionally, encouraging students to develop and negotiate shared meaning about group issues is another effective strategy for promoting equity (Fernández, 2019; Ratnam, 2020; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). Furthermore, encouraging students to have a voice in the education process can combat some PSTs' fears of students espousing the instructor's viewpoints simply due to the instructor being in a position of power (Szelei et al., 2019; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021; Um, 2019; Welborn,

2019). Moreover, promoting the multilingualism and multiculturalism of students prevents an unfair power structure where one culture takes precedence over another, helping to dispel cultural stereotypes and misconceptions (Buchs & Maradan, 2021; Fernández, 2019; Sanczyk, 2020; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021; Yilmaz, 2019).

Preparation for Pushback. Another preparation area for PSTs includes preparing for pushback against equitable educational practices (Medina, 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Ticknor et al., 2020). Many teachers who have worked for equity and have promoted social justice in the K-12 arena have left professional roles due to the numerous roadblocks to progress (Navarro et al., 2020). Some roadblocks include non-supportive administrators or a narrow, inflexible curriculum (Navarro et al., 2020; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019). However, according to a study by Navarro et al. (2020), teachers oriented toward social justice who remained in K-12 classrooms revealed specific persistence strategies for allowing them to remain in less-than-ideal conditions. Several supportive persistence strategies allowing educators to remain in less-than-ideal circumstances included finding creative ways to subvert unjust systems or curricula and maintaining relationships with like-minded colleagues both inside and outside the school. Navarro et al. (2020) also suggest adjusting future teacher education programs to include the topics of social justice networking, self-care, and community organizing practices to prepare future educators to remain in the K-12 classroom longer. Likewise, research also points to the necessity of adjusting training methods for future teachers to develop individuals equipped to work and persist within unjust classroom environments; thus, equitable and socially just education can continue in the K-12 sphere (Medina, 2020; Navarro et al., 2020).

Difficulties with Transformation. As scholarship shows, PSTs well-prepared to promote equity will influence classrooms for equitable interactions (Gupta, 2020; Navarro et al.,

2020; Ticknor et al., 2020). However, in a study by Karabon and Johnson (2020), PSTs' ethnocentric tendencies persisted even after participating in a course specifically aimed at challenging ethnocentric tendencies by exposing PSTs to culturally relevant teaching methods. According to the study's data, a small group of PSTs made progress in understanding cultural dynamics in the classroom, transitioning personal thinking about how to address culture in the classroom. Additionally, a few PSTs were categorized as *Advancing/Retreating*, showing positive advancements in ideology but still retreating to places of cultural comfort and originally held beliefs when possible. However, nearly half of the participating PSTs were identified as *Spectators/Preservers*, acting as outside viewers of cultural practices, which did not result in much personal introspection or adjustment to original ideologies. Furthermore, some PSTs' views remained static or immobile, making no progress toward adjusting ethnocentric tendencies. Data from the study point to the difficulty of personal transformation for PSTs with regard to equity in the classroom (Karabon & Johnson, 2020).

Although a majority of PSTs in Karabon and Johnson's (2020) study did not make significant changes to personal thinking, according to the study, a majority of participants (*Advancers/Retreaters* and *Spectators/Preservers*) had the potential to change personal ethnocentric tendencies with further immersion in, exposure to, and opportunities to learn about different cultural contexts. The findings from Karabon and Johnson (2020) agree with other research by asserting the need for PSTs to continue to examine culturally relevant pedagogical practices as a way to challenge cultural stereotypes and misconceptions, fight hidden curricula, and create opportunities where all students experience equity in the classroom (Love & Yesbeck, 2022; Navarro et al., 2020; Ticknor et al., 2020).

In-service Teachers

Creating equitable classrooms does not end with pre-service training for instructors; opportunities also must continue for in-service teachers, as well (de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Fernández, 2019; Riordan et al., 2019; Villarreal et al., 2022). Although some research considers equitable mindsets to be more important than equity strategies in the classroom, other literature asserts developing in-service teachers' abilities, capacities, and commitments is imperative to creating an environment where inclusion will function best (de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Javius, 2017; Mburu, 2022). Research also demonstrates the importance of the instructor in supporting marginalized students, especially concerning sensitive cultural instructional techniques, communicative techniques, service-learning opportunities, and justice-learning opportunities (Bryant, 2021; Fernández, 2019). However, just as research demonstrates PSTs need concrete examples of the abstract concepts of equitable practices, in-service teachers also need to implement actual, effective instructional practices beyond simply fostering high expectations of learners (de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Mburu, 2022). In fact, students are more likely to experience equity and equitable practices in the classroom when teachers engage in professional development focused on modeling equitable best practices (de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Riordan et al., 2019).

For in-service teachers, ideas gleaned during professional development are more likely to be implemented in classrooms if the training allows teachers to practice implementation during the session and also facilitates critical reflection on individual experiences (Riordan et al., 2019; Romijn et al., 2021). Additionally, skills taught during professional development are more likely to be implemented for deeper learning and equity when teachers have the autonomy to adjust the learned skills to fit the needs of the students and are appropriately contextual (Riordan et al.,

2019; Romijn et al., 2021). Findings from Riordan et al. (2019) further point to the need for focus groups of student voices to help identify gaps in understanding the professional development material after teachers implement the methods in the classroom.

According to scholarship, professional development aimed at increasing equitable practices positively impacts teachers' approaches to equity in the classroom (Fernández, 2019; Riordan et al., 2019; Romijn et al., 2021; Villarreal et al., 2022). Continued professional development can be influential even in situations where teachers are already predisposed to equitable practices in the classroom (Fernández, 2019; Mburu, 2022; Villarreal et al., 2022). In a study by Villarreal et al. (2022), results from a faculty pre-professional development survey at a public state university in the U.S. indicated an already-high endorsement of equitable practices. After receiving targeted professional development about equitable classroom practices, faculty engaged in a post-survey which indicated a statistically significant increase in understanding of the importance of some equitable practices. Overall, although pre-survey results revealed the faculty's initial positive disposition toward equitable instructional practices, a proclivity toward equity increased after receiving targeted professional development. However, researchers agree there is a need for more modeling and concrete examples of how to implement equitable practices and instructional techniques in the classroom (Acquah et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Riordan et al., 2019; Villarreal et al., 2022).

Administration

Many issues can stand in the way of fully implementing equitable practices within schools (Navarro et al., 2020; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). Administrators and school leadership are critical stakeholders in mitigating impediments to equity (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). Administrators are responsible for

defining school culture by setting examples of desired behaviors and providing modeling opportunities for staff and students, especially concerning innovative equitable practices (de Klerk & Palmer, 2021). However, inadequately trained administrators can obstruct equity in an educational community (Navarro et al., 2020; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Williams, 2018). Preparing administrators in the K-12 realm to recognize, defend, and promote equity in classrooms requires a combination of pre-service training and community involvement (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Williams, 2018).

Pre-service Training for Administrators. Cultural competency must be second nature to educational leaders as a necessary tool for promoting equity (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Navarro et al., 2020; Williams, 2018). Instruction in deficit and asset-based mindsets, personal bias, and privilege are crucial starting points for future administrators to grasp the needs of the students (Navarro et al., 2020; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Williams, 2018). However, research demonstrates a disconnect among principals regarding the understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusivity, pointing to a need for such concepts to be addressed more fully in administrator preparation programs (Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Ratnam, 2020; Williams, 2018).

Furthermore, like PSTs and in-service teachers, school administrators could also benefit from more concrete examples of how to address inequitable situations within schools (Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Ratnam, 2020). However, tools and training alone do not automatically create equitable situations, despite studies demonstrating the effectiveness of professional development in increasing equitable mindsets (Punti & Dingel, 2021; Riordan et al., 2019; Villarreal et al., 2022; Williams, 2018). As a result, there is a need for accountable collaboration with other educational leaders to continue challenging stereotypical narratives

regarding historically marginalized student populations (Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Williams, 2018).

Community Resources for Administrators. Leadership does not begin and end with the administrator; instead, the power and responsibility to honor students' unique identities, abilities, and cultures, exists within a school's community, and administrators must tap into the community as a system of support (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Williams, 2018). Having a network of other accountable school and community leaders to help spur administrators to implement and evaluate equitable best practices is essential for future equity success (Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Williams, 2018). For instance, resources like children and youth services and translation services are often available from a school's surrounding community, which could benefit diverse student populations and aid administrators in engaging with the multifaceted needs of students (Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Sanczyk, 2020). However, according to one study, principals who reported no diversity within the local student population were less likely to engage with local stakeholders in meeting students' potential non-visible needs, like socioeconomic, mental health, or LGBTQ+ [*sic*] initiatives (Pollock & Briscoe, 2019).

Principals who support and promote equitable educational environments by valuing and respecting differences directly affect the ability of learners to reach their full potential (de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). According to additional research by Pollock and Briscoe (2019), principals who noted observable diversity in the local school populations also noted the necessity for implementing various practices to allow students to feel included and for staff to be prepared to deal with diversity. Conversely, principals who noted no observable diversity in student populations stated student diversity had no effect on the school leaders' decision-making or practice (Pollock & Briscoe, 2019). Although some school leaders in Pollock

and Briscoe's (2019) study noted an absence of diversity among student populations, the lack of school administrators acknowledging or understanding observable diversity within student bodies may be the result of what Bauer et al. (2020) report as inconsistency with the public's understanding regarding what constitutes a visible minority.

Administrators are responsible for managing multiple demands within a school, including implementing equitable educational strategies. Some of the administration's responsibilities for ensuring equitable educational outcomes include implementing socially just systems and structures, distributing resources equitably, developing diverse instructional techniques and lesson content, and encouraging the collaboration of teachers and staff. Ultimately, principals who value and respect differences while promoting an inclusive educational environment directly empower the realization of learners' full potential (de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Shields & Hesbol, 2020).

The Community

As research shows, school administrators, in-service teachers, and pre-service teachers need additional examples of how to implement substantive equitable practices in the K-12 sphere (Acquah et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Riordan et al., 2019). Practical examples of how to address inequity within a school can come from the community itself (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Sanczyk, 2020; Williams, 2018). According to some literature, the most crucial element to be possessed by educational leaders concerning equity work within a school is a deep, context-specific understanding of the school's community history (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Williams, 2018). The funds of knowledge available for this deep understanding provide a crucial framework for identifying and bridging equity gaps within the

school environment, especially for marginalized or minoritized communities (Buelow, 2017; Durán et al., 2020; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Gay, 2013; Williams, 2018).

In some instances, equity gaps for marginalized, minoritized, or otherwise diverse students can often be filled from programs outside of the school, and administrators and teachers can create bridging opportunities for students to connect to community programs like healthcare and immigration services (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Sanczyk, 2020). Furthermore, research has likewise indicated a need for school leaders to envision opportunities for the school community, demonstrate knowledge of the history and barriers the community has faced, and recognize the importance of community resources for student learning (Green, Castro, et al., 2020). Moreover, equitable school leaders recognize the influence of prominent community members and power structures and seek to make equitable decisions by connecting students' personal circumstances to learning (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Sanczyk, 2020; Williams, 2018).

Research further suggests the need for school leadership proficiency in community-based constructs for creating an equitable educational environment, including embracing the community's concepts of success, cultural competence, and political and socioeconomic impacts (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Welborn, 2019). According to Williams (2018), "leadership resides in the community where everyone is responsible for honoring and empowering children's identities, languages, abilities, and cultures" (p. 55). School leaders interested in developing equitable opportunities for students must listen to the voices of the communities who populate the school (Durán et al., 2020; Welborn, 2019; Williams, 2018). Ultimately, for equitable opportunities to take shape, school leaders must critically examine the personal capacity to receive, reflect on, and implement changes based on feedback from members within the

community who are intimately aware of groups' specific needs, limitations, struggles, and successes (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Shields & Hesbol, 2020; Williams, 2018).

Durán et al. (2020) provides an example of community-informed decisions in a study examining how cultural background aided Latinx immigrant families when integrating into U.S. society through the local school system. The study also examined how immigrant families relied on the group's cultural funds of knowledge while also using community insiders from the U.S. as cultural and linguistic brokers to engage in critical conversations with local school leaders to advocate for the needs of the immigrant children. In the study by Durán et al. (2020), researchers noted how members of the Latinx group used culturally specific concepts as a knowledge base for analyzing the children's educational needs and for advocating for programs to meet said needs. The minoritized community banded together to identify needs and solutions for the perceived gaps in equity and used cultural and linguistic brokering to communicate the needs in the school board's context. In all, the group's use of culturally familiar tactics to engage in issues of the larger school community demonstrated the immigrant families' ability to advocate for the unique needs of their students.

According to Green, Castro, et al. (2020), school leaders must be aware of how power issues within communities might impede equity and must also understand how to use other resources from the community to combat it. The efforts of the Latinx families from Durán et al.'s (2020) study demonstrate how members of culturally marginalized groups are capable of identifying educational equity gaps for students, but what is lacking in the study is a thorough examination of what practices the school board may have put in place to ensure marginalized voices would be heard, a necessary practice for school leaders (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Welborn, 2019; Williams, 2018).

For example, in a study by Williams (2018), when a university from the Southwestern U.S. re-examined equity training for school leaders, researchers sought out community tribal leaders to hear ideas and lived experiences to inform how to train local school leadership in more equitable practices. School leadership pursued the conversation within the community so marginalized voices could speak about personal experiences instead of putting the impetus on marginalized voices to raise concerns (Williams, 2018). However, the study by Williams (2018) contrasts Freire's (2005) views on marginalized voices, which advises marginalized communities to speak out against oppressors and reclaim the right to speak. Despite the different approaches noted in the literature, the theme remains the same: there are multiple voices within communities, and the unique voices must be able to point to lived experiences as examples of how to create more equitable educational opportunities (Durán et al., 2020; Freire, 2005; Green, Morales, et al., 2020; Welborn, 2019; Williams, 2018).

Students

The lack of student voices represents perhaps some of the most critical research gaps for improving educational equity, as students' lived experiences are what should inform the needs for change in policy and practice (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018; Bubb & Jones, 2020; Caetano et al., 2020; Riordan et al., 2019; Szelei et al., 2019). For in-service teachers, student voices have demonstrated how successful or impactful teaching strategies are in practice (Ratnam, 2020; Riordan et al., 2019; Sanczyk, 2020). Educational leaders and policymakers should also consider the benefits of student focus groups to narrow the gap between professional development instruction and its implementation, especially in the case of equity and social justice (Patterson, 2019; Riordan et al., 2019; Szelei et al., 2019). Some studies examine student behaviors in conjunction with students' cultural backgrounds (Buchs & Maradan, 2021; Ordonez, 2021;

Samuels et al., 2020; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021; Tlili et al., 2021). However, there is a lack of scholarship discussing student voices alone—unattached to behaviors observed by outsiders—within the PK-12 sphere (Szelei et al., 2019). Instead, student voices are better represented in research at the post-secondary level (Roe, 2019). Although outside the scope of the current study, the lack of scholarship regarding PK-12 student voices suggests an area of future research for informing best practices for equitable treatment within the classroom (Szelei et al., 2019).

Cultural Competency and Equity

According to the literature, equitable educational environments require targeted training for pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and administration (Navarro et al., 2020; Portelli & Koneeny, 2018; Ticknor et al., 2020). Research also points to the voices of students and the greater community as necessary for implementing practical efforts to increase equity in the education system (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018; Caetano et al., 2020; Szelei et al., 2019; Welborn, 2019). However, cultural competency and culturally relevant teaching methods are also imperative components of addressing inequity in schools, as educators must inform themselves about how to deal with diverse populations and cultural backgrounds (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Welborn, 2019).

Characteristics of Culturally Competent Teachers

Scholarship by Abacioglu et al. (2020) demonstrates a significant relationship between teachers' multicultural attitudes and the frequency of using culturally sensitive pedagogical approaches. Wang et al. (2022) confirms similar findings, noting a correlation between an individual's open-mindedness and cultural skills. Similarly, Abacioglu et al.'s (2020) findings show there is a significant relationship between teachers' multicultural attitudes and the ability to take on differing perspectives, noting the association between CRP and instructional practices

requiring more effort and willingness from the instructor to understand individual cultural differences.

According to additional literature, master teachers who implement culturally relevant strategies stress the importance of factors like respect, communication, celebrating and encouraging students, jointly creating a family-like culture, promoting success, instituting student-centered learning opportunities, and critically implementing material from multiple cultures in the classroom (Acuña & Blacklock, 2022; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017). Teachers skilled in culturally relevant pedagogical strategies also maintain high expectations both personally and academically and should be masters of content material (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Castillo-Montoya, 2019; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017). Additionally, successful CRP implementation is related to teachers making learning meaningful for students by getting to know students' interests and helping classmates build positive relationships with each other (Acuña & Blacklock, 2022; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Knowles & Hawkman, 2020). Skilled culturally relevant educators also understand the value of a growth mindset mentality as an important factor for motivation among students from underrepresented backgrounds (Seals & Valdiviejas, 2021).

Culturally competent teachers also strive to make learning personal for students with student-centered instructional techniques (Acuña & Blacklock, 2022; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Knowles & Hawkman, 2020). Findings from Talbert et al. (2019) demonstrate the value of student-centered instruction as having a significant effect on individual student engagement. Furthermore, at both individual and school levels, students' emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and social engagement are positively predicted by student-centered instructional techniques (Talbert et al., 2019). However, Talbert et al.'s (2019) study does demonstrate a stronger connection

between student-centered instructional approaches for Caucasian students than for African American students, suggesting further need for investigation into root causes for such disparity.

Although maintaining open-mindedness, valuing multiple perspectives, and demonstrating cultural competence support teachers' successful implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy, teachers with African American, Latinx, multi-race, and urban backgrounds have a significantly more advanced awareness of how to engage in both culturally relevant and anti-racist teaching than teachers of other ethnicities or from rural contexts (Abacioglu et al., 2020; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Knowles & Hawkman, 2020; Wang et al., 2022). In a study by Knowles and Hawkman (2020), African American teachers were more likely to be comfortable with difficult issues of race in the classroom, but less comfortable with approaches like colorblindness than teachers with other cultural backgrounds. Conversely, Castillo-Montoya's (2019) findings reveal the power of effective culturally relevant pedagogical strategies in diverse academic contexts despite the ethnic, racial, or cultural background of the instructor. Although course instructors from Castillo-Montoya's (2019) study identified as White men, the educators were still able to facilitate academic opportunities for racially and ethnically diverse students to learn from each other.

Knowles and Hawkman (2020) suggest the need for additional professional development for teachers to investigate how race affects pedagogical decisions in the classroom and curricular decisions at the school level. For instance, Tawa et al. (2021) caution instructors to be aware of the guilt or shame Caucasian students may experience when encountering racial issues, which at first may translate to fewer interactions with diverse individuals. However, instructors should work toward a more integrative approach to promote more equitable, racially diverse student interactions over time (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Anyichie et al., 2023; Tawa et al., 2021).

Moreover, both pre-service and in-service teachers of any cultural background can benefit from participating in the societal realities of students from differing cultural backgrounds to better understand the implications of pedagogical or curricular decisions (Abacioglu et al., 2020; Jacobs et al., 2020). However, participation in differing cultural social realities should be paired with critical dialogue to promote educator introspection, and thus, more meaningful application of new, culturally competent pedagogical skills (Abacioglu et al., 2020; Boyd et al., 2022; Gorski & Dalton, 2020; Jacobs et al., 2020; Minkoff, 2020; Romijn et al., 2021).

Cultural Issues to Consider for Equitable Learning Environments

Culture is an all-consuming force, entirely influencing a person's mental and social programming and filling in the details beyond what has been determined by biology alone (Hofstede, 2001; McAdams, 2019). Thus, culturally responsive pedagogical approaches are the key to creating more equitable, justice-oriented learning environments (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Welborn, 2019). Other scholars, however, suggest the foundation of equitable education is a critical pedagogy, not necessarily a cultural pedagogy (Boyd et al., 2022; Galloway et al., 2019; Gorski & Dalton, 2020; Romijn et al., 2021). With either approach, an awareness of cultural issues in classrooms and communities is crucial for addressing inequity (Ansah & Louw, 2019; Karabon & Johnson, 2020; LaCroix & Kuehl, 2019; Love & Yesbeck, 2022; Welborn, 2019). Cultural awareness aids in creating a collaborative space for joint, just decision-making between groups (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021). Regarding CRP, the following cultural dimensions will be discussed in consideration of each dimension's impact on equitable educational environments.

Issues of Language. Perhaps the most foundational element of an equitable classroom is the language of instruction (Buchs & Maradan, 2021; Yilmaz, 2019). Pedagogical techniques

must account for students in classrooms for whom the language of instruction is not the primary or heritage language (Buchs & Maradan, 2021; Durán et al., 2020; Karabon & Johnson, 2020; Roe, 2019; Sanczyk, 2020; Yilmaz, 2019). Language barriers will naturally create situations where students do not have equitable access to instructional materials or activities (Buchs & Maradan, 2021; Durán et al., 2020; Fernández, 2019; Sanczyk, 2020; Yilmaz, 2019).

Additionally, literal language translation services alone may not be the sole solution, particularly when content is rife with culturally specific idioms and figures of speech (Durán et al., 2020).

Instead, concepts must be communicated to learners in the most meaningful and least restrictive ways (Fernández, 2019; Gutiérrez, 2008; Hofstede, 2001). Efforts to address inequity of language in the classroom can improve students' social learning opportunities, as gaps in language-related communicative ability between parties create difficulties for students to participate with instructional staff and with each other (Fernández, 2019; Roe, 2019; Yilmaz, 2019).

Issues of Collectivism vs. Individualism. Beyond the awareness of linguistic differences in the classroom, the awareness of differing cultural views of individualism and collectivism can impact if or how students access an equitable learning environment (Yi, 2018). Students from highly collectivist cultures may find individualistic classroom environments challenging without peer interdependence (Beilmann et al., 2018; Wilczewski et al., 2017). Conversely, students with individualistic cultural backgrounds may be challenged by a collectivist approach to class assignments, feeling as if group approaches hold back individual freedom and goal setting, especially when the relationships within the group are valued more than the accomplishments (Beilmann et al., 2018; Wilczewski et al., 2017). Similarly, group endeavors may look different for individuals from cultures valuing consensus over authoritative leadership (Hofstede, 2001;

Trumbull et al., 2020). Educators should consider cultural differences in diverse classroom settings, employing various pedagogical techniques to ensure students can access academic and social information in culturally appropriate ways (Biery, 2021).

Issues of Power. Social hierarchies exist in many facets of society, and education is no different (Graf et al., 2012; Williams, 2003). Power dynamics are embedded in school settings and are often taken for granted (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Green, Morales, et al., 2020). Issues of power affect equity in the classroom when the presence of dominant groups infringes upon the rights of minoritized or less-dominant groups (Lu et al., 2020; Williams, 2003). However, power dynamics in the classroom can result from some cultures having strong insider/outsider perspectives and valuing high power distances between groups (Graf et al., 2012; Hofstede, 2001). An insider/outsider construct can perpetuate marginalization when a cultural group values high power distance because such marginalization is the foundation of the culture's societal construct (Graf et al., 2012). Situations where students are marginalized or socially ostracized due to issues like sexuality, gender identity, and mental health may also contribute to an insider/outsider construct in school environments, although such marginalization may not always be a result of culture (Aronson & Laughter, 2020; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019).

When a majority of one culture is present within a group, the majority culture can have a strong influence over a group's organizational structure (Ansah & Louw, 2019; Kokka, 2020; Lu et al., 2020). According to Lu et al. (2020), the greater the power distance between groups, the more likely the party with the higher power is to demonstrate its power by force, dominating the lower-power party in negotiation situations. Because of the dominating behavior of high-power groups, lower-power groups are more likely to display behaviors like compromising, conceding, obliging, or self-sacrificing to appease the dominant group (Lu et al., 2020).

School leaders who desire equitable environments within learning communities should be aware of power distance constructs between groups, as egalitarian efforts may not be a natural desire for some cultural backgrounds (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Stępień & Dudek, 2021). Although egalitarian cultures may naturally attempt to reduce the power distance between groups or individuals, other cultures may expect and prefer to maintain a greater power distance between parties (Hofstede, 2001; Stępień & Dudek, 2021). In order to identify, disrupt, and repurpose underlying or unjust power structures in educational environments, research suggests building critical learning communities and defining community commitments among stakeholders (Abacioglu et al., 2020; Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Green, Morales, et al., 2020).

Issues of Privilege. Areas of privilege must also be examined within the social construct of educational environments to mitigate unjust power dynamics (Green, Morales, et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020). For some egalitarian cultures like the U.S., issues of privilege must be explicitly identified and reflected upon by group members because the construct is not typically part of the culture's value system (Hofstede, 2001). Critical examination of privilege and cultural identities through multiple lenses allows for a greater understanding of how identities are situated within an educational community, thus providing better clarity for when issues of privilege arise (Abacioglu et al., 2020; Boyd et al., 2022; Durán et al., 2020; Minkoff, 2020; Welborn, 2019).

One helpful tool for examining privilege is sociocritical reflection, which is an extension of self-reflection (Kokka, 2020; Minkoff, 2020; Romijn et al., 2021; Welborn, 2019). Sociocritical reflection is a self-reflective learning technique where participants orient introspection within circumstances experienced personally or by others as members of cultural or societal groups (Boyd et al., 2022; Kokka, 2020; Minkoff, 2020). Teachers who employ

sociocritical reflection are able to develop a more complete understanding of numerous personal identities, including identifying any areas of privilege (Boyd et al., 2022; Minkoff, 2020). As a result, teachers who adopt a sociocritical perspective could transfer personal identity and intergroup dialogue experiences to the classroom, making commitments to avoid stiffly categorizing students into racial, gender, or cultural groups (Boyd et al., 2022; Minkoff, 2020). However, there remains a need for more sociocritical mentors to guide educators in how and when to apply approaches to bridge theory and equitable best practices, especially concerning matters of social justice (Medina, 2020; Minkoff, 2020; Romijn et al., 2021).

Issues of High-Context and Low-Context Communication. According to research, members of different cultural contexts react in varied ways to implicit or complex messages (Alizadeh Afrouzi, 2021; Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 2001; Ursu & Ciortescu, 2021). High-context communication, which is often connected to traditional, long-standing cultures, does not use many overt means of communicating ideas and is closely linked to honor/shame constructs (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 2001). High-context communication often involves very little explicit information, as communicators typically internalize information from physical and social environments. Conversely, low-context communication, which is often more representative of modern cultures, behaves oppositely, with most information being transmitted explicitly (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 2001; Ursu & Ciortescu, 2021).

According to Vaccarino and Li (2018), high-context and low-context communication problems can arise in educational settings when stakeholders possess opposite communication styles. For instance, students with high-context communication styles may not fully understand how to communicate with a low-context instructor and vice versa. As an example, a low-context instructor may be expecting students to speak up with questions or concerns, but a high-context

student may be waiting until the instructor offers an invitation to do so. As a result, academic relationships can deteriorate, preventing beneficial interaction between pupils and instructors. As globalization continues and academic environments become increasingly diverse, educators must be aware of potential communication barriers between cultures and should prepare themselves to address such barriers accordingly (Jacobi, 2020; Vaccarino & Li, 2018; Zelenková & Hanesová, 2019).

Issues of Honor and Shame. Although no culture perfectly or completely embodies a cultural dimension, predominant behaviors from the dimensions are observable within cultures, including honor cultures (Dumbravă, 2018). One observable behavior for members of cultures who value honor over shame may include difficulty working in collaborative environments, as members might behave aggressively since societal honor and public face would be on display for critique from other members of a group (Dumbravă, 2018; Ramirez-Marin & Shafa, 2018). In a study by Yao et al. (2017), the cultural concepts of honor and public face were positively correlated to collectivism and extrinsic self-worth. Educators can help reduce honor-driven aggressive behavior in educational environments by offering social rewards to increase productive collaboration between groups while maintaining public face and self-worth for members with honor/shame cultural backgrounds (Ramirez-Marin & Shafa, 2018). Additionally, educators must be conscious of the implications of public image and self-worth for class members from honor/shame cultures and should make pedagogical choices to prevent and reduce unnecessary public shame (Ramirez-Marin & Shafa, 2018; Yao et al., 2017).

Between Cultures: Creating a Third Space for Equitable Exchanges

Research shows master teachers embody a commitment to meeting social and emotional student needs, have a desire to connect learning to relevant experiences to respond to individual

students, and acknowledge the benefit of building a both a positive and critical culture within the classroom (Acuña & Blacklock, 2022; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Kokka, 2020). However, stakeholders must be aware of the multiple competing cultural values and voices among diverse populations within a school, which can make efforts to address student needs and build positive classroom cultures challenging (Gupta, 2020; Hunter et al., 2020; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Prieto et al., 2018). The presence of multiple competing values indicates the need for a potential area of third-space dialogue to address the growing awareness of educational theory and practice gaps in areas like equity and culturally responsive teaching (Ratnam, 2020; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021).

Third-space dialogue may be a viable option for creating shared moral responsibility between stakeholders for adjusting interactions and limiting inequity (Gupta, 2020; Ratnam, 2020; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021; Wang & Zhang, 2023). Research demonstrates morality to be more motivating for prosocial and personal decision-making than equity or efficiency (Capraro & Rand, 2018; Eriksson et al., 2017). Thus, moral responsibility in the shared third space may allow for necessary adjustments to the education system by developing socially constructed, collective meaning to guide educators away from less effective, marginalizing strategies and towards more just and equitable practices in the classroom (Burns et al., 2019; Ratnam, 2020; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021; Um, 2019). Additionally, third-space dialogue allows a model for equitable and socially just education where knowledge is no longer reserved for the privileged but is created jointly in a non-hierarchical and non-colonial environment (Awada, 2021; Cho, 2018; Gupta, 2020; Ratnam, 2020).

Equitable third spaces allow for an open social arena where non-dominant cultural groups are free to share experiences and perspectives, thus challenging monocultural perspectives and

hegemony (Chen, 2020; Wang & Zhang, 2023). Third-space interactions also promote peer collaboration across cultures and multicultural education, a known benefit to helping students build foundations for schooling, careers, and personal development (Karacsony et al., 2022). Furthermore, collaboration across cultures also positively correlates to an increase in student intra-cultural learning, as well, which can lead to a greater awareness of self and others as students navigate cross-cultural relationships (Ismailov, 2021). More third-space opportunities between academia and students' backgrounds also allow for non-traditional students to experience a more holistic approach to education (Burns et al., 2019). Because of its many advantages, teachers, future teachers, teacher educators, administrators, and students all have the potential to benefit from a third-space approach for equitable learning in diverse academic settings (Awada, 2021; Beck, 2020; Gupta, 2020; Ratnam, 2020).

Third-Space Relationships

Students can benefit from third-space interactions to create equitable relationships within the classroom (Awada, 2021; Gupta, 2020; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). According to recent research, an effective way to invoke cultural relevance when dealing with a diverse population of students is through hybrid/third-space pedagogy, particularly in early childhood environments (Burke & Crocker, 2020; Gupta, 2020; Ratnam, 2020; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). Additional research shows the less formal and teacher-directed an activity is, the more opportunities students have to initiate and operate together in flexible, creative, and complex third-space interactions, while other research assigns teachers a foundational role in facilitating third space interactions (Jobe & Coles-Ritchie, 2016; Potter & McDougall, 2017; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021).

Promoting Third-Space Relationships. In a study by Tatham-Fashanu (2021), as opportunities increased for student-initiated interactions in an early childhood education setting,

third-space communication between students also increased concurrently. Conversely, third-space interactions were less common and happened less frequently when the teacher structured interactions. The rich opportunities for third-space interaction between students during free-choice time and suggest numerous benefits to curricula and policy when third-space opportunities are considered alongside traditional, teacher-led learning opportunities for measuring knowledge, growth, and development in the classroom (Burke & Crocker, 2020; Potter & McDougall, 2017; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021).

According to several studies, young children in diverse settings have demonstrated an ability to naturally navigate third-space relationships (Burke & Crocker, 2020; Gupta, 2020; Ordonez, 2021; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). In a study by Ordonez (2021), young students in a multicultural academic setting reached a developmental milestone of reciprocity and intercultural competence at a younger biological age than what had been seen in previous studies, which may have been a result of the highly diverse environment and exposure to multicultural situations, languages, and people. Similarly, findings from Burke and Crocker (2020) also revealed deeper relationships built between preschool students and each other, the instructors, pre-service teachers, and the material as a result of third-space interactions. As is echoed in other studies, the characteristics demonstrated by young children in diverse environments suggest a capability to engage easily in third spaces (Gupta, 2020; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021).

Navigating Barriers to Third-Space Relationships. Not every unstructured interaction between students of differing cultural backgrounds results in equity or inclusivity (Jobe & Coles-Ritchie, 2016; Kavanagh, 2018; Patterson, 2019). For instance, some scholars believe authentic third-space student interactions are rarely possible, as maintaining such spaces requires a high awareness of systemic oppression and colonization, which many students may not possess (Cho,

2018; Jobe & Coles-Ritchie, 2016). As an example, in a study by Patterson (2019), data showed a tendency for socially or academically high-status secondary students to express opinions more often during student-directed group work, leaving fewer opportunities for other group members to express multiple or differing viewpoints. According to student participants' post-activity interviews, exclusion occurred during the group work, thus rendering some group members invisible and not a part of the project (Patterson, 2019). The findings from Patterson's (2019) study contrast with findings from other studies involving unstructured, student-driven third-space interactions involving younger students (Ordonez, 2021; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021).

However, there were similarities between the studies of Patterson (2019) and Tatham-Fashanu (2021). In both studies, students needed to practice agency and assert aspects of personal identity without instructor intervention to be successful in collaborative endeavors (Patterson, 2019; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). Data from both studies also demonstrated the ability of pupils to maintain third-space interaction by themselves, although findings from Patterson revealed contention in some unstructured student interactions (Patterson, 2019; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). Furthermore, although instructors may purposefully design or provide allowances for third-space interaction, intervention from the teacher can inhibit the flow of true third-space exchanges (Patterson, 2019; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021).

Although research suggests third-space interactions are most successful without teacher intervention, positive third-space relationships between students do not always develop naturally, as third space relationships require conducive student attitudes, behavior, and critical thinking skills (Jobe & Coles-Ritchie, 2016; Kavanagh, 2018; Patterson, 2019; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021; Wang & Zhang, 2023). Relationships in the classroom must be cultivated, and potential clashes should be expected when diverse groups interact (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Anderstaf et al.,

2021). For example, Kavanagh (2018) conducted a study evaluating how successful teachers navigated cultural clashes within the classroom. According to Kavanagh's (2018) findings, successful teachers elicited student ideas, offered information, and provided modeling and guided practice when aggressive, culturally fueled exchanges occurred between students in classroom settings. Additionally, successful educators enforced pre-determined social rules, offered social instruction, and negotiated with the involved parties to mitigate acts of aggression between students.

In contrast, a study by Anderstaf et al. (2021) demonstrated how relationships between cultures should embrace conflict, not avoid it. By examining increasingly diverse preschool dynamics in Sweden, the researchers discovered dissonance between the majority cultural approaches of the Swedish teachers and the diverse backgrounds of the students' families. Initially, teachers avoided confrontation after recognizing how the cultural issues of some families conflicted with the curriculum and social norms. However, teachers eventually became open to the idea of culture as an ever-adapting construct, where behaviors might adjust and transform based on surrounding social contexts. The teachers' self-reflection and awareness eventually led to valuing others' voices, reflecting the necessary sociocritical elements for transcending the influence of culture (Anderstaf et al., 2021; Hall, 1976).

Due to a new awareness of the potential adaptability of cultural values, teachers noted a third culture emerging in the preschool environment where majority and non-majority groups intermingled. As a result, teachers discussed the need for both parents and school personnel to take responsibility for actively engaging in conflict in a hybrid culture to achieve a more equitable learning environment for all parties (Anderstaf et al., 2021). The purposeful engagement in conflict from the study by Anderstaf et al. (2021) demonstrates how critical

community building through active listening allows third-space interactions to extend beyond teacher-student interactions and into partnerships with family and the greater school community (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021). Purposeful connections between home and school are necessary for developing third-space relationships, as accountability contributes to building more equitable environments (Bradford & Norman, 2022; Johnston et al., 2021, 2022; McClain-Nhlapo & d’Addio, 2020).

Another approach to mitigating barriers to third space interactions comes from Southern et al. (2020), who describe a need for an outside catalyst to be present for binary groups to engage in the third space. When binary groups exist within educational opportunities, polarizing pedagogical approaches can develop. Using a third-space framework can theoretically bridge the gaps between polarizing approaches, allowing space for diversity, dialogue, and hybridity. The researchers suggest the presence of a community member as a third-party conduit within the classroom to act as the catalyst necessary to spark combined third-space approaches. However, there is inherent difficulty when inserting an outside party into established academic systems if such systems do not already have a method in place to do so (Southern et al., 2020).

For equitable third-space relationships to be possible in diverse educational spaces, instructors must develop and maintain sociocritical awareness (Abacioglu et al., 2020; Alarcón & Bettez, 2021, Durán et al., 2020; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Jacobs et al., 2020; Minkoff, 2020; Welborn, 2019). For example, in a study by Jacobs et al. (2020), teacher candidates (TCs) from a Southeastern U.S. university participating in a nontraditional community-based clinical practice at diverse Boys and Girls Clubs (BGC) acknowledged the need for a third space to be negotiated between the teacher candidates and the club members due to differing cultural backgrounds and experiences. During the study, the concept of third space began to emerge as TCs recognized a

binary relationship between themselves as educators and the assumptions of the children as students, who differed from TCs with regard to social class, race, culture, childhood experiences, and family composition. The sociocritical need to transgress the binary into a third space became evident as TCs needed to learn from children's experiences and funds of knowledge to have successful interactions. However, not all TCs were able to enter third-space relationships with BGC members, as some TC course assignment responses pointed to the theme of un-challenged assumptions about the BGC attendees (Jacobs et al., 2020). The study by Jacobs et al. (2020) demonstrates the benefits of using community-based clinical experiences to promote sociocritical reflection among TCs in order to build future capabilities as culturally responsive educators who can benefit students by negotiating binaries in the third space (Gorski & Dalton, 2020; Jacobs et al., 2020; Janzen & Petersen, 2020).

Third-Space Lesson Design

Along with promoting third-space interactions and fostering positive third-space relationships, careful lesson design is necessary for equitable educational opportunities to exist in the classroom (Buchs & Maradan, 2021; Navarro et al., 2020; Patterson, 2019; Sanczyk, 2020; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021; Um, 2019; Williams, 2018). Adjusting instructional practices to be more culturally responsive by placing students at the center allows for a bridging of binary realities, potentially resulting in the creation of a third space (Burke & Crocker, 2020; Jacobs et al., 2020; Potter & McDougall, 2017). In addition, tapping into students' funds of knowledge as an intentional strategy can support educators' endeavors to promote better academic communication, student engagement, and tailored academic support for improved student success (Buelow, 2017; Roe, 2019; Wang & Zhang, 2023). Designed opportunities for students to share expertise about home cultures, experiences, and even languages are valuable tools in

allowing equitable classrooms to develop (Awada, 2021; Buchs & Maradan, 2021; Roe, 2019; Sanczyk, 2020).

For example, a study by Buchs and Maradan (2021) examined one instance of a purposeful lesson design where students in a linguistically and culturally diverse fourth-grade class acted as home language experts. According to the study's findings for both parents and students, the activity allowed classmates to understand the challenges other students faced concerning the language used in the classroom, especially if the language of instruction was not the students' heritage language. Likewise, the teacher noted an increasing sense of belonging among students as a result of the activity, which was a sentiment also echoed by parents and students. As a result of the lesson, many parents noted new, positive student attitudes towards diversity, both culturally and linguistically. However, the students demonstrated a mix of positive and negative reviews on the values of the lesson, with only about half of the students reporting having learned new things about other languages (Buchs & Maradan, 2021).

Instructional Strategy: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Third space is a nexus of contradictions, where competing values and ideas must exist in tension (Wang, 2006). Culturally relevant pedagogy also acknowledges the tensions of competing cultural values, yet its purposeful lesson design promotes equitable learning opportunities when students are placed at the center of instructional decisions (Anyichie et al., 2023; Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Gay, 2013; Jacobs et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Sanczyk, 2020; Williams, 2018). One key theme in culturally relevant pedagogy, for example, is acknowledging students' different backgrounds and needs while simultaneously acknowledging the instructor's own privilege or areas of bias (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Gay, 2013; Um, 2019; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Additionally, culturally relevant pedagogical techniques should not only affect how interactions take place in

the classroom but also how a curriculum is chosen, with noted benefits for students when lesson materials are culturally and racially diverse, connecting with students' lives and experiences (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Green, Morales, et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Sanczyk, 2020; Williams, 2018). Conversely, a restrictive curriculum due to testing requirements, school board decisions, or community values can hinder equitable environments (Anderstaf et al., 2021; Cho, 2018; Durán et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021).

Culturally relevant instructional strategies and curriculum design are most effective once a positive community among diverse students and stakeholders exists, so all feel comfortable and respected (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Durán et al., 2020; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Green, Morales, et al., 2020; Sanczyk, 2020; Um, 2019). Critical community building within a diverse setting is key to creating a collaborative space where students share decision-making and jointly identify ways to decentralize hegemonic norms (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Cho, 2018; Green, Morales, et al., 2020). When diverse community participants negotiate and co-create meaning, students and stakeholders can feel comfortable articulating personal opinions and stances, arguing viewpoints, changing opinions, and questioning classmates' opinions (Durán et al., 2020; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Green, Morales, et al., 2020; Um, 2019). A diverse community where meaning is co-created among members can be described as a *third space* (Bhabha, 2004; Green, Morales, et al., 2020). Although a third-space community may be desirable for an equitable classroom, competing values and social power dynamics among students may prevent an environment conducive to students taking academic and social risks (Green, Morales, et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Patterson, 2019).

Instructional Strategy: Critical Community Building. According to Alarcón and Bettez (2021), critical community building is a foundational method for joining cultural competency and lesson design to create an equitable classroom. Instructional choices and approaches promoting connection and community building among students and stakeholders result in a more engaged, less marginalized educational environment. A small step toward such an environment includes lessons designed around small group work and active listening, which establishes and promotes mutual respect among students. Furthermore, shared goals among students create a commitment to aiding each other in making sense of new or challenging ideas (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021). Critical community building in the classroom represents the type of third-space collaboration referred to by Gutiérrez (2008) as “the home of intersubjectivity” (p. 153). However, findings from a study of third-space practitioners by Ferrari et al. (2021) show criticality among peers to be of lesser importance than the ability to collaborate to accomplish a task. Peers being sociocritical of each other was reported as the least important element of peer collaboration within third-space interactions (Ferrari et al., 2021).

Still, small group work alone does not create a critical community or an equitable learning space (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021). Learning communities must spend significant time developing a group atmosphere and explicitly defining the group commitments to which members will adhere (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Green, Morales, et al., 2020). Additionally, whether overt or not, power dynamics always exist within a learning environment where marginalization exists and must be identified and subdued (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Green, Morales, et al., 2020; Patterson, 2019; Um, 2019). Acknowledgment of the power dynamics inside a classroom is necessary for the community to create a space where students feel safe to

question positions and where ideas will be respectfully heard (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Green, Morales, et al., 2020).

For third-space interactions to be possible, students must see themselves as co-creators and co-owners of knowledge alongside teachers and classmates of various backgrounds and lived experiences (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Green, Morales, et al., 2020; Jobe & Coles-Ritchie, 2016). The teacher must step away from the traditional approach of being the only authoritative voice in the classroom and instead embrace the role of an instructional designer, creating and maintaining educational third spaces where equity can be achieved (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Green, Morales, et al., 2020; Gutiérrez, 2008; Woolf, 2020). According to Gutiérrez (2008), the transformative process of developing and interacting within a third space is not always peaceful or free from conflict. In fact, findings from Woolf (2020) were mixed regarding whether implementing third space pedagogical approaches neutralized the instructor's social power as an authority figure in the classroom (Woolf, 2020). Despite Woolf's (2020) mixed results, according to other scholars, the collaboration resulting from third-space instructional strategies has potential to lead to equitable learning opportunities (Awada, 2021; Gutiérrez, 2008; Wang & Zhang, 2023).

Instructional Strategy: Translanguaging. Another area of possible third-space interaction in the classroom is translanguaging (Dutton & Rushton, 2023; Yilmaz, 2019). Translanguaging involves the acknowledgement of the fluidity of and lack of firm boundaries between the languages used by multilingual individuals (Dutton & Rushton, 2023; Yilmaz, 2019). Students who engage in translanguaging can make connections between heritage language concepts and academic or social concepts within a school environment without privileging one language over another (Dutton & Rushton, 2023; Fernández, 2019; Yilmaz, 2019). In the classroom, translanguaging allows for multilingual learners to bring unique funds of knowledge

into the academic and social educational process as the focus shifts from using a single language for the purpose of communication to using multiple language for the purpose of meaning-making (Dutton & Rushton, 2023; Fernández, 2019). Additionally, translanguaging challenges monolingual approaches to education through inclusivity and hybridity, disrupting hegemonic practices catering to students and stakeholders from majority cultural backgrounds (Dutton & Rushton, 2023; Kakos, 2022; Yilmaz, 2019). Translanguaging also provides the added benefit of allowing culturally or linguistically diverse students to be seen and heard, especially in smaller group settings, which are considered socially and academically safer than full-class exchanges (Fernández, 2019; Kakos, 2022; Yilmaz, 2019).

Instructional Strategy: Informal or Micro-Third Spaces. Smaller, safer group spaces for meaning-making also point to an option for encouraging informal or micro-third spaces outside of traditional classroom settings as an additional strategy for third-space student engagement (Fernández, 2019; Kakos, 2022; Valenzuela & Epstein, 2023). Scholarship reports informal culturally hybrid educational third spaces in numerous forms, including makerspaces and community organizations for youth (Burke & Crocker, 2020; Jacobs et al., 2020; Valenzuela & Epstein, 2023). Non-systemic third spaces provide a less formal environment for individuals of diverse backgrounds to interact in low pressure circumstances, where connections can occur more naturally (Burke & Crocker, 2020; Hice-Fromille & London, 2023; Jacobs et al., 2020). Even TCs or PSTs experiencing third-space interactions outside of the traditional school environment promote more connection with students' backgrounds and more opportunity for sociocritical reflection (Bradford & Norman, 2022; Jacobs et al., 2020; Janzen & Petersen, 2020). The social spaces of hallways, coffee breaks, lunch breaks, and even online environments are additional examples of informal, micro-third spaces separate from traditional or bureaucratic

systems, where criticality aimed at decolonializing oppressive systems can be fostered (Hice-Fromille & London, 2023; Potter & McDougall, 2017; Valenzuela & Epstein, 2023).

Instructional Strategy: Online Environments. Online environments may provide a third-space arena for neutralizing power discrepancies and empowering non-majority students' identities (Chen, 2020; Lim, 2020; Yeh & Heng, 2022). Online environments, including gaming and social networking, can be an option for allowing non-majority students to participate in third space interactions where participants can enjoy a sense of belonging, improve language development, and participate in knowledge co-construction along with members of other cultures (Chen, 2020; Yeh & Heng, 2022). Teachers and administrators can employ online environments as culturally responsive methods to ensure students from a non-majority background or language have equitable access to the same academic successes as members from dominant cultural groups. Furthermore, online environments represent an opportunity for actively engaging students' cultural capital through third spaces, as a virtual arena provides potential access to students' primary cultural backgrounds in more accessible ways than in-person experiences (Chen, 2020; de Klerk & Palmer, 2021).

In a study by Lawrence (2020), care and communication were the most observed elements of culturally responsive instructional approaches in the study participants' online courses. Findings from Lawrence (2020) demonstrated the importance of online instructors taking a personal interest in students' lives and maintaining personal communication throughout the course while also purposely facilitating community through course postings and discussion to develop a sense of belonging among classes and cohorts. Similarly, Lawrence's (2020) findings demonstrated the importance of authentic communication in online courses, connecting course material to real-world situations or lived experiences. Although Lawrence's (2020) and Chen's

(2020 studies were published prior to much of the emergence of forced online learning environments as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, several additional examples and potential benefits of online third spaces became clear during COVID-19 era schooling and will be discussed in the following section (Bubb & Jones, 2020; Johnston et al., 2021, 2022).

A Third-Space Opportunity: Pandemic Learning

As schools worldwide shut down in-person learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, new online learning spaces forced traditional educational models to transform, and educators needed to adapt to new teaching and learning environments (Bradford & Norman, 2022; Bubb & Jones, 2020; de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Lim, 2020; Popa, 2020; Soudien, 2020). Schooling became neither the total responsibility of the school nor the home but instead emerged as a negotiation between the two parties, with educators having to consider more effective implementations of blended learning (Bradford & Norman, 2022; de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Johnston et al., 2021, 2022). Thus, COVID-19 lockdown learning has provided a unique opportunity for educators to examine pandemic-related pedagogical shifts as potential examples for improving equity in schools and connections to students' home cultures (Bradford & Norman, 2022; Bubb & Jones, 2020; de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Lim, 2020; Soudien, 2020).

Shifts in Pedagogy. New third-space learning opportunities emerged during COVID-19 lockdown learning when families and schools had to work together to ensure the continuation of education during the pandemic (Bubb & Jones, 2020; de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Johnston et al., 2021, 2022; Lim, 2020; Uresti & Thomas, 2023). When students had to engage in learning from home, educators from this study reported seeing initial improvements in students who struggled in the classroom but thrived in the home environment because school and home blended into a third space for learning (Johnston et al., 2021, 2022; Uresti & Thomas, 2023). Educators also

noticed an improvement in the quality of the work for primary students when learners had access to resources from home. Additionally, teachers noted a new and better understanding of some students' home situations, like discovering a student may speak one language in the home but must navigate another language of instruction in the classroom (Johnston et al., 2021; Uresti & Thomas, 2023). Findings from COVID-19 virtual learning studies join other research pointing to the importance of tapping into the funds of knowledge available from students' cultural backgrounds to create a more robust learning experience (Buchs & Maradan, 2021; Buelow, 2017; Durán et al., 2020).

As lockdown learning continued over a more extended period, however, a theme emerged of parents wanting to protect boundaries between home and school, thus limiting third-space engagement (Johnston et al., 2021; Uresti & Thomas, 2023). Parents began requesting asynchronous learning in order to schedule instruction around home and work demands. Similarly, parents requested more direct, didactic lessons like videos or slideshows with voiceover instead of interactive, synchronous activities. As a result of the preserved boundaries between home and school, educators believed students' learning to be not as transformative as if the third space had remained with both home and school engaging in student learning (Johnston et al., 2021).

A study by Bubb and Jones (2020) on the shifted pedagogical techniques resulting from COVID-19 homebound learning revealed two-thirds of participating parents reported having better insight into and understanding of students' studies due to the shift. However, the findings showing increased parental involvement during lockdown learning from Johnston et al. (2021) contrast with findings from Bubb and Jones (2020), which indicated an increase in student independence, ownership, increased motivation, and individual responsibility for routines and

learning. Additionally, findings from the study by Bubb and Jones (2020) also indicated most students believed they made progress in their studies while homebound during COVID-19 lockdown learning. However, the study's findings again contrast with the findings of Johnston et al. (2021), in which teachers believed student achievement was not as transformative as may have been possible if parental involvement had remained steady in a third space.

Shifts in Culture. According to Hofstede (2001), the major characteristics of any culture typically endure over time, with no significant shifts occurring to a culture's characteristics unless there is a significant, dramatic outside force or event which might cause a need for change. Conversely, Yi (2018) suggests cultures continuously undergo modification and transformation in numerous ways, especially in response to society's rapidly evolving situations. In either case, the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on the educational realm may serve as a qualifying event for reconsidering culturally responsive pedagogical techniques, as shifts in both culture and educational approaches have created an opportunity for what de Klerk and Palmer (2021) call, "a rebuilding, reconnecting and reimagining of schools' education priorities to ensure equitable learning opportunities" (p. 21). Furthermore, Soudien (2020) suggests the COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted equity "blind spots" in education which must be addressed (p. 63).

According to literature, what has been lacking in equitable educational practices and third-space interactions have been tangible models for how to engage in the complex nature of each (Navarro et al., 2020; Ratnam, 2020). Emerging third-space learning experiences during COVID-19 lockdowns have provided a potential example, although the experiences have not been fully explored (Bubb & Jones, 2020; de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Johnston et al., 2021, 2022; Uresti & Thomas, 2023). For instance, school entities no longer had total control of learning

during lockdowns, so instruction had to be negotiated between school and home (de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Uresti & Thomas, 2023). Pandemic learning could not be relegated to an already existing order; instead, the order itself had to be transformed, which is a concept suggested in scholarship by Biesta (2009).

Despite contradictory findings regarding whether third-space learning during the COVID-19 pandemic was beneficial to student success, new hybrid techniques of home and school learning may represent innovative, adaptive instructional strategies for transforming learning by embracing students' cultural capital in a third space (Chen, 2020; de Klerk & Palmer, 2021). Additionally, third-space experiences from pandemic learning can be referenced as tangible models for how to implement hybrid spaces for negotiated, collaborative, and co-created education, especially concerning equitable and socially just experiences for diverse classrooms (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Bhabha, 2004; Johnston et al., 2021, 2022). Furthermore, third-space learning experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic can serve as opportunities for teachers to incorporate criticality and equity into pedagogical practices by re-envisioning traditional instructional techniques (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Chen, 2020; Uresti & Thomas, 2023).

Just as negotiation between school and home created transformative third-space opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic, similar third-space negotiations should be possible through culturally competent pedagogy in diverse educational settings (Chen, 2020; Gay, 2013; Gutiérrez, 2008; Ratnam, 2020). In diverse learning communities, not every culture will share the same goals, power dynamics, or values as the majority culture (Anderstaf et al., 2021; Ansah & Louw, 2019; Chen, 2020; Hofstede, 2001). Educators must identify, acknowledge, and value students' cultural funds of knowledge and lived experiences, using such elements to inform pedagogical practice (Buelow, 2017; Chen, 2020; Durán et al., 2020; Gay,

2013; Sanczyk, 2020). However, for equity to be possible, a third space must be negotiated between the school's majority culture and the entirety of the school's constituents (Jobe & Coles-Ritchie, 2016; Johnston et al., 2021, 2022; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). Within a third space, meaning can be co-created for what equitable education must look like for a community's students, providing substantive examples of how to meet all learners' needs so education can continue to be a transformative force in society (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Anderstaf et al., 2021; Bhabha, 2004; de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Freire, 2005; Fullan, 2020; Johnston et al., 2021).

Conclusion

Literature shows both culturally relevant pedagogy and third-space hybridity to be potential frameworks for helping U.S. K-12 educational communities to address the problem of inequity (Acquah et al., 2020; Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Gay, 2013; Welborn, 2019; Ratnam, 2020). However, recent scholarship also highlights the need for additional concrete examples of how to implement both culturally relevant and third-space techniques in K-12 schools to achieve more equitable and socially just learning environments (Acquah et al., 2020; Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Gupta, 2020; Navarro et al., 2020). Furthermore, research also demonstrates the need for more student voices to inform equitable pedagogical techniques, as lived experiences represent under-examined funds of knowledge (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018; Bubb & Jones, 2020; Buelow, 2017; Caetano et al., 2020; Riordan et al., 2019; Roe, 2019; Szelei et al., 2019). By applying the lessons of COVID-19 third-space learning to increased cultural insight regarding marginalized student populations, an opportunity has emerged for educators to re-examine instructional practices to promote equity in new, transformative ways (de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Johnston et al., 2021, 2022). By employing successful third-space, student-informed, and culturally relevant pedagogical practices, educators

can better meet the needs of today's increasingly diverse student populations (Gay, 2013; Green, Morales, et al., 2020). As a result, the field of education can continue to develop innovative best practices for creating more socially just and equitable learning environments, even in a rapidly evolving society (Fernández, 2019; Green & Edwards-Underwood, 2015; Navarro et al., 2020; Shields & Hesbol, 2020).

Chapter III: Design and Methodology

Promoting culturally relevant instructional practices among educators allows for the creation and maintenance of more equitable and socially just learning environments, particularly for culturally diverse students who often can be relegated to societal margins (Navarro et al., 2020; Williams, 2018). As cultural outsiders, marginalized students often lack the opportunity, voice, or social power available to majority-culture counterparts to be able to advocate for academic, social, or emotional needs within an educational context (Durán et al., 2020; Freire, 2005). However, third-space instructional techniques offer opportunities for the funds of knowledge of culturally diverse, marginalized groups to be voiced and implemented as a means to maintain a more equitable learning environment (Buelow, 2017; Chen, 2020; Durán et al., 2020; Roe, 2019). Thus, this study's purpose was to examine teachers' experiences with culturally relevant third-space pedagogical practices and perspectives on the practices' impact on equitable educational environments for culturally diverse students in U.S. K-12 settings. Additionally, the study aimed to identify real-world, implemented examples of culturally relevant third-space pedagogical practices within several diverse educational contexts. As a result, the findings from this study serve to fill the gap in the literature by providing actionable examples of the implementation of culturally relevant third-space pedagogical techniques within diverse U.S. K-12 academic spheres for promoting more equitable learning environments for culturally diverse students.

Research has demonstrated a need for both pre-service and in-service educators to hear more experiences from instructors in the field as to what practices best promote equitable, socially just, and culturally relevant educational environments (Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Navarro et al., 2020; Ratnam, 2020). Regarding the notion of third-space practices within

learning communities, there is also a recognized need for more practical examples of how stakeholders can engage in culturally relevant third-space practices, as the concept is both highly abstract and context-specific (Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Jobe & Coles-Ritchie, 2016; Ratnam, 2020; Ticknor et al., 2020). This study aimed to add to the literature surrounding both equitable, culturally relevant pedagogical techniques and third-space instructional endeavors by investigating the experiences of educators who have engaged in such practices. As a result, educational stakeholders, from pre-service teachers through K-12 administrators, can benefit from examining the findings from this study and might consider how the reported experiences relate to personal educational contexts. Considering the current scholarship and gaps in the literature surrounding the topic of culturally relevant third-space pedagogical practices, the following research questions guided this study:

1. What are teachers' reported experiences with culturally informed third-space practices in a U.S. K-12 setting?
2. How do U.S. K-12 teachers report using community funds of knowledge to integrate practical, culturally relevant third-space practices to inform more equitable learning environments?
3. What are teachers' perspectives on how culturally informed third-space pedagogical practices impact equitable learning environments for marginalized students in a U.S. K-12 setting?

Research Design

This study's research questions were investigated through multiple explanatory case studies. Case study research involves the investigation of a central concept within natural contexts for a prescribed period of time, using multiple data sources such as documents,

interviews, artifacts, and observations, whenever possible (Schwandt & Gates, 2018; Tellis, 1997; Yazan, 2015). Additionally, case studies provide a method for in-depth examination of complex concepts, and in multiple case studies, contrasting attributes between cases allow for rich comparison (Adams et al., 2022; Schwandt & Gates, 2018, Yin, 2009, 2012, 2018).

Furthermore, case studies provide the benefit of being accessible to readers, flexible in data collection methods, inclusive of multiple perspectives, and capable of documenting innovative practices (Moriarty, 2011; Pearson et al., 2015; Yin, 2009, 2012, 2018). In order to produce a proper multiple case study investigation, this study employed three phases for gathering multiple forms of data for each case (Yazan, 2015).

Due to data being collected in multiple forms throughout the study's three phases, the researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze quantitative data from the initial questionnaire. Additionally, the researcher employed qualitative thematic analysis as the best option for examining participants' self-reported experiences with equitable learning environments and culturally informed third-space instructional techniques in diverse academic settings (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2021; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Yin, 2009, 2012, 2018). Thematic analysis of collected data also allowed for theme generation both within and across data sets and cases, using a combination of deductive *a priori* coding based on the study's theoretical framework and inductive *in vivo* and descriptive coding grounded in the data to capture the essence of each participant's experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Lochmiller, 2021). Although qualitative findings are rarely generalizable across populations, the study's methodological approach has the potential to be adapted and replicated by researchers in other contexts, allowing for unique elements of any study site to be examined (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Maxwell, 2013; Moriarty, 2011).

Part I: Questionnaire

Questionnaires can serve not only as a tool to record participant demographic information but also can provide a method by which the researcher may screen participants for inclusion in a case study (Yin, 2009, 2018). Responses to questionnaires can demonstrate common themes, behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, or understandings of potential target audience participants (McGuirk & O'Neill, 2016). Additionally, case studies rely on process-tracing and pattern-matching over time through the triangulation of multiple forms of data, of which a questionnaire may be considered (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2009, 2018). Furthermore, the closed questioning format of questionnaires can be beneficial for provoking narrative or thoughtful expansion on a study's topic of focus, often through an additional interview (Langley, 2004; Yin, 2018).

Part I of the study consisted of participants voluntarily completing an initial online Qualtrics questionnaire and took place from July through September of 2023 (see Appendix B; McGuirk & O'Neill, 2016; Yin, 2009, 2018). The questionnaire recorded participant demographic information and included items developed to examine participants' self-reported practices with culturally relevant third-space instructional practices as a method of screening for respondents with relevant experience to be considered as continued participants in Parts II and III of the study (Yin, 2009, 2018). Questionnaire items were curated to reflect elements of CRP, representing both characteristics of third-space instructional techniques and the study's research questions (McGuirk & O'Neill, 2016).

Part II: Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews are foundational for case-study research designs (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2009, 2012, 2018). Including semi-structured interviews in data collection allows researchers to follow up with participants' initial questionnaire responses for clarification or elaboration (Creswell &

Guetterman, 2019; Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2009, 2012, 2018). Likewise, the personal interaction of interviews allows the researcher to read the body language of the participants, providing greater insight for the researcher to understand the information a participant communicates while also allowing for the adaptation of questions based on the direction of the participants' answers or reactions (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022). Semi-structured interviews also provide data for non-measurable research questions, allowing participants to share firsthand experiences and practical examples relating to the topic of study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022). Additionally, the semi-structured nature of personal interviews offers maximum flexibility for the researcher, such as adjusting questions as new information is discovered or modifying questions based on the context or participant (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022; Moriarty, 2011). Semi-structured interviews are also helpful tools for gathering qualitative data within studies with smaller sample sizes, in contrast to the set sample sizes of fully quantitative studies, which are designed to maximize the generalizability of findings (Boddy, 2016; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022). Instead, qualitative sample sizes can be related to a study's feasibility and timeline and are not bound to mathematical generalizability (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022). However, due to the variability of sample sizes, the results from qualitative data are usually non-generalizable beyond immediate contexts (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Maxwell, 2013; Moriarty, 2011).

Part II of the study consisted of follow-up one-on-one semi-structured interviews with 14 participants for more in-depth examination of individual pedagogical techniques (Schwandt & Gates, 2018; Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2009, 2018). Specifically, the interviews were designed to allow participants who demonstrated noteworthy experiences with culturally relevant third-space

instructional practices to elaborate on initial questionnaire responses (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Schwandt & Gates, 2018; Yin, 2009, 2012, 2018). Additionally, the interviews allowed for more in-depth examinations of participants' context-specific third-space instructional strategies, including how participants incorporate diverse students' funds of knowledge when working toward equitable classroom environments (see Appendix C; Schwandt & Gates, 2018; Yin, 2009, 2012, 2018). The follow-up interviews occurred during August and September of 2023 as the researcher constantly evaluated incoming Part I questionnaire responses for eligibility to be considered for Part II.

Part III: Written Reflections & Artifact Collection

In case studies, written responses can provide text for qualitative thematic data analysis and coding. Written responses also allow participants to complete answers at a personally convenient time and are not bound by the physical presence of the researcher. Furthermore, questions for an open-ended written response prompt can be designed by the researcher, thus allowing more flexibility in responses than scaled surveys, which often have pre-determined response options and do not allow for elaboration (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Tasker & Cisneroz, 2019). However, there are drawbacks to using written response techniques, including the varied length of participant responses, responses removed from the natural context, participant bias through self-reporting, and the considerable length of time necessary for coding and analyzing the responses (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Artifacts also provide rich data for collection and comparison (Tellis, 1997; Yazan, 2015). When combined with other forms of data, such as interviews and written text, collected artifacts serve as a method of triangulation (Tellis, 1997; Yazan, 2015). Triangulating data allows for deeper and richer understanding of a context or area of study by providing multiple

methods through which data can be collected and analyzed (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Maxwell, 2013; Noor & Shafee, 2021; Pearson et al., 2015). In case studies, the collection of artifacts is included as a method allowing researchers to gain a better understanding of the concept being investigated (Schwandt & Gates, 2018; Tellis, 1997; Yazan, 2015). Similarly, artifacts can serve as evidence of the issue being studied, thus verifying findings or otherwise providing sources for more in-depth analysis of the issue (Pearson et al., 2015; Yazan, 2015).

Part III of the study included the collection of written reflections and artifacts from participants during September, October, and November of 2023. At the conclusion of Part II's semi-structured interviews, the researcher asked if participants would be willing to share practices and experiences through reflections and artifacts in the coming three months. Participants who agreed to contribute to the collected reflections and artifacts over the three-month period provided data for process-tracing, an important factor in case study methodology (see Appendix D; Schwandt & Gates, 2018; Yin, 2009, 2012, 2018). The third phase of the study aimed to capture teacher-reported experiences with in-context third-space strategies during current professional practice (Schwandt & Gates, 2018; Yin, 2009, 2012, 2018). Data gathered from semi-structured interviews, reflection prompts, and artifact collection provided the foundational information for coding and thematic analysis to support the study's findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012; Bruns, 1989; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013; Saldaña, 2021; Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2009, 2012, 2018).

Threats to Validity

Although qualitative approaches provide many benefits for data collection for non-measurable research questions, there are some threats to validity to be considered when using such research methods (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Moriarty, 2011). First, data might be

constrained to participant-reported experiences, which may be subject to participants' personal bias. Furthermore, researcher bias may play a role in data collection and analysis, as the researcher is an active participant in the process and cannot be entirely removed from the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2021; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Maxwell, 2013).

Additionally, data analysis can be subject to researcher reactivity (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Maxwell, 2013). Lastly, if only qualitative data is collected, a lack of triangulation or crystallization can exist without multiple forms of data to support study findings (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013).

Considering potential threats to validity, the researcher took great care to acknowledge personal bias throughout the study by journaling reflexive field notes of personal positionality and reactions to participants' responses (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013; Yin, 2009). Additionally, the researcher carefully confirmed findings via member checking and participant review using external audits through critical friends (Candela, 2019; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Maxwell, 2013; Noor & Shafee, 2021). Critical friends are defined as trusted colleagues who provide an outside perspective, ask probing questions, and offer additional lenses through which to evaluate information (Costa & Kallick, 1993; Noor & Shafee, 2021). For the study's external audit, critical friends were chosen based on the qualifications of having advanced professional studies in the areas of education or intercultural studies and research. Additionally, the chosen critical friends have reached at least the dissertation stage of doctoral research to assure rigorous and ethical critique. Critical friend audits and participant review of findings were integral to triangulation for the study, as such practices took the place of objective observation by the researcher, which would not be feasible due to the study's time constraints and varied locations and situations of the study participants

(Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Noor & Shafee, 2021).

Furthermore, the researcher also maintained a transparent audit trail of field notes, reflexive journaling, and analytic memos to produce a credible chain of evidence and valid study (Marshall et al., 2022; Pearson et al., 2015; Yin, 2009, 2018).

Institutional Review Board Approval Process

Before beginning the study, the researcher applied for and was granted Institutional Review Board approval through Northwest Nazarene University in April 2023 (see Appendix E; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022). Key ethical considerations from the IRB process included the researcher's completion of human subjects training (see Appendix F) and the study's focus on participants over the age of 18. Additionally, the researcher prepared informed consent forms for participants to complete prior to participating in the study (see Appendix G; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Finally, although the study's focus did include teacher interpretations of the lived experiences of protected and potentially marginalized populations, the researcher was careful to ensure all identifiable information was redacted and replaced with pseudonyms for maximum confidentiality and participant protection (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Maxwell, 2013).

Participants and Setting

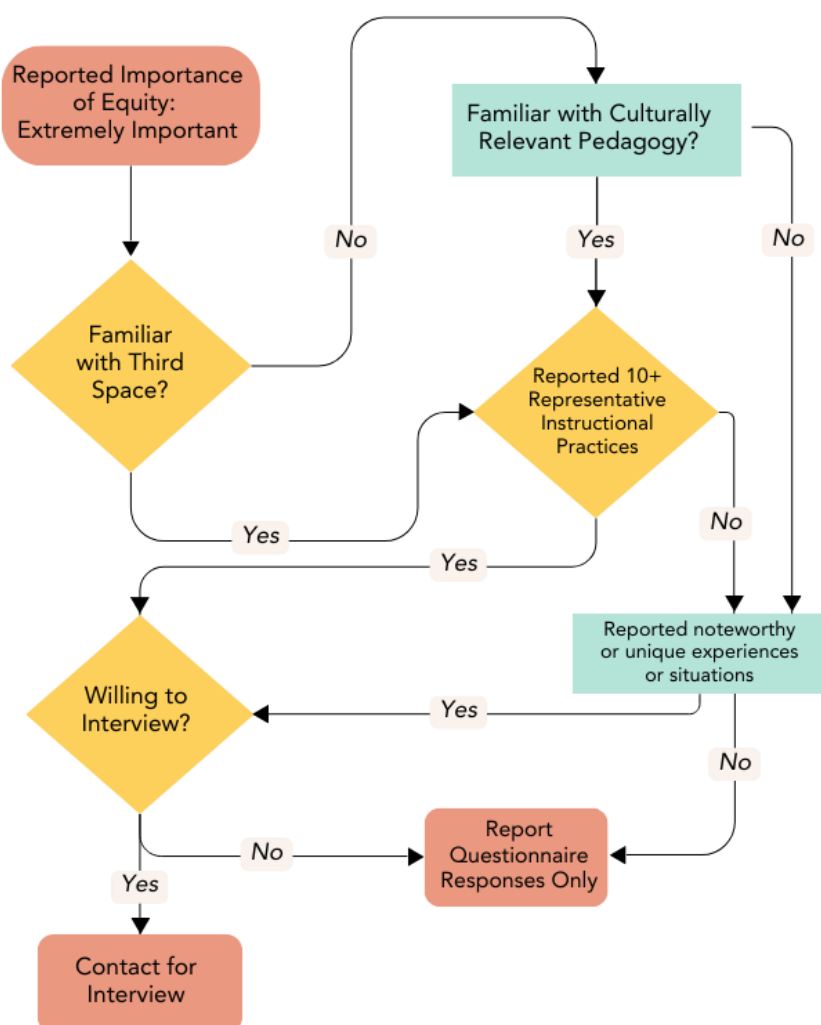
Participants for the study were initially recruited using purposeful maximum variation sampling from two online social media groups for current educators experienced in culturally equitable instructional practices in diverse U.S. K-12 educational settings (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Palinkas et al., 2015; Suri, 2011). Purposefully sampling for maximum variation allows for multiple perspectives of a central concept to be investigated, aligning conceptually with the purpose of multiple explanatory case study methodology (Creswell &

Guetterman, 2019; Palinkas et al., 2015; Suri, 2011; Yin, 2009, 2018). Additionally, maximum variation sampling allowed for the purposeful selection of differing participants to highlight the uniqueness of each case, again conceptually aligning with the methodology of multiple explanatory case studies (Suri, 2011; Yin, 2009, 2018). Recruiting participants from social media allowed for a broader and quicker response rate than e-mailing a variety of school districts and helped to target educators who self-identified as working within diverse U.S. K-12 contexts (Brickman Bhutta, 2012; Dusek et al., 2015). Likewise, social media recruitment allowed for the investigation of educational contexts otherwise personally unfamiliar to the researcher, while also allowing for richer case study data to be collected from numerous contexts (Brickman Bhutta, 2012; Dusek et al., 2015; Maxwell, 2013). After the researcher requested and was granted administrator permission to post in two specialized social media groups for teachers of English language learners, 101 educators who self-identified as working in culturally diverse U.S. K-12 educational contexts and having a passion for educational equity responded to the researcher's social media post recruitment requests during July, August, and September of 2023 (see Appendices H, I, J, and K). At the time of the recruitment, Social Media Group 1 (pseudonym) had an approximate online membership of 12,500 individuals, and Social Media Group 2 (pseudonym) had an approximate online membership of 14,000 individuals.

After initial recruitment from social media, three additional educators who self-identified as working in culturally diverse U.S. K-12 educational contexts and having a passion for educational equity were recruited through snowball sampling referrals during August and September of 2023 (see Appendix L; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Participants were referred to the study as a result of the researcher's gatekeeper connections within other U.S. K-12 school districts (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Naderifar et al., 2017). Moreover, the snowball

sampling of participants allowed for responses outside of the researcher's sphere of influence (Naderifar et al., 2017). Furthermore, participant recruitment through snowball sampling allowed for the targeting of individuals with the specific instructional experience to provide data germane to the study's research questions (Dusek et al., 2015; Naderifar et al., 2017).

As recruited participants completed the initial Part I questionnaire, the researcher briefly examined each response and used purposeful maximum variation sampling to select 44 educators to follow up with one-on-one semi-structured interviews to begin in-depth case studies for Part II of the study. As shown in Figure 2, the selection criteria for interviews were based on participants whose questionnaire responses aligned closely with the study's purpose or represented noteworthy professional experiences or demographic backgrounds. Several additional respondents met the criteria to be selected for Part II of the study but did not wish to be contacted for an interview.

Figure 2*Selection Criteria for Part II*

Additionally, as detailed in the demographic information in Table 1, the researcher took care to select interview participants from different general locations within the U.S., including the Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Northwest, and Southwest, as well as from different grade level bands, including K-2, 3-6, 7-9, and 10-12. The researcher also made concerted efforts to include a diverse cross-section of educators for consideration within the selection criteria, including participants with various years of teaching experience, subject areas taught, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and gender identities. Selection for follow-up interviews occurred during

August and September of 2023 (see Appendix M). From the 44 participants who were contacted to schedule an interview, 19 individuals scheduled appointments to be interviewed, and 14 completed the interview. Five participants who initially scheduled appointments did not complete the interviews, with four canceling prior to the appointment, and one participant not appearing at the scheduled appointment time. Through e-mail, the researcher offered each participant who did not attend the interview appointment an opportunity to reschedule, but none of the participants responded.

Table 1*Part II Participants*

Name	State	Gender	Age	Years in Diverse Contexts	Current Role	Race or Ethnicity	Grade Bands Taught	Degree	Interview Length
Brooke	Illinois	F	21-30	1-5	English/ENL	White	7-9, 10-12	Master's	35 min
Nala	Ohio	F	31-40	1-5	ESOL	Asian	K-2, 3-6, 7-9	Master's	53 min
Shannon	Alabama	F	21-30	1-5	ESL	White	3-6, 7-9, 10-12	Master's	27 min
Kira	Tennessee	F	21-30	1-5	General Ed.	White	K-2	Bachelor's	24 min
Amelia	Colorado	F	41-50	6-10	English	White	7-9	Doctorate	42 min
Becky	Ohio	F	31-40	6-10	ESL	White	3-6, 7-9	Master's	33 min
Ashley	New York	F	21-30	6-10	Director of MLL	White	K-2, 3-6, 7-9, 10-12	Master's	39 min
Wendy	Ohio	F	51-60	16-20	ESL	White	K-2	Doctorate	38 min
Loretta	Rhode Island	F	61+	16-20	English & ESL	White	7-9, 10-12	Bachelor's	57 min
Vanessa	Kansas	F	41-50	16-20	English	White	7-9, 10-12	Master's	39 min
Bess	Missouri	F	41-50	16-20	ELL	White	K-2, 3-6	Master's	49 min
Destiny*	Washington	F	41-50	21-25	ESL Math	Asian & White	K-2, 3-6	Master's	65 min
Debra	New Jersey	F	41-50	21-25	English Interventionist	White	10-12	Doctorate	49 min
Diana*	Wisconsin	F	51-60	26+	ESL Teacher & Liaison	Latina	K-2, 3-6, 10-12	Master's	46 min

Note. All names are pseudonyms. Participants marked with * are National Board-Certified.

At the conclusion of each semi-structured interview, participants whose interviews represented noteworthy experiences with equity or third-space practices were asked to consider participating in Part III reflections and artifact collection. Part III's reflections and artifact collections were developed to provide the researcher with a closer, more specific examination of representative cases of third-space instructional techniques to collect richer, more in-depth data for examination and comparison (Suri, 2011; Yin, 2009, 2018). Participants who agreed to participate in Part III were contacted via e-mail with a linked, privately shared Google Drive Folder where monthly reflections and artifacts could be uploaded (see Appendices D and N; Opara et al., 2023; Torrentira, 2020). For the duration of Part III, the selected participants who were willing to participate completed monthly reflection exercises and provided artifacts of example practices for each of the months of September, October, and November of 2023, as shown in Table 2 (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Tasker & Cisneroz, 2019; Tellis, 1997; Yazan, 2015).

Table 2

Part III Participants

Name	State	Gender	Age	Years in Diverse Contexts	Current Role	Race or Ethnicity	Grade Bands Taught
Brooke	Illinois	F	21-30	1-5	English/ENL	White	7-9, 10-12
Shannon	Alabama	F	21-30	1-5	ESL	White	3-6, 7-9, 10-12
Kira	Tennessee	F	21-30	1-5	General Ed.	White	K-2
Ashley	New York	F	21-30	6-10	Director of MLL	White	K-2, 3-6, 7-9, 10-12
Amelia	Colorado	F	41-50	6-10	English	White	7-9
Becky	Ohio	F	31-40	6-10	ESL	White	3-6, 7-9
Loretta	Rhode Island	F	61+	16-20	English & ESL	White	7-9, 10-12
Wendy	Ohio	F	51-60	16-20	ESL	White	K-2
Bess	Missouri	F	41-50	16-20	ELL	White	K-2, 3-6
Destiny*	Washington	F	41-50	21-25	ESL Math	Asian & White	K-2, 3-6
Diana*	Wisconsin	F	51-60	26+	ESL Teacher & Liaison	Latina	K-2, 3-6, 10-12

Note. All names are pseudonyms. Participants marked with * are National Board-Certified.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected via a questionnaire deployed through Qualtrics for Part I of the study, through semi-structured interviews for Part II, and through a privately shared Google Drive folder between each participant and the researcher for Part III (Opara et al., 2023; Torrentira, 2020). The instrument used for Part I of the study was a researcher-developed questionnaire, which was curated to address the study's research questions and to produce items aligned with foundational concepts of third-space instructional strategies (see Appendix B; McGuirk & O'Neill, 2016; Yin, 2012, 2018). Items from the questionnaire recorded participant demographics such as grade levels and subject areas taught, number of years teaching, age, ethnicity, and U.S. state. The instrument also inquired about the diversity present within the teacher's classroom, the teacher's experience with equitable practices for culturally diverse student groups, and the teacher's experiences with community-informed equitable educational practices, thus highlighting participant responses closely aligned with the study's purpose and identifying participants' potential fit for Part II of the study (McGuirk & O'Neill, 2016; Suri, 2011; Yin, 2012, 2018).

For Part II of the study, data were collected through a researcher-created protocol for individual semi-structured interviews with select participants. The interview protocol was also curated to address the study's research questions (see Appendix C; Yin, 2012, 2018). Semi-structured questions were developed to examine participants' culturally hybrid instructional practices and inquired about practices which teachers believed led to more equity for culturally diverse students. Additionally, the interview protocol offered a brief description of third-space theory and asked participants what personally employed practices might be considered third-space techniques.

Reflective written responses and participant-selected artifact data were collected for Part III of the study through a privately shared Google Drive folder (Gray et al., 2020; Opara et al., 2023; Santhosh et al., 2021; Torrentira, 2020). The researcher created and shared a folder electronically with each participant for ease of data collection (see Appendix D; Gray et al., 2020; Opara et al., 2023; Santhosh et al., 2021; Torrentira, 2020). During September, October, and November 2023, the researcher encouraged each participant to answer reflective prompts and to provide artifacts of individual practices by uploading materials to the online folder (see Appendix N). The reflective prompts for each month directly connected with the study's research questions, provided data about participants' practices over a prescribed period of time, and allowed for an alternative to in-person observation (Göker, 2016; Torrentira, 2020; Yin, 2009, 2018).

Expert Panel, Validation, and Piloting

Prior to implementing the questionnaire, interview questions, and reflective prompts, the researcher validated and piloted the material through an expert panel of peers (Marshall et al., 2022; Torlig et al., 2022). Critical colleagues with expertise in the areas of intercultural studies, instrumentation, and diverse K-12 educational contexts provided feedback on the content, structure, wording, length, and clarity of questions and interview stems (Maxwell, 2013; Torlig et al., 2022). As a result of the validating and piloting process, the researcher applied the critiques and suggestions from the expert panel to the questionnaire, interview protocol, and reflective prompts, adjusting the material to reflect the suggested changes in wording and structure for clarity (Majid et al., 2017; Roberts, 2020). The expert panel also provided feedback to validate the instruments, rating each item's relevancy to the study's purposes to ensure each phase of instrumentation accurately assessed the study's objectives and research questions

(Lynn, 1986; Polit & Beck, 2006; Torlig et al., 2022). The validation process allowed the researcher to curate appropriate instrumentation for data collection (Torlig et al., 2022).

Questionnaire Validation and Piloting. For the study's Part I questionnaire, seven experts were contacted electronically to review the instrument's content and pilot the instrument. Experts were asked to rate the instrument's items in terms of explicitness and relevancy to the study's topic and research questions (Polit & Beck, 2006; Torlig et al., 2022). The experts used a Likert-type rating system of 1 through 4 to rate the relevance of each item, with each number representing the following: 1 (*Not Relevant*), 2 (*Somewhat Relevant/Needs Modification*), 3 (*Quite Relevant/Could Be Improved with Minor Modification*), and 4 (*Highly Relevant/No Modification Needed*), as proposed in literature (Polit & Beck, 2006; Torlig et al., 2022). Ratings of item relevancy resulted in a mean item-level content validity index (Mean I-CVI) of .99. Instruments with item-level content validity index (I-CVI) above .78 are considered acceptable for a panel of seven reviewers (Lynn, 1986; Polit & Beck, 2006). Only one item on the questionnaire received an I-CVI score below 1.00; the item received an I-CVI score of .86, which was still within the acceptable score range. Similarly, the questionnaire's scale content validity index universal agreement (S-CVI | UA) returned a score of .95. Scores for S-CVI | UA above .90 are generally considered to be acceptable for a panel of seven reviewers (Polit & Beck, 2006). A summary of experts' scoring can be seen in Table 3. In addition to item relevancy scoring, experts provided specific feedback for modifications to the wording, length, and clarity of items. Some suggested modifications included adapting initial yes/no response options to Likert-type response options, clarifying the term "funds of knowledge" to be more conceptually accessible to participants, and avoiding the word "marginalized" due to potential bias.

Table 3*Part I Questionnaire Expert Ratings*

Item	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5	Expert 6	Expert 7	Experts Agreed	Item CVI
1-7, 6	<i>Demographic Information/Part II Participation Indicator</i>								
1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
4	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
5.1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
5.2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
5.3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
5.4	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
5.5	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
5.6	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
5.7	x	x	x	x	x	--	x	6	.86
5.8	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
5.9	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
5.10	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
5.11	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
5.12	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
5.13	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
5.14	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
5.15	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
								Mean I-CVI:	.99
								S-CVI UA:	.95
Proportion Relevant:	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	.95	1.00	Mean Expert Proportion:	.99

Note. I-CVI: Item-level content validity index.

S-CVI | UA: Scale-level content validity index, universal agreement calculation method.

Semi-structured Interview Validation and Piloting. In addition to rating the Part I questionnaire items for relevancy, the seven-expert panel also provided feedback and critique for the study's Part II Semi-Structured Interview Protocol. Although some literature traditionally suggests evaluating face validity and piloting to be sufficient for testing qualitative instruments, recent scholarship indicates a high value for calculating the content validity of such instruments, as well (Torlig et al., 2022). As a result, experts were asked to rate the relevancy of the semi-structured interview questions with the same scale used to evaluate the Part I questionnaire: 1 (*Not Relevant*), 2 (*Somewhat Relevant/Needs Modification*), 3 (*Quite Relevant/Could Be Improved with Minor Modification*), and 4 (*Highly Relevant/No Modification Needed*), as suggested in literature (Polit & Beck, 2006; Torlig et al., 2022). After expert review, the protocol scored a Mean I-CVI of .99, which was above the .78 threshold for the number of experts, and an S-CVI | UA of .92, which was above the .90 threshold for the number of experts, indicating the protocol's high level of relevancy to the study's purposes. In addition to providing content validity for the interview protocol, experts also provided face validity feedback through suggested modifications to item stems. Suggested modifications included shortening and rephrasing items for participant clarity. A summary of the expert panel's reviews can be seen in Table 4. In addition to validating the protocol, three expert peers sharing characteristics of the study's target audience participated in individually piloting the interview with the researcher using Google Meet and Otter.ai applications. As a result of the piloting, the researcher increased the suggested amount of time for the interview to approximately 30 minutes to more accurately reflect the time in which the pilots were completed.

Table 4*Part II Interview Protocol Expert Ratings*

Item	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5	Expert 6	Expert 7	Experts Agreed	Item CVI
1	<i>Consent to Proceed</i>								
2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
4	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
5	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
6	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
7	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
8	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
9	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
10	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
11	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
12	x	--	x	x	x	x	x	6	.86
13	<i>Request for Additional Information</i>								
14	<i>Interest in Part III Participation</i>								
								Mean I-CVI:	.99
								S-CVI UA:	.92
Proportion Relevant:	1.00	.92	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	Mean Expert Proportion:	.99

Note. I-CVI: Item-level content validity index.

S-CVI | UA: Scale-level content validity index, universal agreement calculation method.

Reflective Prompt Validation and Piloting. Due to the evolving nature of the monthly reflective prompts for Part III of the study, experts were asked to evaluate the content and face validity of the initial set of reflective prompts to be provided for the September reflection. Again, using the same Likert scale content validity rating system as Parts I and II of the study, experts universally agreed on the relevancy of the prompts to the study's topic and objectives, as the

three prompts were based on the study's three research questions. As a result, the prompts received a Mean I-CVI of 1.00 and an S-CVI | UA of 1.00. However, experts did provide key suggestions for the phrasing and implementation of the prompts. Suggested modifications included providing participants with a clearer definition for “funds of knowledge” and reconsidering the amount of time it might take participants to complete the reflection prompts. The researcher applied the suggested modifications to the prompts by rephrasing “funds of knowledge” to include the concept of students’ home community involvement and adding an additional five minutes to the suggested time frame for completing the reflections each month. A summary of the expert panel’s ratings can be seen in Table 5. Additionally, one expert peer with similar characteristics as the target audience piloted the initial reflection prompts, ensuring proper accessibility and digital sharing settings were in working order for the study’s participants.

Table 5

Part III Reflective Prompt Expert Ratings

Item	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5	Expert 6	Expert 7	Experts Agreed	Item CVI
1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
Mean I-CVI:									1.00
S-CVI UA:									1.00
Proportion Relevant:	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	Mean Expert Proportion:	1.00

Note. I-CVI: Item-level content validity index.

S-CVI | UA: Scale-level content validity index, universal agreement calculation method.

Collection Process

After gaining permission to post from the administrators of two specialized social media groups, the researcher shared a link to the Part I questionnaire via recruitment posts once a week for four consecutive weeks in each group (Brickman Bhutta, 2012; Dusek et al., 2015). Before engaging in Part I of the study, recruited participants first completed an online informed consent form (see Appendix G; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Participants then completed the initial online questionnaire via Qualtrics during July, August, and September of 2023 (Harrison & Hernandez, 2022; McGuirk & O'Neill, 2016; Yin, 2009, 2018). The questionnaire included several initial questions regarding the educator's personal and professional demographic information, and familiarity with culturally relevant education and third-space instructional techniques (see Appendix B). Additionally, participants were asked to select examples of individual professional practices from a sample list of potential culturally relevant and third-space practices to determine participants' suitability for the study (McGuirk & O'Neill, 2016; Yin, 2009, 2018). Incomplete questionnaires, responses from participants whose teaching context was outside of the U.S. or not within the K-12 sphere, and questionnaires demonstrating fewer than 10 of 15 possible examples of culturally relevant or third-space instructional practices were removed from the pool of potential Part II participants to maintain a target audience familiar with the study's areas of focus (Yin, 2009). The researcher concluded collection of Part I data in September 2023 after two consecutive weeks of no new questionnaire responses.

Participants whose responses closely aligned with the study's purpose were contacted via e-mail to complete a semi-structured interview for Part II of the study (see Appendix M; Bruns, 1989; Yin, 2009). Overall, 44 participants were contacted to participate in Part II, and 19 participants agreed to a semi-structured interview, with 14 ultimately completing the interviews

(see Appendix C). The protocol for the semi-structured interviews elicited data describing the diversity and equity practices of the participants' K-12 educational settings beyond what was reported in the initial questionnaire (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Langley, 2004; Marshall et al., 2022). Moreover, the protocol included opportunities for participants to describe individual professional strategies for promoting educational equity for culturally diverse students within the participant's educational context. The protocol also asked for a description of how the educators partnered with culturally diverse students' home communities or invited diverse funds of knowledge into the learning experience to promote educational equity. As responses were collected, data from completed interviews were evaluated continually for relevancy to the study (Yin, 2009, 2018).

Participants who were selected for and agreed to a follow-up interview completed a researcher-developed semi-structured interview protocol with the researcher in August and September of 2023. Prior to the interview, the researcher e-mailed the interview protocol to participants for preparation purposes to promote richer, more in-depth responses during the interview (Bruns, 1989; Stacey & Vincent, 2011). Interviews took place virtually via Google Meet, and participants agreed to have the interviews recorded via Google Meet and the Otter.ai software application for transcription purposes, although the researcher examined and cleaned all automated transcriptions for accuracy (Corrente & Bourgeault, 2022; Gray et al., 2020; Harrison & Hernandez, 2022; Keen et al., 2022; Marshall et al., 2022; Santhosh et al., 2021). Due to two participants' technical difficulties, the recorded Google Meet was replaced with telephone call recorded via Otter.ai software (Marshall et al., 2022; Torrentira, 2020). Eleven of the interviews lasted approximately 30-45 minutes, and three interviews lasted approximately one hour. One interview lasting approximately one hour was partially attributed to the participant not preparing

with the interview protocol prior to the appointment and thus needing more time to consider each question. Two additional interviews lasting approximately one hour were partially due to the researcher's inexperience, as the two interviews were some of the first to be conducted during Part II.

Part II's interview protocol included specific questions about third-space practices not originally addressed in the initial Part I questionnaire (see Appendix B; Langley, 2004; Yin, 2018). The interview protocol sought descriptions of the participant's third-space pedagogical practices, descriptions and examples of cultural hybridity in the participant's classroom, descriptions and examples of the participant's community-informed, culturally relevant instructional techniques, and descriptions of the participant's role in developing the classroom cultural atmosphere. The researcher recorded field notes and analytic memos during the interviews and again while cleaning and reviewing the recorded transcripts, noting participants' body language, tone of voice, and other details not otherwise identifiable solely through transcription (Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013). From the pool of participants who agreed to an interview for Part II of the study, the researcher employed purposeful sampling to curate a group of demographically diverse participants to ensure maximum variation sampling for participation in Part III of the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The goal of the purposeful sampling was to ensure a representation of participants with a variety of ethnic or racial backgrounds, subjects or grade levels taught, and school locations within the U.S. Additionally, including a diversity of participants allowed the researcher to illuminate a practical number of notable cases from multiple, distinct contexts and populations while working within the brief timeframe of this study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Yin, 2009, 2018).

As a result of the maximum variation sampling, 12 participants were selected to participate in Part III of the study, with six participants ultimately completing each of the three monthly, researcher-prepared reflection exercises, five participants completing one or two of the monthly reflections, and one participant who did not provide any reflections or artifacts. The number of participants selected for Part III of the study represented a sample size for multiple case studies research where the benefits of the study to be clearly seen through the study's findings (Gentles et al., 2015). Critical colleagues and participants who confirmed agreement to participate in Part III of the study received summary results from the coding and analysis of Part II interview responses via e-mail for member checking and participant review (see Appendix O; Candela, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013). Prior to member checking and participant review, the researcher redacted all names and identifying information about participants, students, or specific educational institutions to protect both participants and associated stakeholders (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022). After receiving feedback on the coding of responses from both the participants and critical colleagues, the researcher adjusted the findings based on the offered suggestions and clarifications (Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013).

Prepared by the researcher, Part III's reflective prompts mirrored the study's research questions, and participants were encouraged to spend approximately 10-15 minutes on the task during each month in order to speed data collection, encourage participant responsiveness, ensure similar data collection methods across cases, and provide an alternative to in-person observation (Adams et al., 2022; Torrentira, 2020). Participants had the option to respond to the reflective prompts either by typing or through speech-to-text dictation responses in a Google Doc shared with the researcher (Gray et al., 2020; Hest, 2022; Opara et al., 2023; Torrentira, 2020).

Additionally, participants were asked to upload to a privately shared Google Drive folder any artifacts representative of third-space, community-informed, or equitable instructional practices used during the month for process-tracing and triangulation of data (Gray et al., 2020; Opara et al., 2023; Yin, 2009). To maintain participant confidentiality as much as possible, Google Drive folders were shared only between the researcher and each participant individually (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Opara et al., 2023; Torrentira, 2020). At the close of September, October, and November, the researcher accessed the shared folder and evaluated the artifacts and participants' reflective responses for coding and analysis (Tasker & Cisneroz, 2019; Tellis, 1997; Yazan, 2015). After the conclusion of the data analysis in December, a summary of Part III findings was sent to participants and critical friends for participant review and member checking to ensure the trustworthiness of the study's findings (see Appendix P; Candela, 2019; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013).

Analytical Methods

From September to December 2023, response data from participants from both Part II and Part III of the study were analyzed using thematic analysis through *a priori*, *in vivo*, and descriptive thematic concept coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2021; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Lochmiller, 2021; Maxwell, 2013). First, the audio from video-recorded interviews was transcribed via Otter.ai transcription software, and transcriptions were imported into ATLAS.ti software to aid in data storage and organization (Corrente & Bourgeault, 2022; Harrison & Hernandez, 2022; Keen et al., 2022; Lopezosa & Codina, 2023; Paulus & Lester, 2016; Soratto et al., 2020). Next, the researcher reviewed and analyzed the transcription texts deductively using the five themes of the study's theoretical framework as *a priori* codes to determine concepts aligned with the themes of the framework and to illuminate inductively

concepts not addressed within the framework's themes through *in vivo* and descriptive thematic coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2021; Maxwell, 2013). Next, the researcher used ATLAS.ti computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) to aid in pattern and word frequency identification to further illuminate common themes present within the responses (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Lopezosa & Codina, 2023; Paulus & Lester, 2016; Soratto et al., 2020). The data analysis process continued until saturation for each case (Maxwell, 2013; Saldaña, 2021). After saturation, the researcher uploaded a summary of thematic findings to Google Docs and shared the findings with two critical friends prior to summarizing the results for participant member checking to ensure the reliability and validity of the identified themes (Appendix O; Costa & Kallick, 1993; Hopper et al., 2021; Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013; Noor & Shafee, 2021).

During the Part II of the study, the researcher became familiar with the data during the collection process, then completed the first cycle of *a priori*, descriptive thematic, and *in vivo* coding of the transcribed responses from August through September of 2023 (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Maxwell, 2013; Saldaña, 2021). The researcher reviewed, analyzed, and coded the collected responses personally and with the aid of ATLAS.ti CAQDAS for concept and word frequency analysis, as pattern matching represents an important method of case study analysis (Lopezosa & Codina, 2023; Paulus & Lester, 2016; Soratto et al., 2020; Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2009, 2018). The researcher then categorized the initial codes within the five themes of Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Framework: Identity and Achievement, Equity and Excellence, Developmental Appropriateness, Teaching the Whole Child, and Student-Teacher Relationships. The *a priori* codes based on the themes from Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) framework aligned the coding process with the study's purpose and

theoretical framework (Saldaña, 2021). In addition to deductively coding, the researcher also examined data inductively for descriptive thematic and *in vivo* codes falling outside the concept themes presented in Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2021; Maxwell, 2013). The analysis process continued until saturation and theoretical sufficiency, where no new information relating to the themes of the Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) framework and no new descriptive thematic or *in vivo* codes were identifiable in the data (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022; Marshall et al., 2022; Saldaña, 2021). The researcher then evaluated responses for alignment with the study's purpose through a second cycle of thematic concept coding during October 2023 (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012; Saldaña, 2021). After a second cycle of thematic concept coding, critical friends examined the researcher's findings to ensure reliability and validity (Costa & Kallick, 1993; Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013; Noor & Shafee, 2021). Suggestions from the critical friend review included adjusting verbiage for clarity and accuracy and potentially separating findings based on whether participants worked with culturally diverse students exclusively or in general population settings. Based on the critical friend suggestions, the researcher adjusted verbiage accordingly but did not separate data into multiple participant categories in order to preserve the self-reported nature of participants' roles. The researcher then sent a summary of findings to participants for member-checking (see Appendix O; Candela, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013). Through member-checking, one participant responded with a suggestion to adjust verbiage for clarity, which was accepted.

For Part III of the study, the researcher reviewed and analyzed written responses and participant-provided artifacts for common themes, again situating identified themes within Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) Culturally Relevant Pedagogy framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2021; Lochmiller, 2021). As detailed in Table 6, Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011)

themes aligned with the study's research questions, which also served as the basis for the reflective prompts for Part III of the study. The themes of Identity and Achievement, and Developmental Appropriateness aligned with the purpose of Research Question 1, while the themes of Teaching the Whole Child, and Student-Teacher Relationships aligned with the purpose of Research Question 2, and the theme of Equity and Excellence aligned with the purpose of Research Question 3.

Table 6

Alignment of Research Questions with Theoretical Framework

Research Question	Theme from The Principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011)
RQ1	Identity and Achievement
RQ1	Developmental Appropriateness
RQ2	Teaching the Whole Child
RQ2	Student-Teacher Relationships
RQ3	Equity and Excellence

Again, the researcher employed descriptive thematic and *in vivo* coding to note any patterns or themes occurring outside the predetermined codes from Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) framework. The researcher continued the analysis, coding, and thematic review until saturation and theoretical sufficiency for each case (Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013; Saldaña, 2021). After data analysis reached saturation, the researcher sent a summary of thematic findings via e-mail to participants for member checking and participant review to ensure the trustworthiness of the identified themes (Candela, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013). Furthermore, the researcher asked for the participation of critical colleagues to examine the coding of the material to confirm findings and reduce researcher bias or reactivity evident within the findings (Costa & Kallick, 1993; Marshall et al., 2022; Noor & Shafee, 2021). Any suggested adjustments to the

summary of findings by critical friends or participants were considered and addressed by the researcher prior to finalizing the identifiable themes from each case (Costa & Kallick, 1993; Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013; Noor & Shafee, 2021). One critical friend suggested investigating potential explanations for the decline in the number of participant responses from September to November, which the researcher determined was the result of two participants beginning new positions and one participant taking medical leave during October. No adjustments were suggested by participants during the member-checking process.

After the initial cycles of coding and participant review of the data from Part II and Part III of each case study, the researcher then compared findings across cases for areas of commonality or divergence in themes and coding, continuing the process until saturation, when no new areas of similarity or difference were apparent (Yin, 2009, 2018). The researcher identified notable areas of convergence between cases, as well as some areas of differences. Findings from the cross-case comparisons were also sent to critical colleagues to confirm the findings, with all names and identifying information of individuals or educational institutions redacted (Costa & Kallick, 1993; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022; Noor & Shafee, 2021). As a final step, the researcher carefully examined the reflective journals and analytic memos in comparison with the study's findings to ensure any areas of researcher bias were properly acknowledged during the analysis process (Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013).

Validity Checks

The study employed several validity checks to maximize the usefulness of the collected data. First, the study included educators from multiple and varied K-12 diverse environments in the U.S. for maximum variation sampling (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Secondly, both the interview protocol in Part II and the reflective prompts in Part III of the study were designed for

open-ended responses, allowing participants to self-report experiences and descriptions without external boundaries limiting responses (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Maxwell, 2013). In addition, the researcher included both positive and negative examples of answers to the study's research questions to avoid a biased representation of results as much as possible (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013). Next, the research employed member checking and the use of critical friends for both Parts II and III of the study to verify the thematic content provided by the participants (Candela, 2019; Costa & Kallick, 1993; Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013; Noor & Shafee, 2021). Furthermore, the researcher chose to employ private, one-on-one interviews instead of focus group interviews for Part II of the study to allow greater freedom and confidentiality in participants' responses (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022). Finally, the researcher included reflective journals and analytic memos in the critical friend analysis process to ensure any area of personal bias was properly acknowledged in the report of findings (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013; Yin, 2009, 2018).

Challenges to the Analytical Process

Some barriers to the analysis process arose during the study. Incomplete questionnaires and a low number of responses after three online posts requesting participation were some initial challenges due to the timebound nature of the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Additionally, several questionnaire responses indicated at least a moderate level of familiarity with the concept of third-space instructional practices but only two such respondents agreed to an interview. Furthermore, all questionnaire respondents willing to be interviewed identified as female, thus limiting the researcher's ability to maximize participant perspectives by gender identity. The researcher did contact the singular male questionnaire respondent and the two non-

binary/third gender questionnaire respondents who indicated willingness to be interviewed, but the respondents did not schedule appointments. Difficulty scheduling one-on-one interview times with several participants due to multiple competing personal and professional schedules and time zone differences also posed a challenge. The researcher had to make several scheduling adjustments to accomplish the interviews within an appropriate amount of time following Part I of the study and to allow enough time for proper analysis and member checking of study findings. A final challenge to the study's process included the timeliness of collecting reflective responses, artifacts, and member checking responses, as participants' busy schedules prevented responses from occurring consistently within timeframes beneficial to the researcher's analysis timelines.

Limitations

In addition to the challenges noted in the previous section, the study is limited in several ways. One limitation of the study is the self-identification of participants as teachers within culturally diverse educational settings within the U.S. The terms for defining what constitutes a diverse setting were left purposefully broad for participants, although initial participants were recruited from online groups developed to support teachers of multilingual learners. However, without a singular definition of diversity, respondent experiences varied, capturing multiple cases of culturally relevant third-space instructional techniques within a variety of diverse settings. As a result, the broad definition of diversity did not produce multiple examples of the same contextual diversity, which could have allowed for an in-depth examination of how third-space instructional practices affect equity among a specific subtype of diverse classroom. Such in-depth approaches may have merit in future research but were outside the scope of the current study. Furthermore, the study was limited by teachers' level of familiarity or experience with

third-space instructional strategies. Although full familiarity with third-space theory or instructional techniques were not prerequisites for participation in the study, respondents with a firmer understanding of the concepts provided much richer responses for study data and produced responses more closely aligned with the study's purpose. Additionally, despite the researcher's efforts to include willing participants who self-identified as female, male, or non-binary/third gender, all participants who agreed to be interviewed for Part II of the study self-identified as female, thus limiting the gender diversity of the teachers' perspectives. Likewise, despite the researcher's attempts to include willing participants from a variety of cultural backgrounds, most participants who agreed to interviews self-identified as White or Caucasian, with only four of the Part II participants self-identifying as a racial or ethnic background other than White/Caucasian.

Limitations to the study also included its parameter of U.S. K-12 educational environments. Pre-K and post-secondary environments were not examined in this study, as much of the existing research has already focused on third-space educational experiences in both early childhood and post-secondary academic arenas in the U.S. and other countries (Anderstaf et al., 2021; Behari-Leak & le Roux, 2018; Burns et al., 2019; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021; Woolf, 2020). Furthermore, the study was limited by teachers' self-reported experiences due to the study's brief timeframe. Future research might incorporate classroom observations for additional triangulation to crystallize data along with participant self-reports and artifacts. Lastly, the qualitative elements of the context-specific cases indicate the study's findings should not be generalized beyond each case's immediate setting (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Maxwell, 2013; Moriarty, 2011). As a final note, three of the study participants have earned doctorates in the areas of educational leadership with a focus on educational equity and two other participants are National

Board-Certified, having received extensive training in equitable educational practices as a result of the certification process. The level of expertise and knowledge about the study's topics represented by the participants with advanced studies in educational equity should be noted for this study.

Role of the Researcher

When qualitative research methods are employed, the researcher can never be removed entirely from data collection or data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2021; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Maxwell, 2013). As a result, the researcher must be aware of the potential for bias by situating personal experiences properly within the study's process, especially as the active generator of themes and findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2021; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013). In this study, the researcher was positioned as a bilingual educator who worked in a culturally diverse, multicultural, international PK-12 environment in the Middle East for six years. The researcher experienced third-culture exchanges between majority and marginalized groups daily in the international educational environment. Additionally, the researcher has worked in mostly culturally homogenous K-12 environments in the Northeast U.S. for a total of ten years prior to the study. In the U.S., the researcher experienced third-space interactions and teaching practices both personally and from other purposeful educators who attempted to engage culturally diverse students in more equitable learning opportunities.

Regarding the relationship between the researcher and the participants, the researcher was an unknown fellow educator with no shared employment history with the participants. In each connection, the researcher held no authoritative position over any participant and participation was completely voluntary. Furthermore, the researcher made great efforts to include data from

varied respondent contexts, such as location, subject area, and grade level assignments, to reduce bias toward the study's data collection or findings (Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013).

Finally, being aware of the nature of researcher bias in qualitative portions of mixed-methods studies, the researcher employed reflective journaling during the data collection and analysis process to record personal thoughts and observations throughout the study's process (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013).

Chapter IV: Results

Third-space instructional practices represent a potential emerging avenue for promoting more equitable learning environment for culturally diverse students, particularly in the K-12 realm (Buelow, 2017; Chen, 2020; Ratnam, 2020; Roe, 2019). However, research also articulates the challenging nature of applying such an abstract concept due to the lack of practical examples of third space implementation in literature (Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Jobe & Coles-Ritchie, 2016; Ratnam, 2020; Ticknor et al., 2020). As a result of the noted gap in literature, this study aimed to investigate more specific and applied examples of third-space instructional practices through a multiple explanatory case study design, comparing U.S. K-12 teachers' perspectives of and experiences with promoting such practices for more equitable learning environments. To examine how third-space instructional practices may promote more equitable educational environments in U.S. K-12 schools, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What are teachers' reported experiences with culturally informed third-space practices in a U.S. K-12 setting?
2. How do U.S. K-12 teachers report using community funds of knowledge to integrate practical, culturally relevant third-space practices to inform more equitable learning environments?
3. What are teachers' perspectives on how culturally informed third-space pedagogical practices impact equitable learning environments for marginalized students in a U.S. K-12 setting?

The study's three research questions were examined through a multiple explanatory case study investigation occurring in three parts (Schwandt & Gates, 2018; Tellis, 1997; Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2009, 2018). Collected data from Parts I, II, and III of the study are detailed in the following

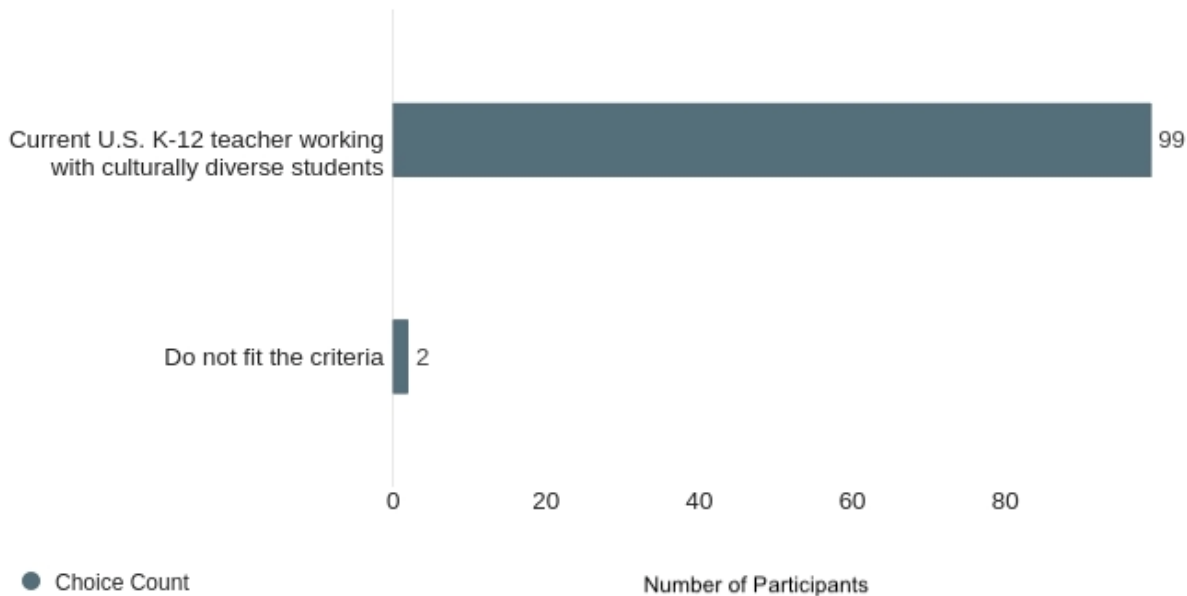
chapter, beginning with the results of the initial Part I questionnaire, followed by participants' experiences as detailed in Part II's semi-structured interviews, and ending with participants' reflections and artifacts of professional practice from Part III. Chapter IV will also provide profiles of study participants and will report the themes apparent from Part II and Part III's collected data.

Part I: Questionnaire Results

Part I of the study consisted of a 15-item, validated researcher-created instrument designed to determine respondents' potential fit for further participation and in-depth investigation in Parts II and III of the study (see Appendix B). The questionnaire initially received 101 ($n = 101$) responses, with 73 responses ($n = 73$) ultimately being applicable to all questionnaire items. The researcher recruited participants from two online specialized social media groups for teachers who work with K-12 English language learners and from snowball sampling through the researcher's gatekeeper connections (Brickman Bhutta, 2012; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Dusek et al., 2015). As shown in Figure 3, 99 of the initial 101 respondents fit the criteria of being a self-reported U.S. K-12 teacher currently working with culturally diverse students, which was Question 1 of the instrument. Two respondents self-identified as not fitting the criteria and were exited from the survey.

Figure 3*Eligibility to Participate in Study***Q1 - Eligibility to Participate in Study**

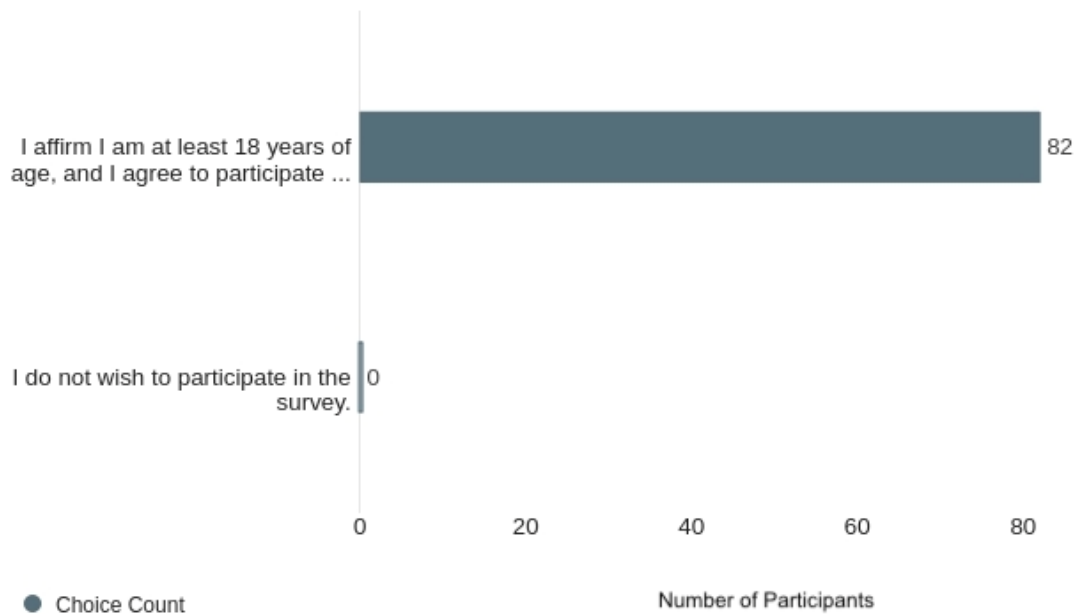
101 Responses



Question 2 of the instrument provided respondents with an electronic informed consent form (see Appendix G; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). At this point in the survey, 82 respondents consented to complete the survey. As displayed in Figure 4, 100% of the respondents ($n = 82$) indicated they were over age 18 and were completing the questionnaire voluntarily. As per the informed consent, participants were free to answer or not answer any question on the instrument or to exit the survey at any time.

Figure 4*Participant Informed Consent Agreement***Q2 - Part I Questionnaire Electronic Informed Consent Form**

82 Responses



After completing an informed consent form as Question 2 of the instrument, the remaining respondents who self-identified as being eligible to complete the questionnaire answered 13 additional questions about personal demographics and instructional practices. Respondents had the freedom to not answer any question if desired. The first demographic question asked for respondents' age range, and of the 82 eligible respondents, 78 reported their ages. The reported ages from the pool of respondents included 13 individuals ages 21-30, 23 individuals ages 31-40, 21 individuals ages 41-50, 15 individuals ages 51-60, and six individuals ages 61+, as shown in Figure 5. The greatest number of respondents (23) reported ages between

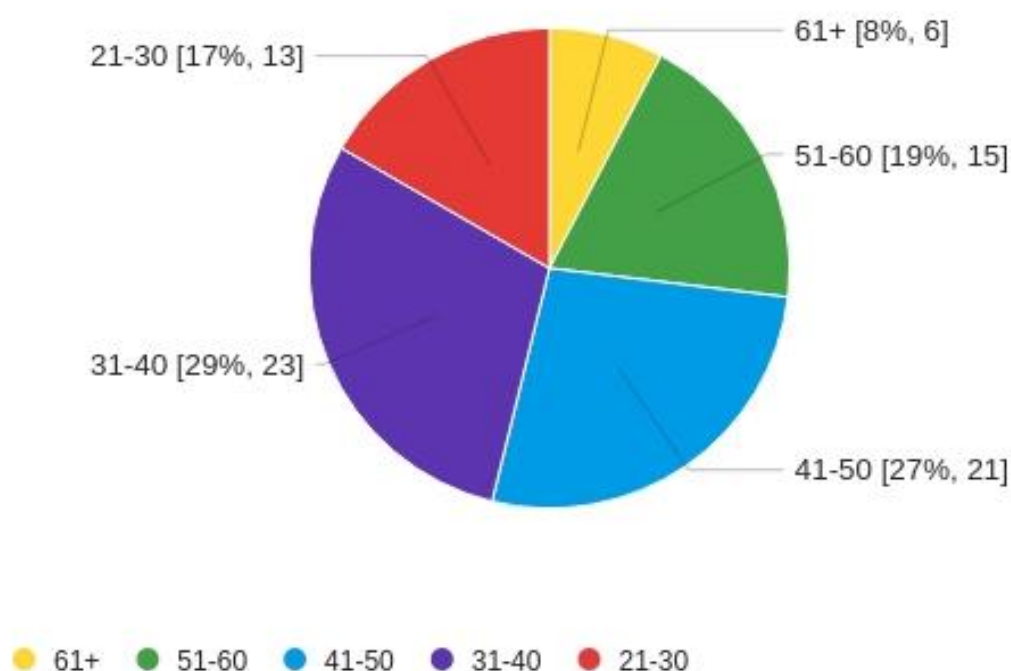
31-40, followed closely by those in the 41-50 age range (21). The fewest number of participants (6) reported ages in the 61+ category.

Figure 5

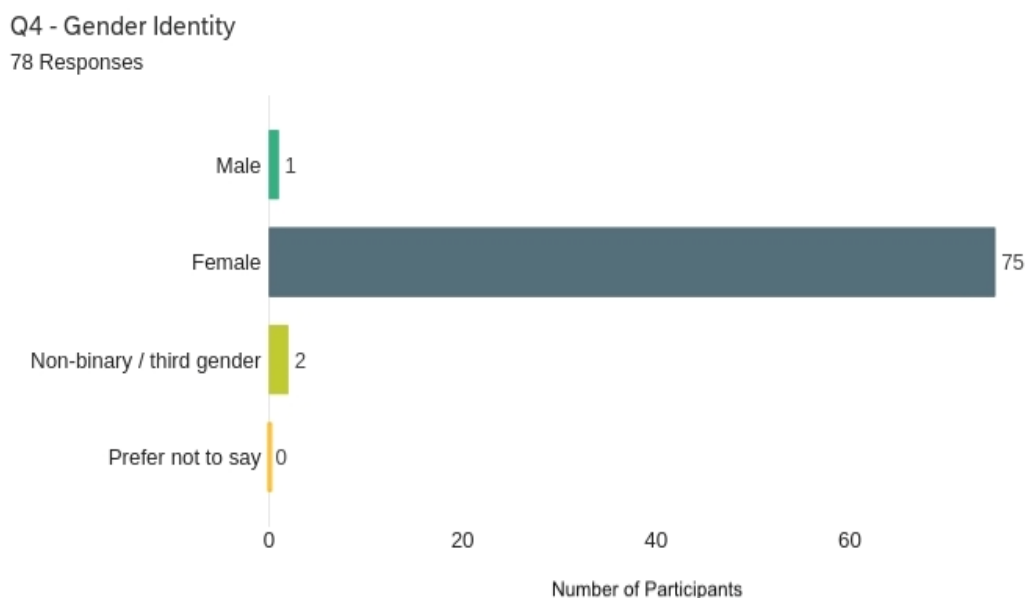
Participant Age Range

Q3 - Age Range

78 Responses



Further demographic information was requested in Question 4, which asked for participant-reported gender identity. In total, 78 participants responded. Results from participant self-reported gender identity are detailed in Figure 6. Of the eligible participants, 75 self-identified as female, two self-identified as non-binary/third gender, and one self-identified as male. The category with the greatest number of self-reports was Female, representing 96.15% of responses.

Figure 6*Participant Self-Reported Gender Identity*

Additionally, Question 5 asked respondents to report their race or ethnicity. Data from the question is outlined in Table 7. Of the eligible respondents, 70 answered the question ($n = 70$), with respondents identifying as White/Caucasian (56), Asian/South Asian (5), Hispanic/Latinx/Mexican (4), Black (1), Afro-Latina (1), Asian and White (1), Latina and White (1), and Ashkenazi Jewish (1). The category with the greatest number of self-reports was White/Caucasian, representing 80% of responses.

Table 7*Participant Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity*

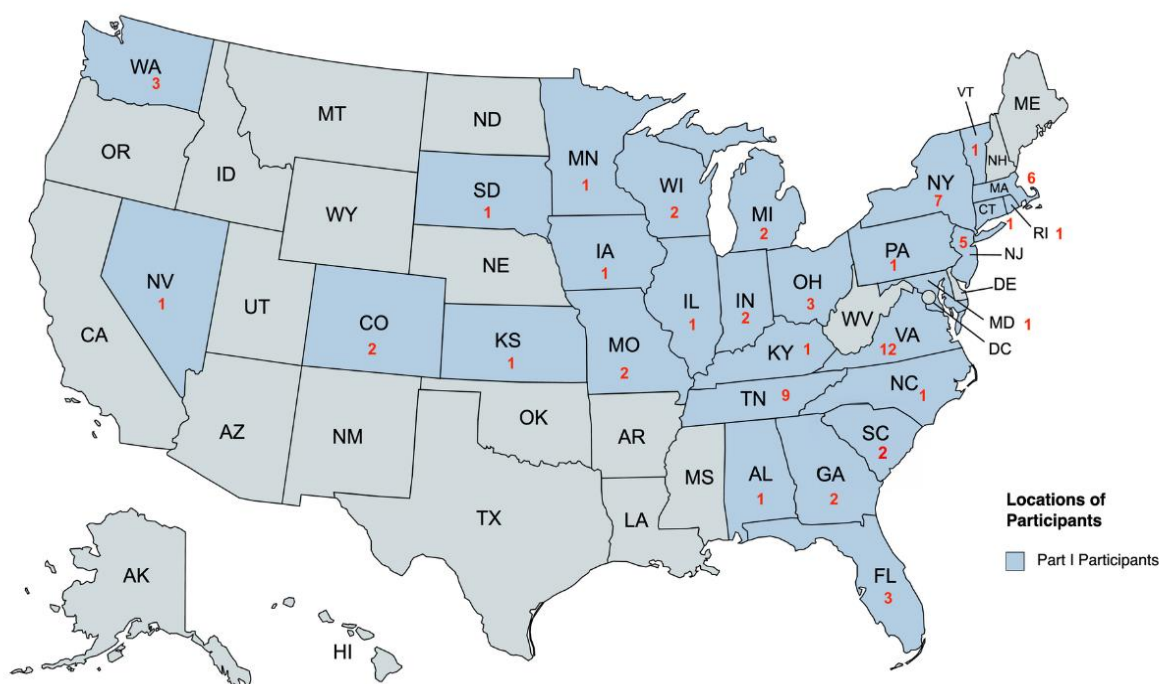
Race/Ethnicity	$n = 70$
White/Caucasian	56
Asian/South Asian	5
Hispanic/Latinx/Mexican	4
Black	1
Biracial: Afro Latina	1

Race/Ethnicity	$n = 70$
Biracial: Asian & White	1
Biracial: Latina & White	1
Ashkenazi Jewish	1

Question 6 asked for participants to indicate the U.S. state where they currently teach. Figure 7 details the 29 states represented by 77 respondents ($n = 77$). Participants represented the Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Northwest, and Southwest geographical locations within the U.S. Participants from 12 of the 28 represented states also continued in the study as eligible participants for Part II. The most represented states were Virginia, with 12 respondents, followed by Tennessee (9), New York (7), Massachusetts (6), and New Jersey (5).

Figure 7

U.S. Location of Part I Participants

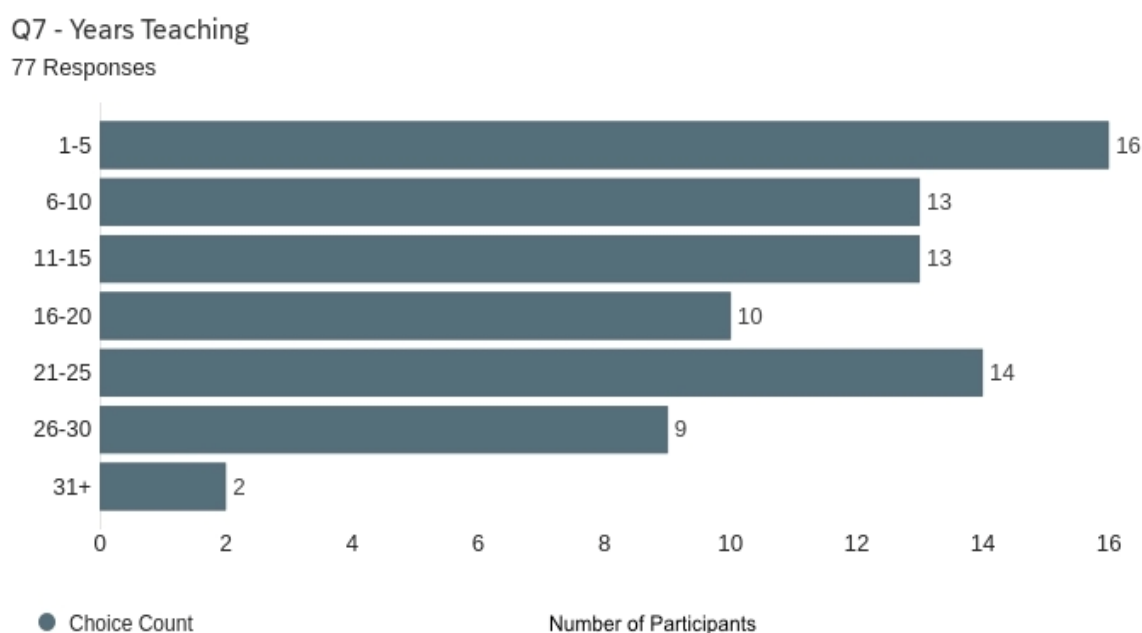


Note. Numerals indicate number of participants from the location.

Question 7 and Question 8 asked respondents to indicate overall years of teaching experience and years of teaching experience in diverse K-12 contexts, respectively. Figure 8 and Figure 9 detail the recorded responses. For Question 7, 77 respondents recorded answers ($n = 77$), with 16 individuals reporting 1-5 years of experience, 13 individuals reporting 6-10 years of experience, 13 individuals reporting 11-15 years of experience, ten individuals reporting 16-20 years of experience, 14 individuals reporting 21-25 years of experience, nine reporting 26-30 years of experience, and two individuals reporting more than 31 years of experience.

Figure 8

Participants' Overall Years of Teaching Experience

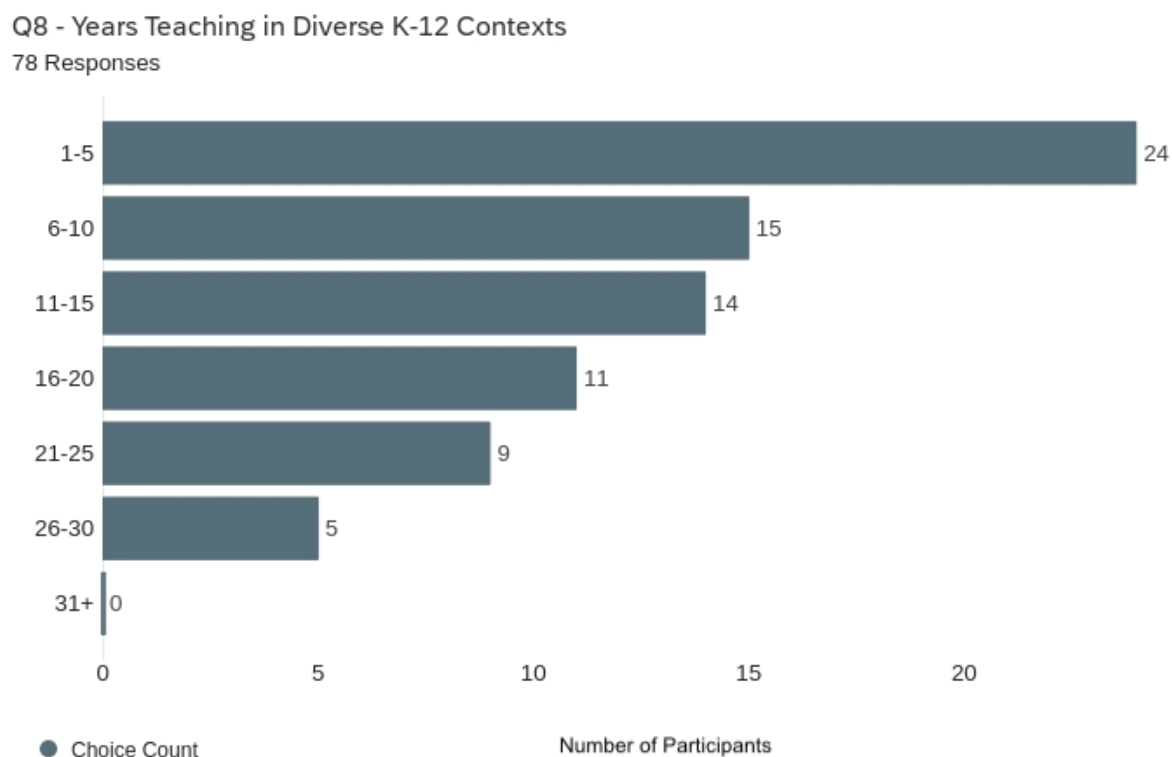


Regarding the number of years spent teaching within diverse U.S. K-12 educational contexts, 78 respondents answered ($n = 78$). Of the respondents reporting experience within diverse U.S. K-12 environments, 24 individuals reported 1-5 years of experience, 15 reported 6-10 years of experience, 14 reported 11-15 years of experience, 11 reported 16-20 years of experience, nine

reported 21-25 years of experience, and five reported 26-30 years of experience. Figure 9 displays the breakdown of responses for Question 8.

Figure 9

Participants' Years of Experience in Diverse U.S. K-12 Contexts

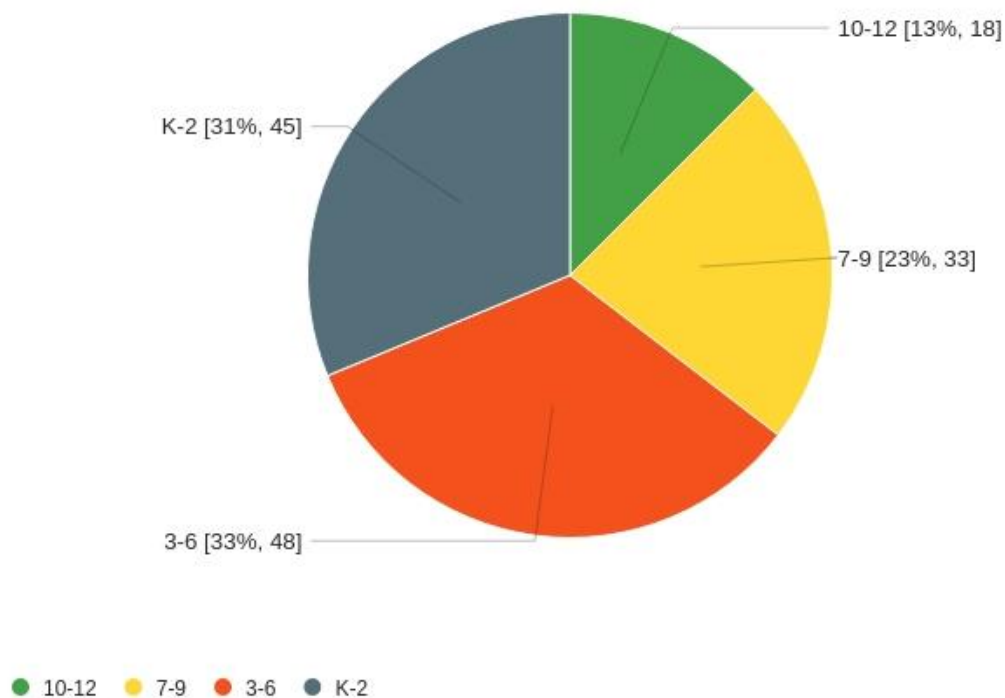


Question 9 asked respondents to report current grade level assignments. Data recorded from Question 9 is detailed in Figure 10. Of the 78 respondents, 49 reported assignments across multiple grade bands, with 45 individuals reporting Grades K-2 assignments, 48 reporting Grades 3-6 assignments, 33 reporting Grades 7-9 assignments, and 18 reporting Grades 10-12 assignments. Only 26 respondents indicated assignments within a single grade band.

Figure 10*Current Grade Level Assignment*

Q9 - Current Grade Level Assignment

78 Responses



Question 10 asked respondents to indicate their current role or subject area. Results from Question 10 are reported in Table 8. A majority of respondents (70.13%) indicated a role working with English language or multilingual learners. The remaining 23 respondents (29.87%) indicated placements other than specifically working with English language or multilingual learners. Other placements included English Language Arts, General Elementary Education, Math, Spanish, Special Education, Academic Coaches, and Specialists or Strategists.

Table 8*Participant Roles*

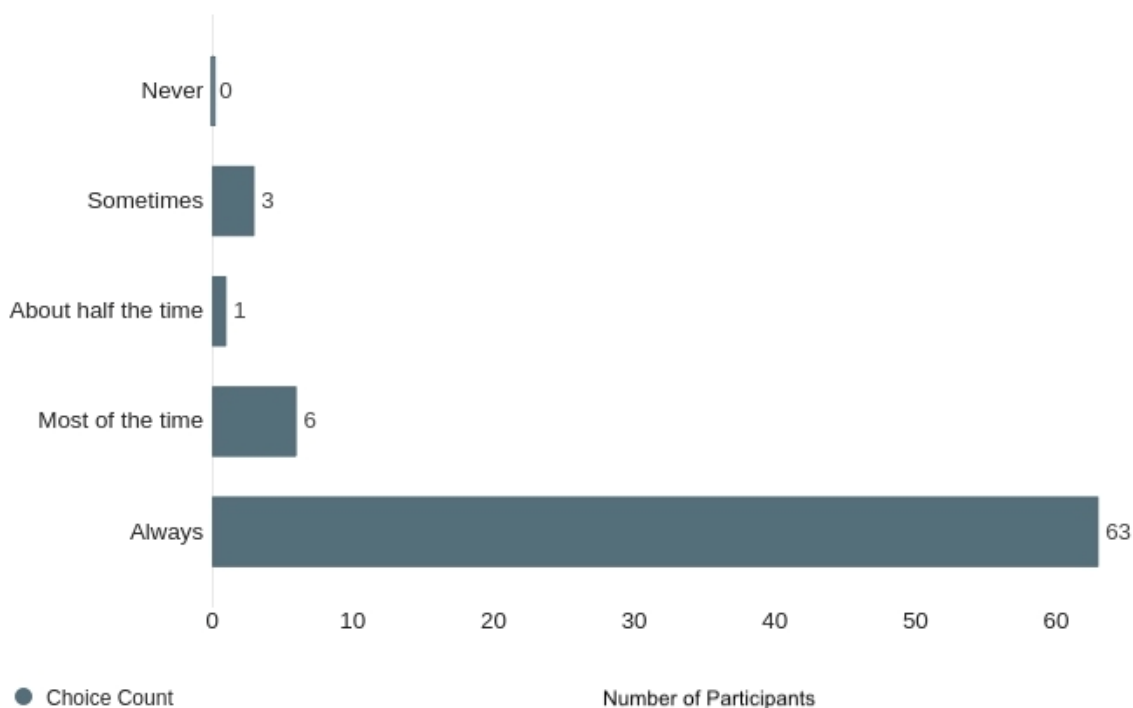
Role	Count (<i>n</i> = 77)
ESL/ELL/ENL/TESOL/MLL	54
English Language Arts	7
General Elementary Education	5
Coach: Technology, Innovation, or MTSS	3
Math	2
Spanish	2
Specialists/Strategists	2
Special Education	1
Unspecified	1

Question 11 asked respondents to report the frequency of interaction with culturally diverse students in group settings. As shown in Figure 11, a total of 73 responses ($n = 73$) were recorded, with 63 individuals indicating “Always,” six individuals indicating “Most of the time,” one indicating “About half the time,” three indicating “Sometimes,” and zero respondents indicating “Never.” The majority of respondents (86.30%) indicated the level of interaction with culturally diverse students as “Always.” Respondents who indicated a level of frequency as “Always” were noted by the researcher as potential participants to be considered for Part II of the study.

Figure 11*Frequency of Interaction with Culturally Diverse Students*

RQ1.Q11 - In your current role, how often do you interact with students from diverse cultural backgrounds in group settings?

73 Responses

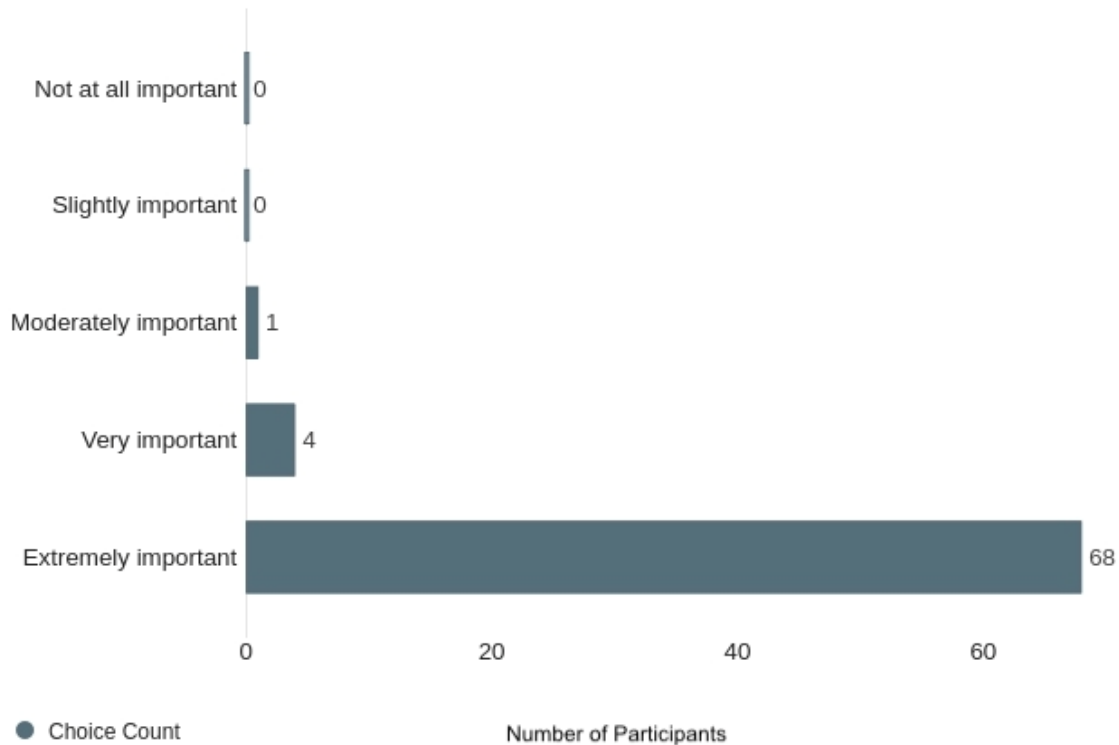


Similarly, Question 12 asked respondents to indicate the level of importance they place on culturally diverse students experiencing an equitable learning environment. As summarized in Figure 12, a total of 73 participants answered the question ($n = 73$), with 68 respondents indicating the level of importance as “Extremely important,” four indicating a level of “Very important,” and one indicating a level of “moderately important.” No respondents indicated levels of “slightly important” or “not at all important.” Participants who indicated responses of “Extremely important” were noted by the researcher as potential participants to be considered for Part II of the study.

Figure 12*Importance of Equitable Learning Environments*

RQ3.Q12 - How important is it to you that all students under your supervision experience an equitable learning environment?

73 Responses

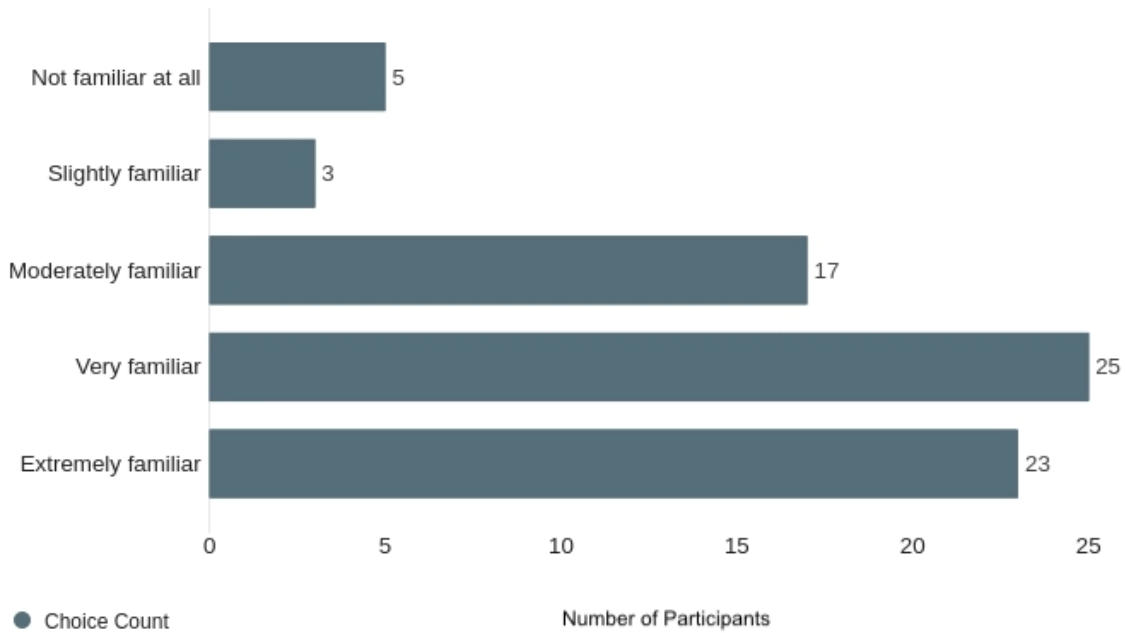


Likewise, Questions 13 and 14 asked respondents to indicate their level of familiarity with Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and third space instructional practices, respectively. As shown in Figure 13, of 73 respondents ($n = 73$), 23 selected “Extremely familiar,” 25 selected “Very familiar,” 17 selected “Moderately familiar,” three selected “Slightly familiar,” and five selected “Not familiar at all.” Participants who indicated “Moderately familiar,” “Very familiar,” or “Extremely familiar” were noted by the researcher as potential candidates for Part II of the study.

Figure 13*Familiarity with Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*

RQ1.Q13 - How familiar are you with the concept of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy?

73 Responses

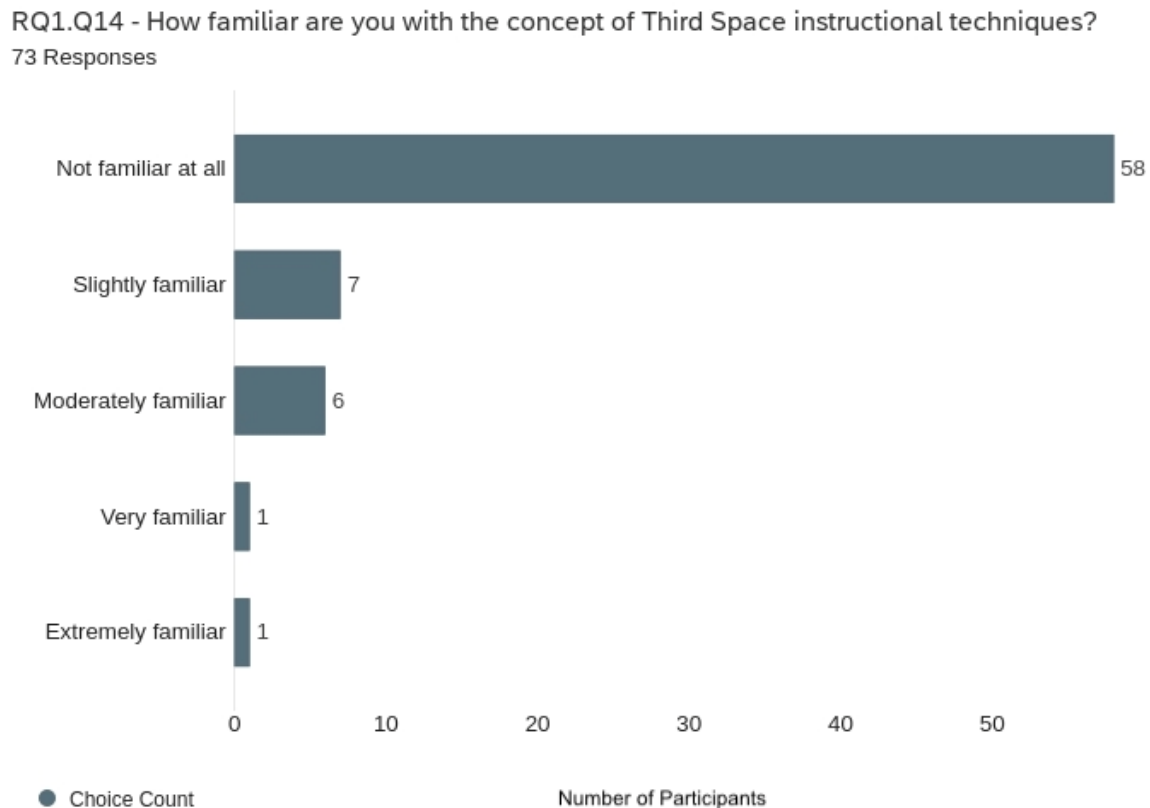


Additionally, 73 respondents also indicated their level of familiarity with third space instructional techniques, as detailed in Figure 14. Of 73 respondents ($n = 73$), 58 indicated “Not familiar at all,” seven indicated “Slightly familiar,” six indicated “Moderately familiar,” one indicated “Very familiar,” and one indicated “Extremely familiar.” The majority of responses (79.45%) indicated no familiarity with third space instructional techniques. Participants with responses of “Slightly familiar,” “Moderately familiar,” “Very familiar,” and “Extremely familiar” were noted by the researcher as potential participants to be considered for Part II. However, not having familiarity with third space instructional techniques did not preclude participants from being considered for Part II, especially if the self-reported instructional

experiences and practices reported in Question 15 (see Table 10) aligned with third space pedagogical theory or techniques noted in literature.

Figure 14

Familiarity with Third Space Instructional Techniques



Questions 11, 12, 13, 14 were designed to collect data through Likert scale responses, and 73 total participants ($n = 73$) responded to each of the four questions. Because of the ordinal nature of the Likert-type data for the four-question portion of the questionnaire, median, mode, and frequencies are appropriate reporting measures (Tanner, 2012; Urdan, 2016). For analysis purposes, Likert scale responses were labeled with numbers 1 through 5 in Qualtrics, with 1 representing the least amount of interaction, importance, or familiarity and 5 representing the greatest amount of interaction, importance, or familiarity depending on the nature of the

question. Table 9 summarizes the frequencies and descriptive statistics from participant responses for Questions 11-14. Question 11 had a reported mode of 5, indicating a high frequency of participant interaction with culturally diverse students (86.30% or 63 out of 73). Similarly, Question 12 had a reported mode of 5, also indicating participants' high level of importance for providing equitable learning environments to students (93.15% or 68 out of 73). Regarding Question 13, participants' familiarity with Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, the reported mode was 4 (34.25% or 25 out of 73). However, 31.51% (23 out of 73) also selected 5 (*Extremely familiar*). For Question 14, participants' familiarity with third space instructional techniques, the reported mode was 1 (79.45% or 58 out of 73), indicating a low level of familiarity across participants.

Table 9

Frequency and Descriptive Statistics of Likert Scale Questionnaire Responses

Question	Response Choice	<i>n</i>	%	Median	Mode	Range
Q11. In your current role, how often do you interact with students from diverse cultural backgrounds in group settings?				5.00	5	3
	1-Never	0	0.00%			
	2-Sometimes	3	4.11%			
	3-About half the time	1	1.37%			
	4-Most of the time	6	8.22%			
	5-Always	63	86.30%			
Q12. How important is it to you that all students under your supervision experience an equitable learning environment?				5.00	5	2
	1-Not at all important	0	0.00%			
	2-Slightly important	0	0.00%			
	3-Moderately important	1	1.37%			
	4-Very important	4	5.48%			

Question	Response Choice	<i>n</i>	%	Median	Mode	Range
	5-Extremely important	68	93.15%			
Q13. How familiar are you with the concept of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy?				4.00	4	4
	1-Not familiar at all	5	6.85%			
	2-Slightly familiar	3	4.11%			
	3-Moderately familiar	17	23.29%			
	4-Very familiar	25	34.25%			
	5-Extremely familiar	23	31.51%			
Q14. How familiar are you with the concept of third space instructional techniques?				1.00	1	4
	1-Not familiar at all	58	79.45%			
	2-Slightly familiar	7	9.59%			
	3-Moderately familiar	6	8.22%			
	4-Very familiar	1	1.37%			
	5-Extremely familiar	1	1.37%			
Valid <i>n</i> (listwise)	<i>Total</i>	73				

Question 15 provided respondents with an opportunity to select from a sample list of instructional techniques they believed to be representative of their experiences or personal practices in the classroom, as detailed in Table 10. A total of 73 respondents ($n = 73$) completed the question, indicating multiple practices from the provided list, which was curated to reflect potentially culturally relevant and third space educational interactions. The most-chosen responses were “I prioritize making my classroom/educational assignment a socially and emotionally safe place where students from any cultural background can share their perspectives” with 72 responses, “I encourage multiple perspectives in the classroom” with 71 responses, and “I promote student collaboration across cultures” and “My classroom/educational

assignment includes speakers of languages other than English” with 70 responses each. The least-chosen responses included “Culturally diverse students interact regularly with majority culture students in my classroom/educational assignment” and “I try to incorporate different cultures’ definitions of success in my evaluation or assessment practices whenever possible” each with 49 responses, and “I amplify or draw attention to the perspectives of culturally marginalized students” with 46 responses. Respondents who selected at least 10 of the 15 possible options as representative of their personal practices were noted by the researcher as potential candidates to be considered for inclusion in Part II of the study.

Table 10

Self-Reported Culturally Relevant or Third Space Experiences or Practices

Experience or Practice	Count (<i>n</i> = 73)
I prioritize making my classroom/educational assignment a socially and emotionally safe place where students from any cultural background can share their perspectives.	72
I encourage multiple cultural perspectives in the classroom.	71
I promote student collaboration across cultures.	70
My classroom/educational assignment includes speakers of languages other than English.	70
I make purposeful connections between students’ home environments and school, especially with students from cultural backgrounds different from mine.	69
I try to use equitable instructional practices for students from diverse cultural backgrounds.	67
I use or adapt curriculum to ensure that it applies to all of my students’ cultural backgrounds.	65
I encourage students of varying cultural backgrounds to be co-creators of classroom knowledge.	61
In my classroom/educational assignment no single culture has more privilege or social power than another.	61
My classroom/educational assignment has a family-style sense of community.	58

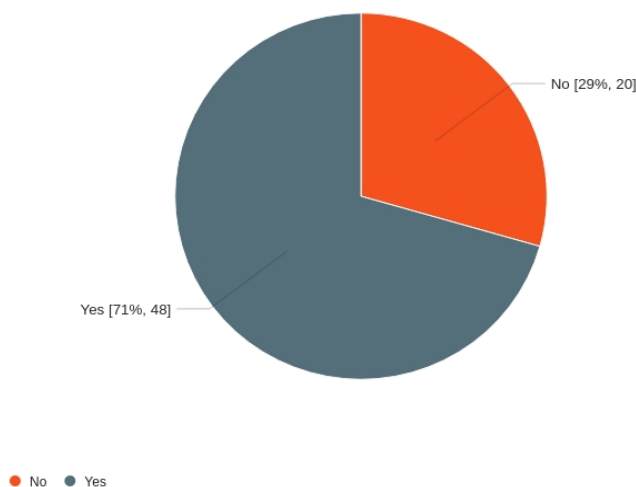
Experience or Practice	Count (<i>n</i> = 73)
Students in my classroom/educational assignment engage in culturally hybrid interactions (i.e., use of multiple languages, mixing of cultural norms, etc.)	54
I try to incorporate different cultures' definitions of knowledge in my instructional practices whenever possible.	50
Culturally diverse students interact regularly with majority culture students in my classroom/educational assignment.	49
I try to incorporate different cultures' definitions of success in my evaluation or assessment practices whenever possible.	49
I amplify or draw attention to the perspectives of culturally marginalized students.	46

The final question of the instrument asked for participants' willingness to be contacted for potential inclusion in Part II of the study. As shown in Figure 15, a total of 68 respondents answered the question, with 48 answering "Yes," and 20 answering "No." The researcher noted the 48 willing participants and examined their responses to the other questions to determine if their potential fit for inclusion in Part II of the study for more in-depth case-study examination.

Figure 15

Willingness to Participate in Part II Interviews

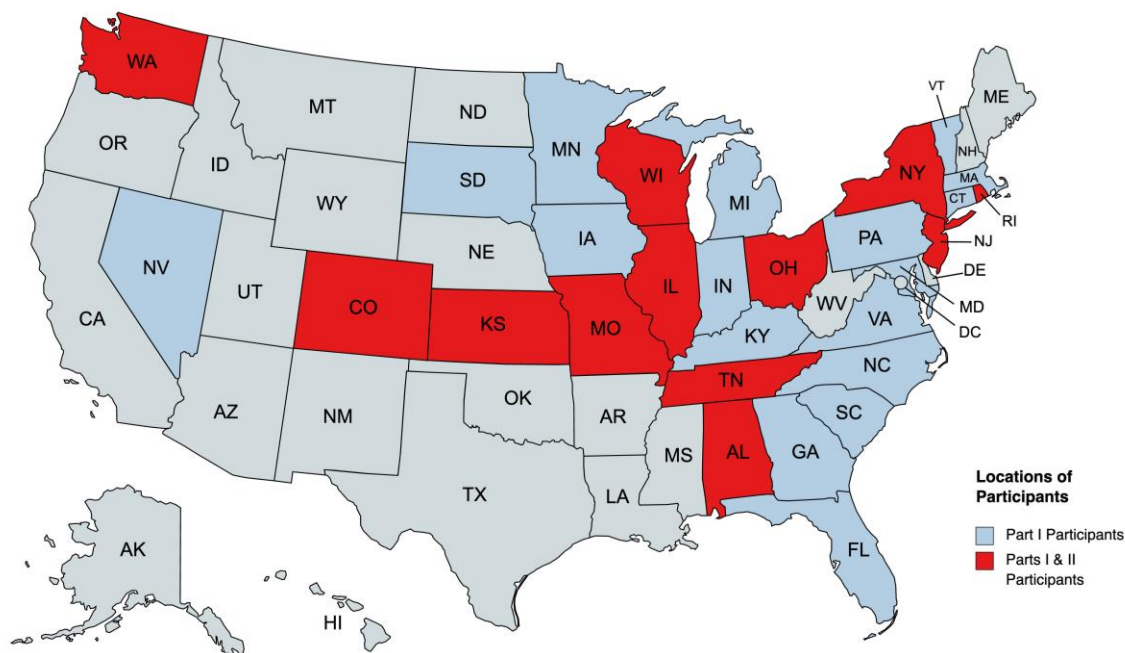
Q16 - Willingness to Participate in Part II
68 Responses



Part II: Semi-Structured Interview Data

Participants who indicated a willingness to be interviewed for Part II of the study were evaluated for potential fit for the study according to the criteria outlined in Figure 2 (see p.87) before being contacted for an interview. As evidenced through Part I's questionnaire responses, individuals selected for interviews represented teachers with regular interaction with culturally diverse students and a commitment to educational equity. Additionally, the teachers must have reported at least ten examples of actual instructional practices representing CRP or third space to be considered for an interview. Further consideration was given to participants representing various locations within the U.S. to provide as many context-specific cases as possible.

Individuals meeting the selection criteria or with noteworthy experiences were contacted via e-mail to schedule an appointment with the researcher. Of the 44 individuals who met the criteria to be interviewed and were contacted, 19 individuals scheduled interviews and 14 ultimately completed the interview process. Four individuals meeting the criteria to be interviewed for Part II reported 1-5 years' experience in culturally diverse educational environments, three reported 6-10 years' experience, four reported 16-20 years' experience, two reported 21-25 years' experience, and one individual reported more than 26 years of experience. The 14 participants who completed both Part I's questionnaire and Part II's semi-structured interviews represented current teaching locations in 12 U.S. states, as identified in Figure 16.

Figure 16*U.S. Location of Part II Participants****Participant Profiles: 1-5 Years of Experience***

Brooke. Brooke works as a secondary English and English as a New Language teacher in a 2,000-student high school in Illinois, serving students in grades 7-9 and 10-12. Brooke's school reports approximately 635 students as English language learners. Across Brooke's district, about 30% of students are categorized as multilingual learners. Brooke also reported the demographics of her school's student body as approximately 70% Hispanic, 10% Black, 10% Asian, and 10% White. Brooke identified as a White female and as a member of the LGBTQ community.

Nala. Nala works in an urban school in Ohio as an English as a Second Language teacher, serving her second year in this role. Prior to this role, Nala taught kindergarten, first, and second grade at charter schools. Nala claims Indian cultural heritage but grew up in South America before moving to the U.S. when she was 11 years old. Nala estimates the cultural

background of her district's students to be approximately 40% Black, 30-35% White, and the remaining 25-30% to include various cultures and backgrounds, with Spanish-speaking students representing a majority. Nala works mostly with students from the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Nepal.

Kira. Kira is a recent Canadian immigrant teaching in a first-grade general education classroom at private charter school in Tennessee. Kira estimates the demographics of her school's student body to include approximately 95% African American, with the remaining percentage being made up of Caucasian students. Kira credits the push for diversity training and culturally appropriate curriculum and pedagogical strategies she learned in Canada as an influencing factor on her approach to educational equity while working in the U.S.

Shannon. Shannon has taught middle school and high school ESL classes in Alabama for the past two years, with two prior years of experience teaching in Mississippi. Shannon is bilingual, speaking English and Spanish. Growing up, Shannon credits her mother, also an ESL teacher, for promoting a lifestyle where diversity and equity were celebrated and pursued. Shannon recounts her mother creating environments where she would interact with friends who did not speak English and who did not share the same cultural heritage as her.

Participant Profiles: 6-10 Years of Experience

Amelia. Amelia currently teaches eighth grade English at a culturally diverse school in Colorado, with much of her prior experience being at the high school level. Although Amelia reports only having 6-10 years' experience in culturally diverse educational environments, she has been teaching for 21 years, in both Arizona and Colorado. In Amelia's school, approximately 88% of the students are students of color, with the majority identifying as Latinos. Within the Latino culture in the school, Mexicans, Salvadorans, and Guatemalans are represented. In

addition to the represented cultural backgrounds, the district has approximately 25% transient students, 36% English language learners, and 90% receiving free or reduced lunch. Additionally, Amelia's district is heavily impacted by gang activity. Amelia also reports the teacher turnover rate in her district is 40%.

Personally, Amelia was impacted to promote educational equity by her experiences growing up in a culturally homogenous area, having been targeted and ethnically marginalized due to her Italian heritage. Moreover, Amelia's husband is Guatemalan, which has also impacted her stance on equity for culturally diverse individuals. Professionally, Amelia mentions her experiences in the classroom in both Arizona and Colorado as being influential in her pursuit of educational equity. Amelia holds a master's degree in English and a master's degree in Bilingual and Multicultural Education. Recently, Amelia also completed her doctorate in Leadership and Educational Equity.

Becky. Becky has been teaching middle school ESL in Ohio to students in Grade 6, Grade 7, and Grade 8 for eight years. Prior to her current role, Becky taught adult refugees in Ohio for two years and taught English in Mexico for five years. Becky is bilingual, with an undergraduate degree in Spanish, and a master's degree in TESOL. Personally, Becky experienced a homogenous upbringing in a White, Christian environment, but was influenced to engage in more culturally diverse environments through high school Spanish classes and mission trips to Mexico. In her current environment, Becky interacts with about 40 students, varying in English proficiency from beginning to advanced. Some of the countries represented in her students' cultural backgrounds include Mexico, Puerto Rico, Ecuador, Venezuela, Brazil, Vietnam, Laos, Ghana, Palestine, Cameroon, Peru, Somalia, Iraq, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Costa Rica.

Ashley. Ashley serves as the Director for Multilingual Learning Program at a charter school in New York City and works with students grades K-12 in a non-White majority school. Within the school's 1,200 student population, approximately 155 are categorized as multilingual learners. Among the multilingual learners, the main language spoken is Spanish, but other languages include Fulani, Swahili, Arabic, and Bengali. What has motivated Ashley to pursue educational equity for her students is the juxtaposition between her experience as a White woman and the experiences of her students and colleagues who are not White. In her role, Ashley says she is constantly being held accountable for anti-racist pedagogy by her non-White colleagues. Additionally, she credits her charter school's mission to provide an anti-racist environment for its students as influential to her stance on educational equity.

Participant Profiles: 16-20 Years of Experience

Wendy. Wendy has been working in education for 33 years. For the first 16 years, she taught students with multiple disabilities, then completed her master's degree in TESOL. Since achieving her master's degree, Wendy has been working teaching ESL at the middle school and primary level. Having recently completed her doctorate degree, Wendy currently teaches in a K-2 building of 400 students in Ohio, where approximately 60 students are English language learners. Among the English language learners, 15 languages and 14 countries are represented, including Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Haiti, Guatemala, and Japan. Wendy is passionate about advocating for educational equity for culturally diverse students and credits a teachers' community advocacy group for culturally diverse students as a motivating factor in her pursuit of educational equity. Wendy leads weekly sessions for the students in her school to become more aware and understanding of students with different cultural backgrounds.

Loretta. Although in her 60s, Loretta has just 15 years of experience in education, all of which have occurred in Rhode Island. For the first 13 years, Loretta taught middle school and high school English in an urban, Title I district. After completing her ESL certificate, Loretta has been working for the last two years in a small school district within a sanctuary city with a high percentage of multilingual learners. A self-proclaimed activist, Loretta finds teaching ESL a productive endeavor for addressing inequities within the U.S. educational system, especially after having experienced student populations with high poverty and instances of unaccompanied minors. Despite teaching in a sanctuary city, Loretta notes there is an obvious lack of interaction between culturally diverse students and students from the majority cultural background in her school. Loretta's goal, however, is to see the separation between cultures disappear.

Vanessa. Vanessa has been teaching high school English in Kansas for 16 years. Vanessa has both an undergraduate and a master's degree in English and has nearly completed a master's in teaching. Vanessa came to teaching through an alternative route, taking her education credits while also working in a full-time teaching position. As part of one of the largest schools in the state, there are approximately 2,500 students enrolled in Vanessa's school, with over 50 spoken languages in her building. Additionally, Vanessa reports 77% of the student population lives below the poverty line. Demographically, 35% of the student body identifies as Hispanic, 27% as Caucasian, 19% as African American, 10% as Asian, and 7% as Multiracial. Regarding the cultural diversity of the district's students, Vanessa describes her school as "a little microcosm" of the world.

Bess. Bess has spent significant time overseas, living in multiple countries, including Russia, Vietnam, the Galapagos Islands, and Guatemala. An 18-year veteran teacher, Bess holds a master's degree in TESOL and began her career outside of the U.S. Bess's first year of

teaching was in Russia at the university level, followed by time as a kindergarten teacher in Vietnam. After returning to the U.S., Bess began teaching in a Korean boarding school before entering the public school system in Missouri. Currently, Bess works with 43 students representing 19 countries and 18 different languages in grades K-5.

Participant Profiles: 21-25 Years' Experience

Destiny. A National Board-Certified Teacher since 2004, Destiny has been teaching for 24 years. Destiny holds a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and English Language and a master's degree in Teaching. A native of Washington state, Destiny works in a Title I district and has had experience as a teacher in grades K-5 and as an instructional coach. As a fifth-grade teacher, Destiny had the opportunity to several opportunities for her classroom to serve as a model classroom for state-wide and nation-wide projects. Destiny has also been recognized as a STEM and Math Teacher of the Year. Now, Destiny serves as the English Language Coordinator, with an emphasis in Math and STEM. In Destiny's district, there are 380 English language learners across three schools, with Destiny's individual caseload consisting of 100 students. Demographically, two of the schools in Destiny's district have a 50% poverty rate, and the third school has a 70% poverty rate. Destiny describes the two schools with the lower poverty rate as being very White-privileged compared to the third school.

Personally, Destiny describes her connection to educational equity as being impacted by her own cultural background as biracial, being Asian and White. Throughout her education, Destiny remembers never seeing a teacher who looked like her until reaching the college level, stressing how representation matters for culturally diverse students in terms of equitable educational opportunities. Destiny's experience with students and their families from diverse educational backgrounds has been as mediator and advocate. Culturally diverse families are

willing to come to Destiny with their needs because of her ethnic background, and she acknowledges that many colleagues in the more White-privileged districts benefit from her advocacy as they struggle to appropriately meet the needs of the diverse students. Destiny's district includes students speaking at least 21 different languages, with Spanish, Mam, and Tagalog as the three most-spoken languages.

Debra. Debra has been working in K-12 education in New Jersey for 25 years. For the first 22 years, Debra interacted with English language and multilingual learners in every grade K-12 in some capacity. Most of Debra's experience was at the middle school level before moving to the high school level for the past three years. Within the past three years, Debra has transitioned to the role of an English Interventionist for newcomer students while also maintaining the role of assistant professor at a small Catholic university, focusing on Reading Specialist and ESL certification. Debra holds double undergraduate degrees in Elementary Education and Spanish. Through her master's program, Debra pursued ESL certification and bilingual certification before ultimately completing her doctorate. In Debra's district, newcomers represent many countries and regions from around the world, including Mexico, Central America, South America, the Middle East, and more recently, Ukraine. Most of the students working with Debra are Spanish speakers.

Participant Profile: 26+ Years of Experience

Diana. Also a National Board-Certified Teacher, Diana has been teaching in Wisconsin for 27 years. All of Diana's years have been spent with English language learners and multilingual students. After working as a reading specialist for 20 years, Diana has spent the past seven years as an ESL teacher and special education teacher. Holding more than a dozen teacher certifications in the state of Wisconsin, Diana says ESL is her favorite area of teaching. Diana

has spent time in urban and suburban public schools, with populations of Vietnamese, Russian, and Spanish speakers in the suburban district, including newcomers. In the large, urban district, Diana also worked with a significant Hmong student population. Influential to Diana's stance on educational equity was her National Board Certification process, which she credits as providing the opportunities for her to fully understand the difference between equality and equity.

Part II Codes, Categories, and Thematic Concepts

After interviewing study participants, the researcher used Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) framework for CRP as an *a priori* coding structure for evaluating the qualitative data collected throughout the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2021; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Lochmiller, 2021; Maxwell, 2013; Saldaña, 2021). Because participants represented a population of teachers who interact regularly with culturally diverse students and report a commitment to educational equity, the *a priori* codes from the CRP framework were determined to be an appropriate starting point to evaluate collected data for common practices and techniques across participant experiences. After data were initially coded through the CRP framework, the researcher then examined data for *in vivo* and thematic concept codes falling outside of the predetermined framework (Marshall et al., 2022; Saldaña, 2021). The frequency of the predetermined codes and categories from the CRP framework are detailed in Table 11, with the additional *in vivo* and descriptive thematic codes detailed in Table 12.

Table 11*First Cycle A Priori Coding Frequency*

Category	Code	Frequency
Developmental Appropriateness		157
	Teaching Styles	71
	Cultural Variation in Psychological Needs	67
	Learning Styles	19
Equity and Excellence		236
	Equal Access	95
	Dispositions	79
	Incorporation of Multicultural Content	33
	High Expectation for All	29
Identity and Achievement		245
	Affirmation of Diversity	88
	Public Validation of Home-Community Cultures	54
	Multiple Perspectives	40
	Identity Development	32
	Cultural Heritage	31
Student-Teacher Relationships		85
	Caring	27
	Relationships	23
	Interaction	20
	Classroom Atmosphere	15
Teaching the Whole Child		225
	Supportive Learning Community	67
	Bridge between Home, School, & Community	65
	Learning Outcomes	38
	Skill development in Cultural Context	36
	Empowering Students	19
<i>Total</i>		948

Through *a priori* coding, data collected during Part II's semi-structured interviews revealed the presence of each of the five themes of Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) framework. The category with the most frequently recurring codes was Identity and Achievement (245), followed closely by Equity and Excellence (236), and Teaching the Whole

Child (225), then Developmental Appropriateness (157). The least occurring category were Student-Teacher Relationships (85). Furthermore, within each category, the most frequently identified codes were Developmental Appropriateness: Teaching Styles (71), Equity and Excellence: Equal Access (95), Identity and Achievement: Affirmation of Diversity (88), Student-Teacher Relationships: Caring (27), and Teaching the Whole Child: Supportive Learning Community (67). Evidence of each of Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) five CRP themes were found across all 14 semi-structured interview transcripts, demonstrating a confirmation of participants' self-reported instructional practices, experiences with culturally diverse students, and commitment to educational equity.

In addition to the *a priori* codes already provided through Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) framework, several *in vivo* and descriptive thematic codes were generated by the researcher after examining the interview data in a second cycle of coding (Marshall et al., 2022; Saldaña, 2021). Researcher-generated codes unable to be thematically collapsed into the CRP framework's existing categories are reported in Table 12. The researcher-generated thematic concepts included Obstacles to Educational Equity, Advocacy and Support for Educational Equity, and Equity in a Third Space. Additional codes falling outside of the *a priori* coding framework and researcher-generated categories were classified as Miscellaneous but did not occur with enough frequency to create a new category or to be discussed substantively (Marshall et al., 2022; Maxwell, 2013; Saldaña, 2021).

Table 12*Researcher Generated In Vivo and Descriptive Codes*

Category	Code	Frequency
Obstacles to Educational Equity		458
	<i>External Obstacles</i>	
	Language	52
	Changing Demographics	26
	COVID	26
	Family Support	24
	Socioeconomic Factors	22
	Technology	17
	Student Literacy	15
	Privilege	13
	Trust	13
	Legal/Refugee Status	10
	Politics	6
	<i>Internal Obstacles</i>	
	Lack of Training	50
	Attitude	43
	Lack of Resources	36
	Racism & Bias	32
	Lack of Staff	23
	Lack of Representation	20
	Board/District	14
	Systemic Issues	6
	"We're so bougie here. I hate it."	4
	"If I don't do it, it's not happening."	2
	"Baptism by fire"	1

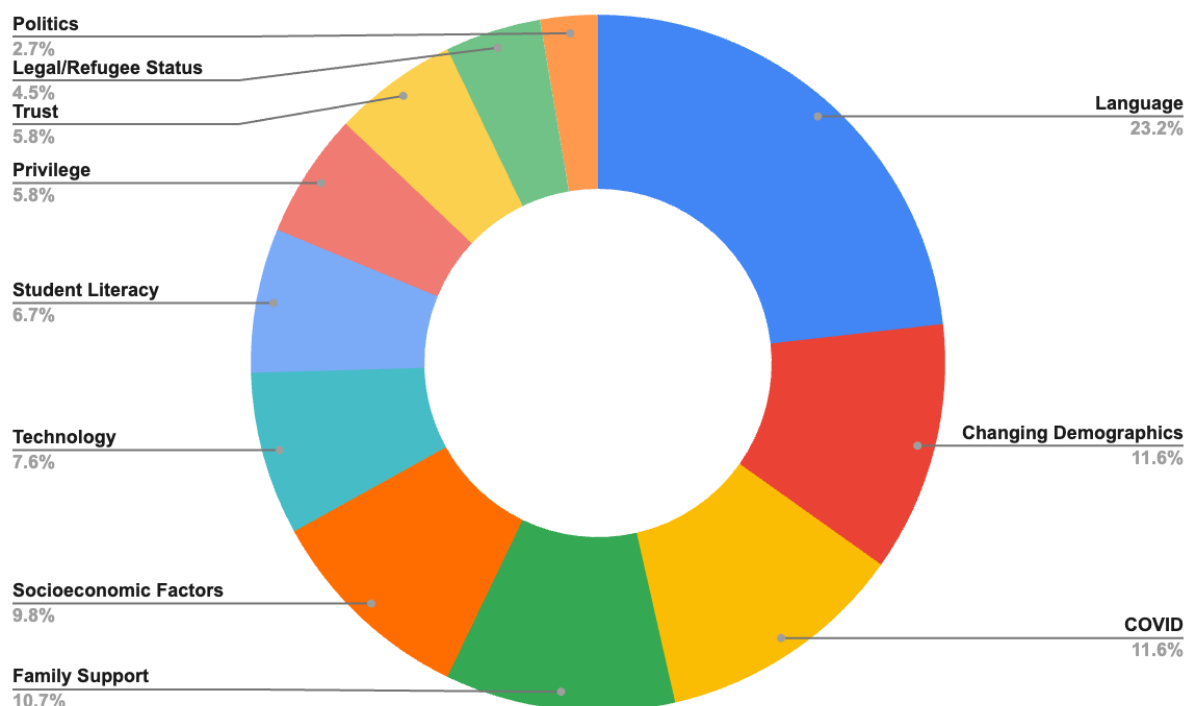
Category	Code	Frequency
	"Feeling of isolation"	1
	"Teachers don't get it yet."	1
	"They beat you down."	1
The Role of Advocacy & Support for Educational Equity		163
	“Advocacy”	49
	Administration	36
	Coworkers/Like-Minded Professionals	33
	Self	25
	Finances/Resources	11
	Community Members	9
Promoting Equity in a Third Space		344
	<i>Fostering Third Spaces</i>	
	“Safe space,” “Sense of belonging,”	71
	"Comfortable,” “Interwoven,” “Foster,” or “It happens naturally.”	
	Opportunities to Engage	60
	Shared Life Experiences	37
	<i>Experiencing Third Spaces</i>	
	Third Space Interactions	67
	Language and Communication	62
	Cultural Hybridity	47
Miscellaneous		18
	Student Assets/Strengths	18
	<i>Total</i>	983

Note. Bolded words indicate categories. Bolded and italicized words indicate subcategories.

As a result of the coding and categorization process, the researcher generated several thematic concepts to represent participants’ experiences with third-space instructional practices and educational equity (Saldaña, 2021). The thematic categories occurring outside of the *a priori* thematic framework codes were of most interest to the study, as the new codes and categories

represented material extending beyond the foundational CRP framework of Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011). The newly generated codes and categories specifically reflected obstacles and support educational equity, as well as educational equity as it relates to third space instructional practices. The additional categories occurred with the following frequency: Obstacles to Educational Equity (458), The Role of Advocacy and Support for Educational Equity (163), and Promoting Equity in a Third Space (344).

Obstacles to Educational Equity. Throughout Part II's semi-structured interviews, participants referenced numerous hinderances to educational equity within their individual contexts. Due to the substantial number of codes under the Obstacles to Educational Equity category, the researcher further collapsed individual codes into the subcategories of Internal Obstacles and External Obstacles (Saldaña, 2021). The Internal Obstacles subcategory represented challenges to educational equity occurring within the school system, organization, or among stakeholders, while the External Obstacles subcategory represented stumbling blocks largely outside of the control of the studied school entities. The frequency of both the Internal Obstacles and External Obstacles subcategories were relatively evenly split across interview responses, with 224 reported occurrences classified as External Obstacles and 234 reported occurrences classified as Internal Obstacles. A breakdown of the reported subcodes for External Obstacles is reported in Figure 17 and subcodes for Internal Obstacles are reported in Figure 18.

Figure 17*Participant Reported External Obstacles to Educational Equity*

Note. Percentages represent the frequency of code occurrences within the subcategory.

Of the reported External Obstacles, the highest percentage of challenges reported were related to language issues. Participants reported several examples of how language differences among students and families posed challenges to equitable practices. For example, Amelia reported her perceptions of the plight of the culturally diverse learners in her junior high ELA classroom: "...students who are identified as language learners...have the double burden of being a minoritized culture and language minority." Amelia elaborated, acknowledging, "double language learners are doubly burdened," and her students are not the type of students whose parents are in constant contact with teachers about students' academic needs or performance. For Amelia, it has been necessary but challenging to advocate for what is best for the needs of her

students. As a recent doctoral graduate, Amelia noted the trend for culturally diverse language learners is an issue not just for her students, but also nationwide, stating, “They are in a no-win situation.”

Diana, a seasoned National Board-Certified teacher working in a large, urban, Wisconsin district echoed similar concerns about language as an obstacle to equitable education for the culturally diverse students she oversees. Diana mentioned, “A lot of the immigrants ... are staying wherever their family or friends are, and there aren't ESL programs in those schools. They want to be in the neighborhood. They don't care if there's an ESL program.” Without language services, Diana’s students struggle to engage in the school environment with the same level of access as students whose first language is English. In Diana’s role, the first step toward equity for her culturally diverse students is addressing the students’ language needs. Not having students’ language needs addressed represents a primary obstacle for Diana’s diverse study population, but despite the challenge, Diana adamantly believes, “You can always get around the language barrier...it’s a barrier only if you allow it to be.”

Destiny, also a later-career and National Board-Certified educator, believes language is a primary obstacle to equity. For Destiny, a considerable portion of her students speak Mam, an unwritten Mayan language spoken in Guatemala. However, Destiny also notes at least 20 additional languages spoken in her district, which is challenging for her as an ESL teacher and coordinator. Personally, Destiny has attempted to bridge the language gap by learning Spanish, which has opened lines of communication with some families. However, the language barrier remains an obstacle with many of the other students who speak neither English nor Spanish as their first language. Destiny noted, “...Some families I can only talk to them through e-mail because we use Google Translate.” Although Destiny mentioned language as an obstacle to

equity in her own ESL classes, she indicated language as a greater obstacle to equity for her students in general education teachers' classes, who may not have the same resources available to them to address the inequity present due to students' language needs. Although the experiences of Amelia, Diana, and Destiny are highlighted, other participants offered numerous additional examples of external obstacles to educational equity. Moreover, the frequency with which participants mentioned students' home language as a challenge represents how difficult it can be for educators to provide equitable educational opportunities for culturally diverse students when a foundational element to learning is outside of the instructor's control.

An additional external obstacle to educational equity related to language reported by many participants was the online learning situations necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. For most participants, the culturally and linguistically diverse students who did not speak English as their first language benefited the least from mandated online learning. Becky reflected on her experiences, saying, "Oh my gosh, it was so bad. Tons of them didn't have internet." Diana concurred, saying of her ESL students in Wisconsin, "These kids weren't going to get online." In Missouri, Bess experienced similar issues, as she was one of eight or nine teachers who had to keep up with the communication demands for the 300-400 students in the ESL program, but according to Bess, "...not everybody had internet. Not everybody had technology." Vanessa reported similar pandemic-related challenges regarding virtual learning for her culturally diverse students high school students in Kansas, noting, "It certainly increased the [learning] gap."

Although Diana reported similar pandemic-related equity obstacles as other participants, her experiences differed slightly. Diana recounted, "COVID...was a nightmare for ELs. I mean, it was absolute. The parents didn't know how to help their students." Diana relayed her experiences during the pandemic, where despite social distancing protocols, she would drive

clandestinely to her students' homes and physically set up the internet connections and log the students in to their virtual meetings. For Diana, such advocacy for her students was necessary in order to remove as many barriers as possible to allow the student to attend classes. Diana's successful advocacy in getting students to attend classes resulted in an additional unexpected positive outcome: the "blessing" of increased parental engagement. According to Diana, "I had parents sitting in on my ESL classes learning English with my students. Now when is that going to happen?"

In addition to the numerous reported external challenges to educational equity, participants also reported several internal challenges to educational equity occurring within their unique educational contexts. In the subcategory of Internal Obstacles (see Figure 18), the most frequently reported challenge was Lack of Training, either for the participant personally or for professional colleagues. One area of challenging internal circumstances reported by participants included students experiencing educational inequity as a result of educators not understanding the needs of culturally diverse students. As an example, Nala, a teacher with four years of experience, reflectively included herself when identifying the need for more teacher training in her urban public school in Ohio. Nala stated, "I feel like we could have more, like, I personally, could have more, professional development opportunities."

Teaching is a second career for Nala, but she found a passion for working with diverse learners, as she has personally experienced many of the same challenges her students now face. Nala's family moved to the U.S. from South America when she was an adolescent, and she identifies as Indian, Guyanese, and American. Nala's unique perspective as a culturally diverse student, who was once new to the U.S. school system, informs her perspective. Nala elaborated on her view of the need for more educator training, saying, "Teachers, classroom teachers, could

use more... Just sort of professional development and how to work with diverse students, not just language learners, but as a whole, diverse students in general.”

Shannon, a teacher in Alabama also in her first five years of the profession, also noted the need for more training for teachers regarding the needs of culturally diverse learners. In Shannon’s case, the need for more training does not necessary stem from educator ignorance, but rather an acknowledgement of her district’s changing demographics. The changing district demographics are not an intimidating factor for Shannon, however, as her mother, a former ESL teacher herself, introduced her to students from diverse backgrounds from a young age, encouraging Shannon to befriend them. Although such experiences were formative for her personally, Shannon recognizes how other educators may need more training to effectively provide equitable environments for diverse students. Shannon noted, “Yeah, I would say because it's such a new population for our area, a lot of the teachers are not very trained in how to create these [equitable] environments for specifically my [ESL] students.”

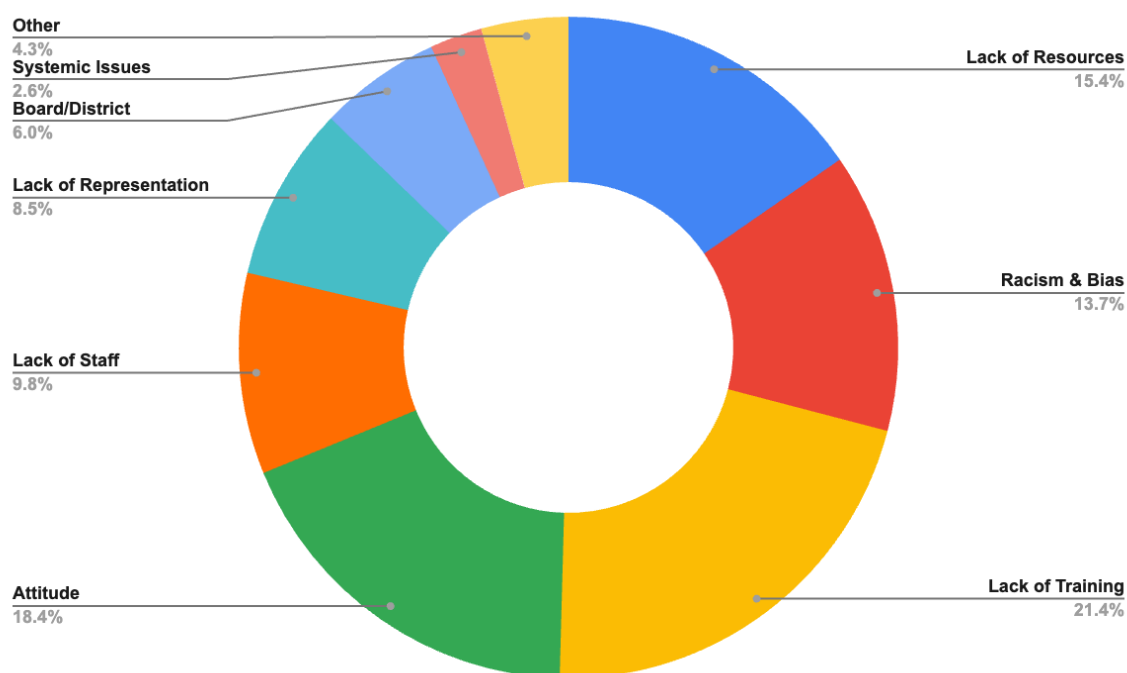
Seasoned educator Destiny echoed similar concerns regarding the need for more teacher training to improve equitable environments for culturally diverse students. In Destiny’s experience, teacher training and awareness are key elements in equitable learning environments. According to Destiny, a student’s educational experience is directly tied to “the training... and the awareness of a teacher.” For Destiny, the teacher directly affects the possibility of culturally diverse students to experience educational equity.

Also noted by participants were examples of coaching or professional development provided by the participants themselves to improve colleagues’ understanding of how to meet the needs of culturally diverse students. Wendy, a recent doctoral graduate, expert teacher, and advocate for equity within her community in Ohio, has found the need to provide training for her

colleagues. Wendy noted, “But part of the problem I have is there's nobody in the administration around me, even in my whole entire county, who has ever had any experience teaching these children.” Despite the challenge of having very few local individuals who can help train teachers, Wendy has found value in her unofficial training role, mentioning, “I’d love to be a coach. I’ve done some PDs at my school, at our preschool, and at the local YMCA, but you know, we have hallway PDs every day. So, I’m trying to I do it informally.” Like Nala, Shannon, Destiny, and Wendy, other participants’ responses indicated a sensitivity to and awareness of the needs of culturally diverse students, as well as an awareness of the importance of proper training for educators to be able to reliably meet such needs.

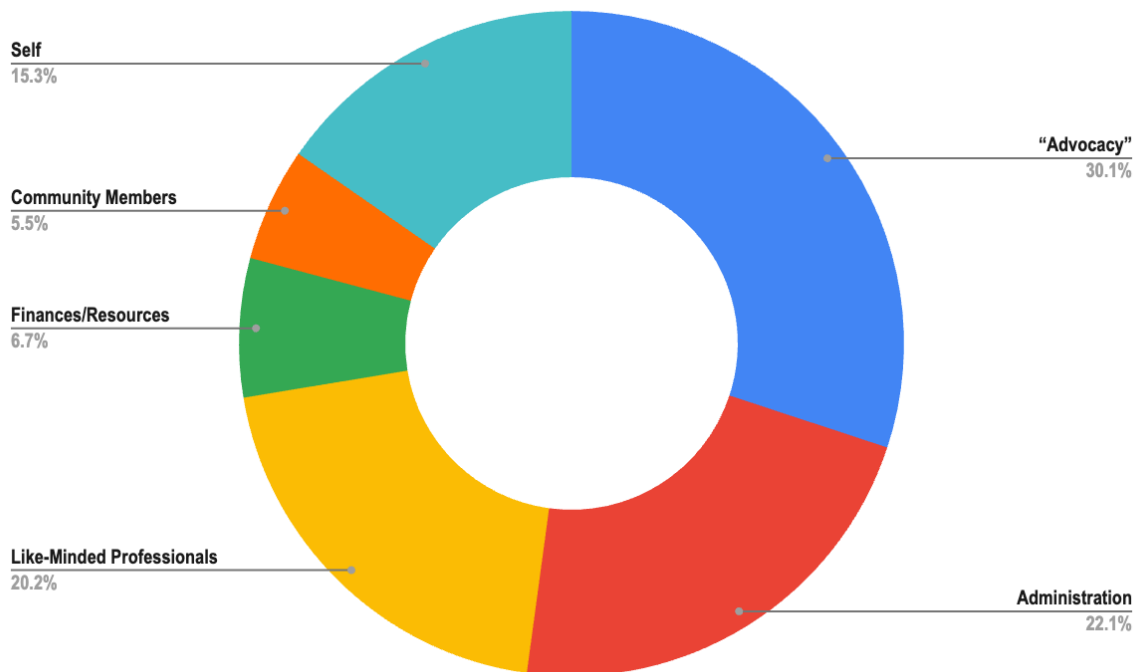
Figure 18

Participant Reported Internal Obstacles to Educational Equity



Note. Percentages represent the frequency of code occurrences within the subcategory.

The Role of Advocacy and Support for Educational Equity. Among participants, the three most mentioned areas within the category of The Role of Advocacy and Support for Educational Equity were “Advocacy” (49), Administration (36), and Colleagues/Like-Minded Professionals (33). Figure 19 shows the percentage of frequency of each code within the larger category. Clearly mentioned throughout participants’ responses was the importance of either having support for or advocating for meeting the needs of culturally diverse learners for educational equity to be possible. For many, support was mentioned as being necessary at the administrative or district level, but for others, support was gained from like-minded colleagues. Similarly, several participants mentioned advocacy as a necessary part of their roles, with a few demonstrating it as personal characteristic. The participants who mentioned advocacy provided examples of promoting equitable and socially just practices not only inside the classroom, but outside of the classroom as well. Some forms of advocacy shared by participants included providing training for colleagues or joining community advocacy groups consisting of other like-minded professionals.

Figure 19*Participant-Reported Areas of Advocacy and Support*

Note. Percentages represent the frequency of code occurrences within the category.

Administrative Support. Brooke, an educator in her first five years of teaching in Illinois, recognized the importance of administrative support in her endeavors to promote equitable learning environments for the culturally diverse students in her classes and clubs. “I’m very lucky to have a lot of, like, administrative support,” Brooke said. Master educator Destiny agreed, noting the role of administrative support for equity as foundational, stating, “A child’s experience in their classroom can be shaped by the administration. If they’re unwilling to push it, it’s not going to happen.” Fellow National Board-Certified Teacher Diana also mentioned the role of administrative support in her pursuit of educational equity for her culturally diverse students. For Diana, administrative support has empowered her to go above and beyond typical expectations in her role: “[District administration] were very well versed [in equitable practices],

and they wanted me to even get up to their speed and go beyond and be able to reach out and teach my colleagues.”

In contrast to the administrative support experienced by Brooke, Destiny, and Diana, Becky, a mid-career teacher in Ohio, finds support from administration and like-minded colleagues only at the building level. Becky does not experience the same level of support from the district level. In Becky’s words, “I think all of the EL teachers are very happy with ourselves. And, like, we all have teachers we all are really great working together [with] and our aides are really great. And our principals are really great. But once we go above that, that’s when things start to fall apart.” In Becky’s opinion, improving the level of support available from the district level would be helpful.

Advocacy. For other participants, having support from administration and like-minded colleagues was only a portion of the necessary foundation for creating equitable environments for culturally diverse students. Advocacy was another key factor. Imagining her future in education, new-to-the-profession Nala noted, “I really hope to be an advocate for cultural diversity and educational equity.” Similarly, Loretta, a latecomer to the education profession, also conveyed the significance of advocacy for her role, stating:

I have found that ESL is my passion and that it’s almost something that I’ve been you know, working towards my whole life. I’ve always been an activist and working in a high poverty district... made me see a lot of the inequities but then becoming an ESL teacher really just crystallized it so much.

While Nala and Loretta aspire to advocate as their careers in education progress, experienced teachers Wendy and Destiny consistently practice advocacy in their current roles, recognizing the need to close gaps in training, support, and understanding for educational equity. Wendy

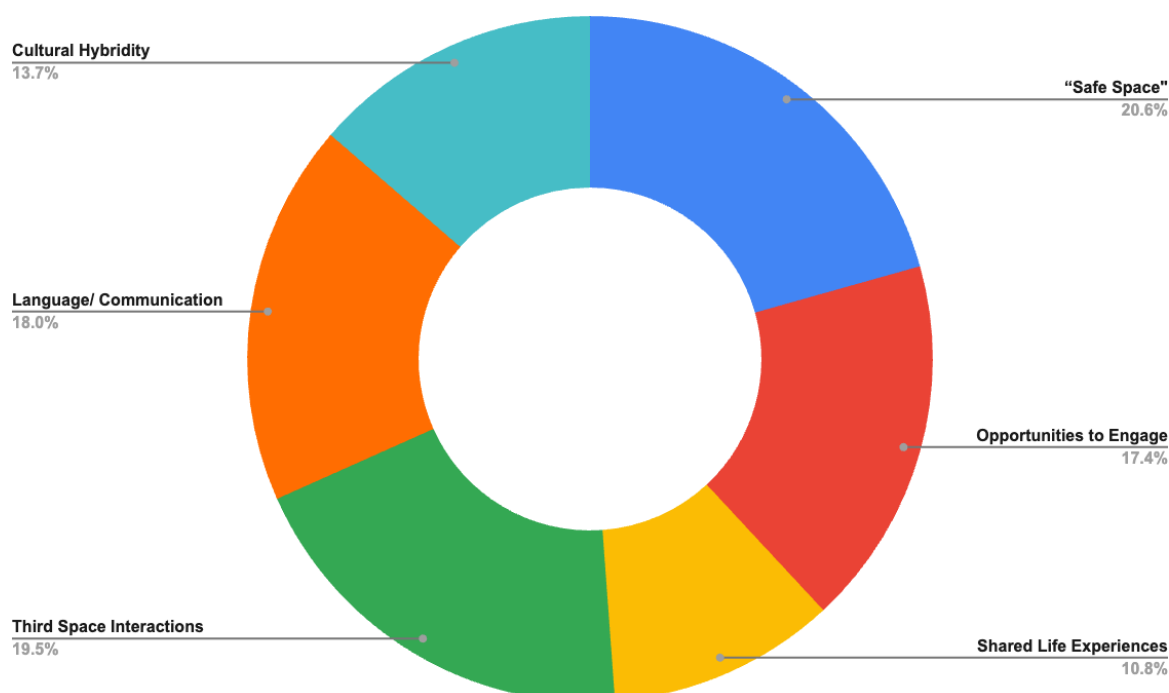
explained, “I would say sometime before COVID, around maybe 2018, I joined an advocacy group. It’s a group of teachers...and we’re just advocating for our students... who are teachers that get the right kind of education, to get educated by people who are trained.” Destiny also constantly examines her role as an advocate through critical reflection with like-minded colleagues: “So, the three of us [my partner teacher, supervisor, and I] talk a lot about like, okay, how can we advocate for our students? What does it look like? What does it sound like?” Like Nala, Loretta, Wendy, and Destiny, many other participants either expressed a need for advocacy or provided examples of advocacy in terms of support for promoting equitable learning environments for culturally diverse students. Further discussion and analysis of the role of advocacy in promoting educational equity will occur in Chapter V.

Promoting Equity in a Third Space. A final thematic category developed by the researcher after examining participant data was Promoting Equity in a Third Space. The frequency of occurrences of the codes within the Promoting Equity in a Third Space category can be seen Figure 20. Codes within the category could be further classified into two subcategories: Fostering Third Spaces and Experiencing Third Spaces. Included in the subcategory Fostering Third Spaces were the codes “Safe space,” Opportunities to Engage, and Shared Life Experiences. Participant examples within the subcategory represented ways in which potential third spaces were encouraged or cultivated for culturally diverse students, either by the participants or by the students. An additional subcategory, Experiencing Third Spaces, included the codes Cultural Hybridity, Language/Communication, and Third Space Interactions. Participant examples within the subcategory demonstrated actual instances of culturally diverse students participating in equitable educational and social experiences in a third space. The two subcategories indicated the dual challenge of implementing equitable third spaces: creating an

environment conducive to fostering such interactions and maintaining third-space student interactions to help promote equitable educational experiences.

Figure 20

Participant-Reported Areas of Promoting Equity in a Third Space



Note. Percentages represent the frequency of code occurrences within the category.

Fostering Third Spaces: Communication Techniques. Participants noted numerous examples of promoting or fostering equitable third spaces. Some examples included how the participants set an inclusive social tone for the classroom, while others demonstrated specific techniques for making the classroom environment more favorable to equitable exchanges. Participants with numerous years of experience shared examples of specific academic and communication techniques. For instance, Amelia discussed her approach to creating third spaces for her culturally diverse junior high English Language Arts students by stating, “I work really hard to really check myself to make sure that there's no greater cultural capital that anybody

has...I really try to get to know the community environment so [the community's] capital is what's brought in. It's not *my* culture [emphasis added]." Amelia provided further examples of how she promoted no single cultural capital in the classroom, including using multicultural curricular materials and purposefully seeking out cultural connections and references to course material to make the academic environment accessible to all her students.

Where Amelia shared academic approaches for fostering a third space within her curriculum, experienced educator Diana offered specific communication techniques as a foundation for equitable third-space exchanges in her classes. Purposefully teaching communication techniques to her students helps Diana maintain an environment where all students are respected and valued. Diana noted, "...I can think definitely the eye contact, the paying attention, and giving the same amount of time to each group or each student definitely was something I had to make sure was managed." For Diana, managing both the high-context and low-context communication styles between culturally diverse students aided in establishing an equitable third space.

Although not a veteran teacher, Nala expressed similar communication expectations in her classroom, perhaps reflective of her own diverse background and former personal experiences as a culturally diverse student in a U.S. K-12 school environment. Nala reflected, "I think, for the most part, it's through conversations that I try to sort of foster this culturally diverse environment... that they're able to talk about themselves and their culture and their homes. And they really take pride in it." In Nala's culturally diverse small group settings, the students are allowed to share about themselves freely, but according to Nala, "... the expectation is that you're a listener first ... because, you know, kids can be kids sometimes. So, the expectation is like, 'Oh, that's not weird,' or, 'Oh, that's different.' It's like, 'It's different, but it's okay.'"

Managing student-to-student communication and modeling understanding and acceptance of different cultural practices helps Nala to promote equitable exchanges in a third space.

Destiny shared related experiences with how communication create a third space within her elementary ESL classroom in Washington, recalling a fourth-grade group with students who speak Somali, Japanese, Persian, Mam, and Spanish. As an example, Destiny recalled having to be aware of and manage language use to promote an equitable learning environment, saying, “My para is from Mexico, and she speaks Spanish, so she's actually been really funny. [I told her] like, you have to stop speaking Spanish, because...my Somali kids can't understand you... She's like, ‘Oh, yeah!’” In Destiny’s situation, preempting the paraprofessional from speaking Spanish with Spanish-speaking students allows her to foster an environment where students can interact more equitably in a third space.

In addition to monitoring and promoting different communication opportunities within the school environment, Wendy also promotes third spaces by bringing in funds of knowledge from her culturally diverse students’ families. For Wendy, it is important to allow all her primary age students in Ohio to see, experience, and understand the value of all students’ cultural backgrounds. The best way to include information from different cultures is to include information directly from the individuals within each culture. Wendy recounted the following:

I thought last year I would contact parents and I would ask specific questions about what is school like [in different countries]. Do they have uniforms? And especially because the school lunches around the world are pretty amazing compared to what we serve. And we have a welcome sign with all the languages and every week I teach the whole school how to say good morning in another language. So, every day these kids are greeting me [in different languages] ...so it's pretty cool.

By purposefully bringing in different cultures' funds of knowledge and experiences into learning opportunities for all students, Wendy fosters an environment where her students can engage with her and with each other in a more equitable third space.

Fostering Third Spaces: Informal or Social Techniques. In addition to the formal academic experiences already reported, other participants discussed how they fostered third spaces among students socially, through informal yet important gestures. An approach Destiny uses to allow for an opening into third space for her students is to engage her own cultural background in the classroom. Destiny stated, "I try to be very open about my...biracial side. And then they're open with me about their Guatemalan background and that kind of thing." Through her modeling, Destiny's students engage with one another, finding areas of comparison between their cultural groups, allowing them to experience third space interactions. Destiny continued, "I have kids from Somalia and Japan and they also [say,] 'Oh, well, we do that,' like, we start comparing. 'Oh, in our family we this' and there I mean, that's that kind of thing."

For Nala, who personally identifies with the challenges of her culturally diverse students, promoting a third space among her students is all about attitude and maintaining a learner's posture. Nala mentioned the following:

And just, I think, in the beginning...what I do is just set the expectations of we're all we're all here to learn...like we have so much to learn from one another...I just really try to set that tone and that I think that's a strategy that really helps, like, students know right away, like, we are in a safe space.

Through the fostering of a safe third space, Nala believes students have the potential to interact with one another in more equitable ways.

Vanessa, a mid-career high school ELA teacher in Kansas, shared another example of fostering a socially safe third space among her diverse students. In her classes, Vanessa fosters third spaces specifically through curating music playlists for students to listen to during classroom work time. The curated class playlists are helpful in allowing all students to have a say in the classroom's atmosphere while also providing other students with opportunities to interact with other culture's unique elements. Vanessa shared the following:

And so [students] get to suggest whatever song they want. Each hour has a different class playlist and so we end up with this huge mix of like, traditional Mexican music with hip hop and Hindi music and country and a little bit of everything...I've had Bollywood on there a lot. And so, everybody gets a say in some of the music that plays and that's been really helpful.

Although Vanessa's class playlists do not represent a strictly academic example of fostering third spaces, the small-scale, informal third-space efforts still contribute to the overall social atmosphere of the classroom, where all cultural backgrounds are respected and valued.

Participant Shannon also noted a social element to promoting inclusive third spaces, noting the need to celebrate students from all cultural backgrounds, not just the students from the majority or dominant cultural backgrounds. For Shannon, this involved specifically amplifying the cause of some diverse students who might otherwise be overlooked. Shannon recounted the following experience:

This one's really hard because we are majority Hispanic and then I feel like our Arabic students get left out sometimes...So like last year, at the high school, we did Hispanic Heritage Month and I tried to do like an Arabic... It was like Arabic Heritage Month, kind

of...but the national one kind of falls during a bad time because it's right around the time of Ramadan... So, this year, I'm going to try again a different time.

Mid-career middle school teacher Becky recounted similar experiences at her school in Ohio. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Becky's school put on a diversity fair each year to draw attention to, value, and celebrate students' various cultural backgrounds. The diversity fair is slated to start up again this year, and as Becky states, "[It's] a chance to bring anything they want to share with the whole school." In Becky's and Shannon's schools, opportunities to promote different cultural backgrounds represent teacher efforts to promote equity in a third space.

Fostering Third Spaces: Challenges. Although most participants provided examples of positively fostering third spaces, participant Loretta expressed an alternate experience. For Loretta, who teaches high school students in a Rhode Island sanctuary city, third spaces are challenging to foster. Loretta mentioned the following regarding the challenge of attaining cultural hybridity and equity in a third space among her students:

That's a goal. That's a goal because I was aware of the separation [between cultural groups]. And, you know, I did try to bring things in that would, that would [be] sort of cross-cultural, but I was also aware that, that there were a lot of barriers up from the students themselves, that sometimes I would say, 'Well, you're not doing a good enough job, Loretta,' but then I really recognized that it really probably wasn't about me, you know...that was just where they were at, but it's definitely a goal I would love. I really haven't seen [third space interactions] too much, but I would love to see it."

Similarly, Nala, who is positively inclined to promote third space interactions between students, also affirmed the challenge of promoting third spaces, especially outside of her own classroom:

And I think if, if that could be sort of fostered a little bit more, I think this third space and this hybrid that you speak of can really become prominent in classrooms, outside of my small space, and in the school. And I see...I see, like where, how we could [make it] happen. I just don't know how to get it there.

Nala's noted challenges in promoting third space interactions outside of her classroom echoes findings in published literature regarding the difficulty of implementing such a unique instructional approach (Gupta, 2020; Ratnam, 2020). The concept of third space is highly abstract, and there are few published examples of how to implement the theory practically in academic environments (Gupta, 2020; Ratnam, 2020).

Experiencing Third Spaces: Language and Translanguaging. In addition to providing examples of promoting or fostering equitable academic or social exchanges in a third space, study participants also provided examples of students engaging in actual equitable third spaces experiences. Several participants noted third space experiences occurring among students through language, especially with younger students. Diana recounted the following example occurring with her elementary students:

So, I remember I had a student who spoke both Ukrainian and Russian and English and, in that class, there was a Ukrainian student and then there was a Russian student...Most Ukrainians do know Russian...But it was it was just so cool that there was this little mini translator in third grade, just you know, little girls, and she's speaking all three languages. [One student is] only speaking Russian. [One student is only] speaking Ukrainian. But they were having this conversation. And there's this little mini human just...like ping-pong, playing ping-pong [interacting] with both of them at the same time. That was just amazing to me.

Wendy, whose main role is in a K-2 building, recalled a similar incident:

My favorite groups are honestly the groups that are different languages. So, if they're all Spanish, or all Japanese, it gets really difficult because [students from the same cultural background are] speaking with each other. But last year, we had a little girl from Japan and a little girl from Brazil. And they were brand new, so they like to use the translator a lot... But one, my little Japanese girl...after a while after she started using the translator not to translate Japanese into English, but to translate it into Portuguese for her friend. So, and then they know it's like, well, if I'm teaching a new concept, I'll say it in English. I'll translate it to Japanese and they're like, 'Okay, Portuguese now.' So, they know what the others need, and it's just, it's normal. That was just normal to them. And I think a lot of the same thing might happen in the classroom; they just know. They will know if a student needs that kind of translation. Or they'll try to help each other even if they can't speak the same languages.”

Debra, a master educator with a doctoral degree who works as both a high school ESL educator and a college professor in New Jersey, has witnessed third spaces emerging through language with older students. Debra reflected on her experiences, recalling the following:

When I think of the ESL courses for the students with higher proficiency, that's more that hybrid. There [are] many different languages that are represented...the cultures are emerging, languages are emerging. I've even had a Ukrainian student who, alongside learning English, was learning Spanish so she could hang out [with other students].

Similarly, Debra recalled an additional experience she observed over the course of an academic year involving three junior high students engaging in third space first through language, then through social elements:

There [are] three students who are not necessarily newcomers, in the high school. One is Turkish, one is Arabic, and one is Brazilian, so they do not share a common heritage language. But I think, listening to them, I believe that all three of them translate language between the three languages, not even just the Brazilian one just speaking Portuguese, like they will use whatever language and it's just incredible to watch...and they eat lunch together and where and when they eat has to support the Arabic student during certain times...they're very respectful. So, it's not only just language, it's where and when they eat. It's supporting each other in the content areas.

Experiencing Third Spaces: Sociocritical Relationships. Within Amelia's junior high setting in Colorado, she has seen her adolescent students engage in third space interactions regularly, acknowledging no visible disconnection among students based on cultural background. Instead, third space interactions represent a sociocritical awareness on the part of the students. Differences are acknowledged, and at times, joked about between students within friend groups. Amelia refers to this as "a positive thing," because pretending all students share the same home life, cultural background, or language is "not helpful at all." Amelia noted, "I don't see in my building amongst middle schoolers, like, kids only grouping by race or ethnic culture. They all do kind of interact...changing friend groups, you know, but it's not usually racially or ethnically separated." Ashley, whose school context is in East Harlem, New York, has witnessed similar interactions from her culturally diverse students. Ashley mentioned her geographical context as having an influence over students interacting in a third space, stating, "I think also just because of where we are...you're constantly surrounded by such diversity ... you're never like, 'Oh, I'm going to talk to this person differently,' or at least that's my personal experience, but I have not noticed a specific difference in how students interact based on their cultural identities."

Experiencing Third Spaces: Informal or Micro-Third Spaces. In Tennessee, Kira has helped promote third space exchanges in her charter school's first-grade classroom through small-scale activities. For instance, one activity Kira recounted was asking students to bring in items from their home cultures to share with their classmates. Through this activity, Kira has noticed similarities across cultures, helping students to see areas of common connection with one another. Kira explained the activity as follows:

Every student brought in, like, a little bag of like things about their family or things that interest them and [we try to incorporate] those. And we've seen a lot of like recurring themes, not necessarily just in the culturally diverse children but in the rest of the class too, like these Takis that the kids are all into and the Ramen noodles and the Pop-Its and just like all the little things that they like, and then trying to find a way to like loop that back in. So, I think that, you know, once we find out more about their families and different things like that, we can loop that back in, too.

As Kira noted, learning more about students' families and cultural backgrounds allows her to promote multiple points of connection between students in the classroom. Kira's simple yet effective class activity demonstrating common connection points for her students allowed them to engage in micro-third space interactions.

For Nala, students who experience third spaces are able to do so both inside and outside her classroom. Like the connections occurring within Kira's classroom, Nala's ESL students built relationships across cultures within her classroom before gaining confidence to interact with non-ESL students outside of the classroom. Nala recalled, "But it was really great to see as the year progressed, how they were interacting with their peers and also with one another because

...they found this, like, common bond with one another, but then that led them to be comfortable to interact with other students ... that speak other languages or just English.”

Destiny also has established an activity where her students are able to build confidence interacting with one another through engaging in a third space. Although outside of the purely academic sphere. Destiny’s informal, micro-third space activity started as a weekly lunch gathering for her culturally diverse ESL students. During the weekly gatherings, students engaged in play and conversation, crossing cultural and linguistic boundaries. According to Destiny, the group became so popular that students began inviting friends to join. What was interesting to Destiny, however, was that the friends who were invited were also culturally diverse. Soon, the lunch gathering became a safe space for culturally diverse students. Destiny reflected on the experience, saying, “So, I talked a little bit about the ‘lunch bunch’...I would say that’s it [a third space]. That has been the most impactful thing I have seen. It started as kind of just a random thing that we tried. We wanted our kids to feel like they had a space to go to anytime.”

The connection Destiny witnessed through her lunch group in Washington may be due to the same student characteristics witnessed by Bess in Missouri. Bess, who has had extensive experience living and working in countries outside the U.S. has seen the social aspect of third space among her students: “One of the third place or space, things that I feel like [students] do really well is including each other, and including those that they see who might feel alone.” She elaborated, “...but like, to me, that shows a person who felt isolated and alone, based on a cultural identity can suddenly say my cultural identity isn’t that different from this cultural identity, which isn’t that different from this cultural identity, and together that built that third space.”

Some informal, social third-space interactions Shannon has witnessed with her high school ESL students included the students making efforts to engage in the southern U.S. culture of Alabama. Such efforts were not necessarily orchestrated by Shannon as the teacher, but instead, developed naturally between students, which is consistent with some scholars' findings (Burke & Crocker, 2020; Gupta, 2020; Ordonez, 2021; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). Speaking of the classroom social atmosphere of her students, Shannon noted:

But I do think it's just a mix of cultures, including the U.S. culture because you know, today they came in [and] we're talking about the football game tonight. And my Hispanics are like, "We hate American football, but like, we're going to try it." And my Arabic students...one of them works at a gas station. He gave me the [university team] schedule, on the back of a Coors Light ad...so, it's fun that they're all trying to interact with, you know, the [local cultural] environment, even if they don't really like it. They're like, "You know what? We're going to go. We'll try."

Football was not the only informal area of noted Southern U.S. cultural influence. Shannon also recalled a pep rally where her culturally diverse students got involved in learning the line dances prominent in the area. Furthermore, many native English-speaking students have tried to persuade Shannon to allow them to join her ESL classroom in order to have class with their culturally diverse friends. For Shannon, such actions demonstrate how her culturally diverse students have attempted to enter into a more equitable third space environment with other students in non-systemic ways.

Nala shared a similar judgment about how her culturally diverse students engage with each other and with her. She reflected on her students' experiences in comparison to her own experience having a complex cultural identity. She noted the following:

Yeah, I don't know how to explain it...but yeah, I guess the third space is something I do see happen among students, and I think, naturally, it's, I feel like it's interesting to have a word to describe it, because I feel like I'm in this third space, but I don't know what you would call it, you know?

Of all the participants, Kansas educator Vanessa's experience reflected a daily acknowledgement of and experience with consistent third space student interactions. Vanessa describes her culturally diverse school as "its own animal," noting the 50 different languages spoken in her district reflect a global culture. Because the atmosphere of Vanessa's school is so unique, she feels she will likely always stay in her current role. She notes, "I mean, at the risk of sounding like I'm naive and live in a utopia, everybody is...I mean, it's, it's a pretty good, like, mix of kids who just get along." The intermixed environment happens not just inside but outside the classroom, with a variety of clubs available for students' different cultural backgrounds. Inside the classroom, Vanessa attests, "I mean, in the classroom, everybody's all over and intermixing...I think everybody gets along, for the most part. It's just ...[a] nice little utopia, most of the time."

Experiencing Third Spaces: Challenges. Like the Fostering Third Space subcategory, most participants' examples in the Experiencing Third Space subcategory were positive. Two participants, however, explained difficulties for students experiencing third-space interactions. For example, Diana explained the age of students as a factor for how well students are willing to interact in a potential third space. Consistent with published literature, Diana recognizes younger students as having more willingness to engage in culturally hybrid or third-space interactions with others (Ordonez, 2021; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). Having experienced culturally diverse class environments in multiple grade bands, Diana mentioned the following about the interactions she

typically observes from high school students: “Yeah, it's the high schoolers that are the most hands off. They'll let you sit with them, but they don't truly understand and have the empathy for some reason, that the little ones do. The little ones just dive in.”

Loretta has also experienced similar disinterest from high school students in her secondary English classroom in Rhode Island. Loretta does not believe she has witnessed her students interact in third spaces within the academic realm. However, she does think that it might occur outside of the classroom, through sports:

The first thing that pops into my mind is sports. Um, I mean, soccer... There was the World Cup this year, and I did allow them to watch and maybe, maybe that would have been one of the few times that I would have seen something like that... a lot of them do participate outside of school, as well, on like travel teams... and I bet that that does happen there because it's a third space of sports.

Despite Loretta not witnessing third space exchanges between her students, she does see value in it. For Loretta, third space interactions are “definitely something that I would love to support.”

Overall, the data collected from participants during Part II's semi-structured interviews provided rich, context-specific examples of how equity and third-space instructional practices exist or persist within the educators' unique situations. Several participants provided further experiential data for consideration and analysis in Part III of the study through monthly reflections and artifacts of professional practice. Additional discussion of the themes and cases as related to the study's research questions will continue in Chapter V.

Part III: Reflections and Artifact Collection Data

Part III of the study included collecting monthly reflections and artifacts of professional practice from several study participants during September, October, and November of 2023.

Collecting additional data from participants over a prescribed time period acted as a method of data triangulation and provided additional data for the researcher to evaluate the participant-teachers' perspectives on the concepts investigated throughout the study (Yin, 2009, 2018). Additionally, collecting multiple forms of data for Part III aligns well with case study methodology, promoting investigation through varied data sources (Schwandt & Gates, 2018; Yin, 2009, 2012, 2018). Reflections and artifacts collected during Part III were also coded through both Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) CRP framework themes and the researcher-generated *in vivo* and thematic descriptive codes used in Part II of the study. After examining the data, and due to the flexible nature of qualitative research analysis, the researcher developed the additional code Translation under the category of Advocacy/Support for Equitable Practices after it was mentioned 32 times across participants' reflections and artifacts (Maxwell, 2013; Yin, 2009, 2012, 2018). Results of Part III's coding analysis can be viewed in Table 13.

Table 13

Part III Reflection and Artifact Coding Frequency

Category/Code	September	October	November	Totals
<i>Advocacy/Support for Educational Equity (70)</i>				
Translation	4	16	12	32
"Advocacy"	1	7	3	11
Administration	0	2	0	2
Community Members	1	5	2	8
Coworkers/Like-minded Professionals	1	2	1	4
Finances/Resources	0	6	0	6
Self	0	4	3	7
<i>Developmental Appropriateness (4)</i>				
Cultural Variation in Psychological Needs	4	0	0	4
<i>Equity and Excellence (46)</i>				
Dispositions	0	1	2	3
Equal Access	10	13	5	28
High Expectation for All	2	0	0	2
Incorporation of Multicultural Content	10	0	3	13
<i>Identity and Achievement (32)</i>				
Affirmation of Diversity	8	1	0	9

Category/Code	September	October	November	Totals
Cultural Heritage	5	0	1	6
Multiple Perspectives	3	0	0	3
Public Validation of Home-Community Cultures	9	2	3	14
<i>Obstacles to Educational Equity (12)</i>				
External Obstacles	1	1	1	3
Internal Obstacles	2	0	7	9
<i>Student-Teacher Relationships (4)</i>				
Interaction	1	0	1	2
Relationships	0	0	2	2
<i>Teaching the Whole Child (64)</i>				
Bridging Home, School, & Community	24	16	18	58
Learning Outcomes	1	0	0	1
Skill Development in Cultural Context	2	0	0	2
Supportive Learning Community	1	1	1	3
<i>Promoting Equity in a Third Space (82)</i>				
"Safe Space"	10	0	2	12
Cultural Hybridity	13	1	1	15
Language and Communication	17	9	6	32
Opportunities to Engage	15	2	6	23
<i>Totals</i>	<i>145</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>314</i>

Note. Bolded and italicized words indicate thematic categories.

Codes with the highest frequency of occurrence throughout the data were Teaching the Whole Child: Bridging Home, School, and Community (58), Advocacy/Support for Equitable Practices: Translation (32), Third Space: Language and Communication (32), Equity and Excellence: Equal Access (28), and Third Space: Opportunities to Engage (23). The most frequent codes represent thematic concepts from both Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) framework as well as researcher-developed themes resulting from Part II data analysis.

September Reflections and Artifacts: Fostering and Experiencing Third Spaces

September's reflection prompts asked participants to reflect on their experiences over the previous month, which for most, was the beginning of the academic year with students. The reflection prompts mirrored the study's researching questions, asking participants to elaborate on any third-space instructional practices they used (RQ1), share any practices used to bring the knowledge of culturally diverse students' home communities into the classroom (RQ2), and

reflect on whether any of the practices impacted educational equity for culturally diverse students over the course of the month. Ten participants from Part II of the study participated in September's reflections and artifact collection: Ashley, Amelia, Becky, Wendy, Diana, Kira, Destiny, Bess, Loretta, and Shannon.

Some examples participants provided regarding students engaging in third spaces (RQ1) included additional examples of the subtheme *Fostering Third Spaces*. For instance, Ashley described how her culturally diverse students in New York worked together in small groups to identify their heritage countries on a map (see Figure 21). According to Ashley, there was a potential for a third space for interaction because of the students' shared purpose within the small group. According to Ashley, "They realized that although they are all from different geographical places and may speak different languages, they are all working toward a shared goal of learning English."

Figure 21

Artifact: Fostering Third Space through Displays of Cultural Diversity



Shannon shared a similar experience with her culturally diverse students in Alabama, validating the unique cultural background of each of her students and modeling how these

students due share some common bonds. Although her students originate from a variety of backgrounds, the students' shared experiences fostered a potential third space. In the example provided by Shannon, she was able to facilitate a conversation around empathy, drawing commonalities between students who have been culturally misidentified out of ignorance.

Shannon recounted the following:

In one of my small groups, I facilitated a discussion of city/state/country between Vietnam and Guatemala. I received a new Vietnamese student and the students said she was from China. We worked together to realize that saying [the Vietnamese student] was from China was similar to when students say [Guatemalans] are from Mexico. We finished with saying that we live in Alabama, United States. We also completed a school-wide read along bilingually in Spanish and English to explain to our general education students the feelings and frustrations that our students feel upon stepping into a U.S. school with no prior language knowledge.

Shannon demonstrated how she began to foster a third space not only in her small group of ESL students, but also by drawing a larger connection to the student body as a whole. Shannon began working to foster potential third spaces with the greater school community through promoting Hispanic Heritage Month in a school-wide presentation, promoting the empathy necessary for students to interact across cultures more effectively (see Figure 22).

Figure 22

Artifact: Fostering Third Space through School-Wide Activities



Bess also used Hispanic Heritage Month as an opportunity to foster third spaces at her school in Missouri. Each week, Bess wore a shirt promoting the flags of the countries of her Hispanic students, and she helped teachers choose bilingual books and activities in Spanish and English to share with students throughout the month. Bess not only attempted to foster third spaces for linguistically diverse students, but she also did so for students who were culturally diverse but did not qualify for ELL services. Bess reflected, “I informed all teachers of [the multicultural students’] family backgrounds.” Furthermore, Bess also encouraged teachers to help the non-ELL multicultural students choose bilingual or culturally appropriate books from the library. Bess’s efforts extended beyond the teachers, as well. In one instance, Bess shared culturally relevant information with a new, non-ELL culturally diverse student to help explain student behaviors.

In Ohio, Wendy began fostering third spaces with her primary students by creating an environment that publicly acknowledges the diversity in the school. Wendy reflected, “Having world flags displayed, ‘Hello’, and ‘Welcome’ signs in multiple languages around the building exposes the entire student body to our diverse learners” (see Figure 23 and 24).

Figure 23

Artifact: Fostering Third Space through Language Diversity



Figure 24

Artifact: Fostering Third Space by Acknowledging Diversity



Additionally, Wendy reflected on encouraging the characteristic of empathy among her students, a key disposition necessary for third space to exist. Wendy fostered empathy by having students create and share self-portraits, encouraging students to recognize the numerous crayon colors used to represent each student's unique differences and backgrounds (see Figure 25).

Figure 25

Artifact: Fostering Third Space through Empathy



Furthermore, Wendy also fostered empathy between students from differing cultures through the use of a book for young learners entitled *Chocolate Milk, Por Favor: Celebrating Diversity with Empathy* (Dismondy, 2015). While the book promotes important characteristics for fostering third-space opportunities, it also engages both Spanish and English languages, representing students experiencing third spaces through translanguaging. According to Wendy, translanguaging is used in her classroom regularly, mostly between Spanish and English. Wendy also reported translanguaging when students have access to an electronic translator. Wendy reported, “Some students skip English altogether and translate directly from their language to their friend’s!” Translanguaging was reported by several participants, including Wendy, in Part II interviews as an example of students interacting in a third space. Wendy provided additional artifact examples of translanguaging through displays around her school encouraging students to learn phrases in languages other than English (see Figure 26).

Figure 26

Artifact: Experiencing Third Space through Translanguaging



Overall, in Wendy’s opinion, her efforts are resulting in more equitable learning environments for her students: “It is very ‘normal’ to them. The students show great interest in their culturally and linguistically diverse friends.”

Like Wendy, Becky was able to demonstrate not only how she fosters third spaces for her students, but how they are already experiencing them. Like Ashley and Shannon, identifying common bonds between different cultural experiences aids in third-space potential. According to Becky, “My advanced class is studying Latin America this quarter. We learned about food, facts, and watched a music video from each country. In my beginning class, we talk about school in their countries vs. in Ohio. Again, my students come from all different countries, so they are ALWAYS [*sic*] working together and sharing ideas.”

Besides translanguaging, translation was also a communication strategy reported by several participants with regard to engaging the home communities of culturally diverse students during the month of September. Ashley and Becky reflected on Back-to-School Night parent events, where materials and sessions were offered in multiple languages (see Figure 27).

Figure 27

Artifact: Bilingual Back to School Night

What can you expect from your scholar’s MLL specialist? ¿Qué puede esperar del especialista en MLL de su estudiante?

- Communicate in your preferred language twice a month.
- Discuss your scholar’s language goals and collaborate with you to determine how you can support your scholar at home.
- Comuníquese en su idioma preferido dos veces al día mes.
- Discuta los objetivos lingüísticos de su estudiante y colabore con usted para determinar cómo puede apoyar a su estudiante en casa.



However, Becky did note the challenge of having only three families present for the event.

Becky also provided translated e-mail messages for the families of her students and reported the initial uses of a mobile application translation software, Talking Points, which allows communication between educators and families in the families' preferred languages. Bess also reported similar translation activities using the same Talking Points mobile application software and helped general education teachers set up accounts to communicate with the families of non-English speaking students. According to Bess, "I shared information about any/all school or classroom events through Talking Points."

Diana and Wendy also provided examples of communicating with families through translation (see Figures 28 and 29). Diana reported sending home informational forms translated into students' home languages, noting how data from the forms helps teachers develop material best suited to the needs of each student. Similarly, Wendy reported a Language Use survey her school sent home to better understand students' language and schooling needs. Wendy also sent home a translated Getting to Know You form to acquire additional family information, like cultural traditions. According to Wendy, "Translating information to send home increases opportunities for parents to be involved in their child's education, to understand what is going on, and to feel/be included."

Figure 28

Artifact: Communication with Home Communities in Heritage Language

Wisconsin Daim Ntawv Nug Txog Hom Lus Siv Nyob Hauv Tsev (HLS)

Menyuam Kawm Ntawv Lub Npe: _____ Tus Ntsiaj Ntawv Ntawm Lub Npe Nruab Nrab: _____
 Menyuam Kawm Ntawv Lub Xeem: _____ Qhib Ntawv: _____ Hnub Yug: _____/_____/_____
 Koog Tsev Kawm Ntawv: _____ Lub Tsev Kawm Ntawv: _____ Menyuam Kawm Ntawv Tus ID: _____
 Hnub Muab Coj Los Siv: _____/_____/_____

Lus Qhia Txog Niamtxiv/Neeg Saibxyuas

Lub Npe	Lub Xeem	Txheeb Ze Tus Menyuam Kawm Ntawv Li Cas

Niamtxiv/Neeg Saibxyuas Tus Ntawv Tes Kos Npe: _____

Niamtxiv/Neeg Saibxyuas Tus Ntawv Tes Kos Npe: _____

Tus neeg muab qhov HLS coj los siv: _____, txoj hauj lwj _____.

Lub Hom Phiaj

Cov lus nyob hauv daim ntawv ntawm no yuav pab qhia tau rau peb tias cov menyuam kawm ntawv uas yuav tsum tau muaj kev los mus pab lawv kom lawv paub lus Askiv zoo txaus lawv thiaj li yuav mus kawm tau ntawv nyob hauv tsev kawm ntawv yog cov twg. Peb yuav tsum tau siv ib qho kev xeem ntawv los ntsuas saib nws paub lus zoo npaum li cas thiaj li yuav txiav txim tau tias saib puas yuav tsim nyog npaj muaj kev pab kawm lus rau koj tus menyuam.

Peb yuav tsis muab cov lus teb siv coj los txiav txim saib tus menyuam kawm ntawv puas yog ib tus neeg nyob tau hauv teb chaws Meskas raws cai lossis siv mus rau cov hom phiaj ntawm kev khiav tuaj nkag rau teb chaws Meskas. Yog peb pom tau tias koj tus menyuam yog ib tug tsim nyog siv tau cov kev pab rau kev kawm lus, koj yeej tseem hais tau tias koj tsis kam kom koj tus menyuam mus siv ib co lossis tag nrho cov kev pab uas muaj rau koj tus menyuam siv.

Ntu Lus Nug 1

1. Lus Askiv puas yog hom lus thib ib uas tus menyuam kawm ntawv ntawm no paub hais? Yog tias tsis yog no, thov qhia saib yog hom lus dabtsi: _____

Yog: Hla mus rau Nqis Lus Nug 2

Tsis Yog: Hla mus rau Nqis Lus Nug 3

2. Tus menyuam kawm ntawv ntawm no puas hnov neeg hais lossis siv ib hom lus uas tsis yog lus Askiv ntau tshaj li ntawm ib nrab ntau nyob rau lub sij hawm thaum nws nyob hauv tsev?

Yog: Hla mus rau Nqis Lus Nug 4

Tsis Yog: Tus menyuam kawm ntawv tsis tsim nyog mus xeem qhov kev ntsuas ELP Screening. Qhov Kev Nug HLS tag li no.

Hla mus rau Ntu Lus Nug 2

3. Tus menyuam kawm ntawv ntawm no puas hnov neeg hais lossis siv ib hom lus uas tsis yog lus Askiv ntau tshaj li ntawm ib nrab ntau nyob rau lub sij hawm thaum nws nyob hauv tsev?

Yog: Muab qhov kev ntsuas ELP Screener rau xeem. Muab lwj hom (cov) lus sau tseg. Qhov Kev Nug HLS tag li no. Hla mus rau Ntu Lus Nug 2

Tsis Yog: Hla mus rau Nqis Lus Nug 4

Figure 29

Artifact: Selections from an English Translation of Getting to Know You Form



Getting to Know You

English Language Learners

Welcome. The first step in helping English learners grow is getting to know them. My goal this year is to know more about your child and your family. This will help us in working on language skills. It will also help me to have a better understanding of any cultural needs and differences. I am very excited to grow with your child this year!

Student's name _____

Is there a different name your child wishes to be called? _____

*Sometimes on official forms, there are up to 4 names. This is often a confusing situation for teachers, as it differs with cultures. Which 1st and last name will your child be learning to write?

*What country was your child born in? _____

If the U.S., what is the country of origin of your family?

*What language does your child use most at home?

*Do you need information that comes home on paper to be translated? Yes / No

In all reflections for September, participants shared a common affirmative interpretation of whether the month's efforts to promote third spaces or include students' home communities in the learning process resulted in a more equitable learning environments for culturally diverse students. Ashley believed her map activity "really helped students to gain mutual respect and ownership toward a shared goal while recognizing and respecting cultural differences." Additionally, Ashley affirmed the potential for more equitable learning environments when there is a clear connection between students' homes and school: "I think the key with family

communication having a positive impact will be more visible long term with consistent translation.” Wendy also believed her practices during September resulted in more equitable learning environments for her culturally diverse students. According to Wendy, “Classroom teachers are using the [information provided by families]. Most have taken time to translate information that goes home.” Similarly, with additional translation efforts, Wendy reflected, “Parents feel more comfortable reaching out for help, or with questions. I believe building and strengthening family relationships is an important piece.” Shannon also felt her undertakings were resulting in more educational equity for her culturally diverse students, especially with her efforts to work school-wide and not just within her own classroom. According to Shannon, “I think that it is slowly but surely changing the culture of my school.”

October Reflections and Artifacts: The Role of Advocacy and Support

As data were being collected from September’s reflections, the researcher evaluated and coded the reflections and artifacts based on the coding structure used for Part II. During the analysis process, the category of The Role of Advocacy and Support for Educational Equity became clearer across data sets. As a result of the analysis and the flexible nature of case study methodology, the researcher adapted October’s reflections and artifact collection prompts to include teacher-reported instances of advocacy or support for third-space instructional practices (RQ1), advocacy or support for engaging funds of knowledge from culturally diverse students’ home communities (RQ2), and reflections on whether the reported instances of advocacy or support resulted in a more equitable learning environment for culturally diverse students (RQ3). Seven participants, Destiny, Bess, Becky, Wendy, Diana, Loretta, and Shannon, participated in October’s reflections and artifact collection.

The first reflection question for October asked participants to recall any experiences of providing support or advocacy for third space practices during the prior month. Participants noted both successes and frustrations. Shannon shared another example of her school-wide attempts to advocate for equity through fostering third spaces. In Shannon's school, there is a school-wide read-aloud activity each Friday. After Shannon's success including material for Hispanic Heritage Month for the school-wide event, she collaborated with the school librarian to brainstorm ideas of how to incorporate ideas for Native American History Month, as well. Although the school-wide read-aloud activity represents a more formal academic third space, Shannon recalled another more informal example of supporting students in a third space at a school dance. Shannon recounted, "At a school dance, one of the Vietnamese ESL students was trying to learn the line dances that our predominantly Black school plays at our events. Other students and I tried to help her learn the steps!"

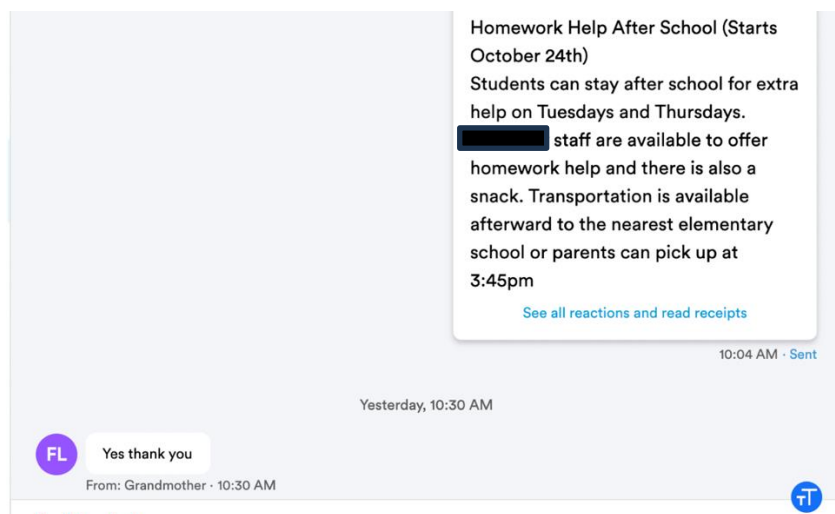
In Ohio, Becky's efforts to advocate through translation continued in October. Becky noted the following:

We started using Talking Points [a mobile software application] which lets EL teachers and admin send texts in the language preferred by the parent. We also had parent teacher [sic] conferences this month and I translated for them (see Figure 30).

Beyond translation, however, Becky also provided support for both staff and families through sharing important information. For example, Becky shared a monthly e-mail with staff about what cultural heritage was being celebrated and shared winter sports schedules with high school EL families. However, despite Becky's efforts, a lack of support and advocacy was still noted at an administrative level within her school. Becky recalled, "I can't think of anything that admin has done this month."

Figure 30

Artifact: Community Engagement through Talking Points



Frustrations were also reported in other participant contexts. For example, consistent with what she reported during Part II of the study, Loretta continued to experience challenges with fostering third spaces in her classroom. Loretta related the following:

I am still getting to know my students, and I am trying to figure out the dynamics between them. I am starting to realize just how complicated this is...The language majority (Spanish) are the largest group in my class, but the 18 MLLs in this class make up less than one third of the total MLLs in the school. Everyone else is very [W]hite...In my class, there are about 8-10 Spanish students... So, the other students who speak Turkish (2 sisters), Lao (1 student), Portuguese (4 students) and French (1 student) are all in their little islands. It's tough.

Regarding support or advocacy for engaging the home communities of culturally diverse students during October, Wendy noted, "I always highlight cultures and languages in my classroom." During one such activity, outside community visitors were observing in Wendy's classroom. Wendy's students introduced themselves and what country and language they

represented. At a later event with the community observers, the interaction witnessed by the visitors in the classroom was shared, and the multicultural aspect of the activity was highlighted. Wendy also continued to advocate formally school-wide each Wednesday, through a campaign called Worldwide Wednesday. During Worldwide Wednesday sessions, Wendy highlights students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and has the students teach others how to say some words or phrases in another language. During October, Wendy highlighted a student from Puerto Rico who taught the student body some Spanish words. Wendy's efforts will not end in October, however; she shared, "Next up - Jordan!"

Shannon's efforts to connect with the community of her culturally diverse students were supported by her district during October. Shannon noted, "Our district participated in a city-wide Trunk-or-Treat at one of the elementary schools and ensured that there was a table for Hispanic families to get information and Halloween activities." Shannon also worked to ensure all the Trunk-or-Treat flyers were translated into the students' home languages to encourage more participation from the district's EL families. In Missouri, Bess's ELL Department supported equitable educational opportunities through an ELL Family Night for the families of ELL students. During the event, dinner was provided, and families were given a faux passport to be stamped as they worked through the Seven Wonders of the World activity, craft, and game stations in the school gym. Bess reported approximately 350 families attended the event. In addition to the examples of Shannon and Bess, participants Wendy, Diana, Becky, and Destiny all reported community engagement through district-supported parent-teacher conferences during the month.

Consistent with her experiences shared during Part II of the study and despite her advocacy efforts, Diana shared her continuing challenges with language being a primary barrier

to students experiencing equitable educational opportunities. Diana recounted how she provided interpreters for October's parent-teacher conferences in her district only for the parents of her culturally diverse students to not attend. Diana shared the following frustrations:

The Somali interpreter and Hmong interpreter just sat there that night. No ESL parents showed up. I texted, called, and emailed [*sic*] the parents about the events. For various reasons they choose not to attend. Language doesn't have to be a barrier.

Loretta also reported challenges with engaging the community of her culturally diverse students. Although Loretta aspires to use the funds of knowledge from her diverse students' cultures to inform her educational practices, her current context's internal and external challenges present too many obstacles to collect such information. According to Loretta, there are not enough staff available to support the needs of her diverse students, and the families of the diverse students do not have the resources available to them to be active in the educational environment. Loretta explained the following:

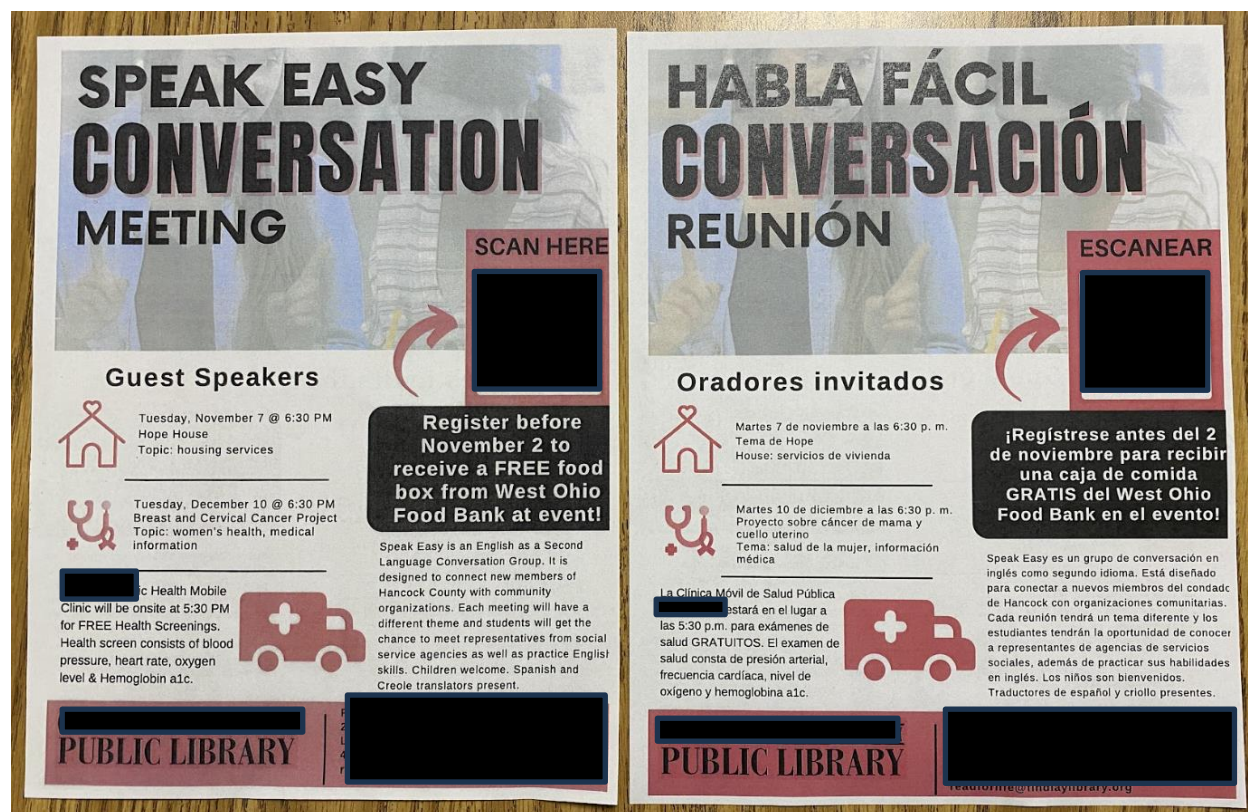
We did have a family night that a few families attended. We have had no time to even consider [engaging the diverse funds of knowledge from the students' home communities into our instructional practices]. The town is very [W]hite, suburban, no one gets around without a car, so the newcomers are living in the few low-income housing available in the town. I would love to do this, but we are supposed to have three MLL teachers, and they can't find anyone to hire, despite constantly posting the position since August.

Although numerous participants' examples of support and advocacy occurred within the framework of school-sponsored events, Wendy also provided examples of how she reaches out into the community to advocate. Wendy spends her free time working with multiple advocacy groups in the community who come together to meet the needs of immigrant families. One such

organization holds monthly meetings and provides language classes for parents at the local library. Wendy explained the monthly meanings, saying, “In addition to language, [the library] always bring[s] agencies from the community in [to] explain different supports offered... The library uses us (ESL teachers) as contacts for these families” (see Figure 31).

Figure 31

Artifact: Community Engagement through a Local Library



The final reflection question for October asked participants to reflect on whether the reported support and advocacy efforts over the past month impacted educational equity for culturally diverse students (RQ3). All responding participants answered affirmatively. Several reported translation support as a key factor in equity. For Becky and Destiny, having a connecting point through the translation mobile software application allowed better communication pathways for parents to meet teachers and ask more questions. Similarly,

Wendy, Diana, and Brooke felt having translation services and points of contact who spoke languages other than English were helpful in providing more equitable educational environments for culturally diverse students. According to Diana, “It should be a natural occurrence and shouldn’t be an afterthought...Anything is better than nothing, which is what they have gotten in the past.”

Beyond the support provided through translation, other participants pointed to their efforts to support students socially and emotionally as key to students experiencing equity. For example, even in Loretta’s challenging situation, she believes her students are experiencing more equity every day, especially as she aims to foster student dispositions conducive to third space interactions: “Yes, it is more equitable, because I am aware of the inequities, and I am working toward some conversations about empathy (we did that today) as well as lessons on everyday conversations in English.” Likewise, Shannon also believes the support she provided her students when they engaged in a third space at the school dance also resulted in a more equitable social environment, even if it was not a formal academic activity. Shannon shared the following:

I believe the school dance was really important for some of my students to feel included in the school. It is difficult when you are not the majority culture to feel comfortable branching out and trying new things. I think that my students learning the dances will ultimately make them feel like a part of the activities in the future!

November Reflections and Artifacts: Bridging Home, School, and Community

The focus of November’s reflection prompts and artifact collection was developed by the researcher as the result of examining previously collected data. Throughout the data collection process, participants referred to examples of culturally relevant, culturally hybrid, or third space instructional practices in terms of displaying or drawing attention to different cultures’

languages, flags, celebrations, and food. Although important, such engagement of multicultural symbols represented a superficial representation of culture. According to Hall (1976), culture can be likened to an iceberg, with certain observable cultural elements and behaviors like celebrations, fashion, holidays, flags, food, and language easily visible above the surface. However, a majority of a culture's foundational elements remain deep under the surface, and thus, are not as clearly visible to cultural outsiders. Some areas of deep culture might include nuanced communication styles, attitudes, approaches to family, education, religion, or modesty. As a result, November's reflection prompts asked participants to examine their experiences with third-space instructional practices (RQ1) and engaging home community funds of knowledge (RQ2) in terms of what elements of culture their practices might be engaging: easily visible surface culture or less visible deep culture. Furthermore, participants were asked whether the surface level or deeper level interactions resulted in a more equitable learning environment for culturally diverse students (RQ3). Participants were encouraged to consider their practices over the past month and to predict what they might plan to incorporate in the month of December. Eight individuals participated in November's reflections and artifact collection: Amelia, Destiny, Brooke, Wendy, Diana, Loretta, Shannon, and Bess.

Surface Culture Third Space Interactions. Shannon noted third space interactions occurring through translanguaging during November. In Shannon's classes, she noticed her Arabic-speaking students starting to use common Spanish greetings with the Spanish-speaking students. Additionally, Shannon was able to follow through with completing a school-wide read-aloud activity about Native American Heritage Month, continuing her efforts to foster potential third spaces in her school environment. However, Shannon acknowledged only a surface level engagement in the different cross-cultural or third space interactions she witnessed. Although

Shannon implied a desire to work in the deeper levels of culture with her students, she noted the following challenges preventing her from engaging below the surface level: “I only have these kids for 45 minutes at a time, so it is hard to get them to go very much deeper. I have a feeling they discuss these things themselves, but not in a class/small group.”

Wendy witnessed teachers using gestures and Google Translate to interact with students in a third space during November. Additionally, Wendy and her team visited Kindergarten and first grade classes to discuss holidays around the world. The holiday discussions add to the communication Wendy has regularly with students about different cultural clothing, traditions, country maps, and greetings in different languages. Wendy calls her efforts “typical surface culture,” but noted how the young ESL students love to learn about each other’s cultures and “often initiate” the learning (see Figure 32). Bess shared similar surface culture engagement, reporting the celebration of Diwali during November. Bess’s students from India were able to share with classmates about their favorite activities. Likewise, Bess’s school put on a Winter Festival, where holidays from around the world were celebrated. The examples from Bess’s context were also representative of surface culture but did demonstrate efforts to foster potential third spaces for students.

Figure 32

Artifact: Cultural Instruction in Primary Grades



In Washington, Destiny's elementary group engaged in a third space through studying the characteristics of the volcanoes in Guatemala. Although the project represented surface level cultural engagement, Destiny purposefully chose to study the volcanoes in Guatemala to connect to the experiences of her Guatemalan students while also helping her non-Guatemalan students learn about the country. Brooke also reported surface level third space engagement through winter sports in her school in Illinois. In Brooke's judgment, sports bring together students from many differing backgrounds. Additionally, sports provide an opportunity for parents who are "not accustomed to sports traditions" to participate in games and activities.

Deep Culture Third Space Interactions. In addition to several surface-level third space interactions reported by participants, some were also able to reflect on deeper cultural third-space involvements. For example, Loretta continued to report the challenges of third space interactions in her Rhode Island context. In Loretta's high school classroom, she has been experiencing the ongoing challenge of two "stand-offish" sisters from Turkey, and as a result, the difficulty of fostering interaction between the two girls and the other students, who originate from Cape Verde, Haiti, Laos, and Spanish-speaking countries. Loretta reflected:

One example that I observed is ongoing tension within my MLL class between two sisters from Turkey, and the rest of the class. This is a group of about twenty students, WIDA [L]evel 1 and 2. Most speak Spanish as L1, but there are also four students from [Cape Verde], one from Haiti who speaks Haitian Creole and French, and one from Laos. The sisters from Turkey are very stand-offish, although the younger one occasionally tries to befriend some other students. The older sister clearly discourages this contact. It's very hard to figure out what is going on. Is this a cultural thing, or is it personal, or both? The younger sister is more willing to be friends with others, but she is under her older

sister's thumb. Their isolation as the only Turkish students in the school makes it difficult. The other teacher I work with has changed their seats by splitting the sisters up, but they are clearly miserable apart from each other. It's confusing and difficult. The other students want to be friends, but they are uncomfortable at the way the older sister clearly is not interested.

The challenges Loretta has noticed in her sociocritical reflection may potentially be due to deeper cultural elements within her students' backgrounds, like different communication styles, notions of insiders/outside, or even gender roles. Whatever the underlying cause, Loretta noted the situation's difficulty in fostering third space interactions among her students.

In Colorado, Amelia was able to engage her junior high ELA students in third spaces at a deeper cultural level through her curriculum. During November, Amelia facilitated a text study of "Abuela Invents the Zero," a short story discussing a Puerto Rican girl embarrassed by her grandmother (Ortiz Cofer, 1996). According to Amelia, the text allowed for deep culture discussions about students' family relationships in order to analyze the characters' actions in the story. Such conversations were representative of third space engagement for Amelia's students.

Bess reported multiple deeper culture third space efforts during November. In one example, Bess recalled different cultural notions of cleanliness, as a student and family were struggling with a lice infestation. Bess mediated the situation between the family and school, helping teachers to understand how the student's family might be viewing and reacting to the situation differently than might be expected by school personnel. Ultimately, as part of a non-profit organization Bess is involved with, she was able to arrange an opportunity to go to the students' home to help remove the cause of the infestation. Additionally, the school care team paid for salon treatment in order to aid the family.

Another example of deep culture third space interaction provided by Bess during November included helping a family navigate the IDEA special education identification process for a Vietnamese student with autism. Bess helped to explain cultural norms for the test examiners, special education teachers, and support teachers. For Bess, it was important to help preserve the cultural norms for the student, ensuring the norms were not taken away as a result of receiving services. Advocating for the Vietnamese student's cultural needs between multiple parties represented third space interaction in Bess's opinion.

In Wisconsin, Diana also experienced deep culture third space interactions through advocating for the needs of an ESL student who was not receiving services in her current school placement and would receive better opportunities at a school 30 minutes away. Through an interpreter, Diana interacted with the family, the language department, and the transportation department to make arrangements for the students. Through meeting the family, Diana experienced deeper cultural elements of the family's background. According to Diana, "This interaction was on the deep level because this was a concern of the family [for] the well-being and education of their child. The family was very grateful to me as an advocate for the student. They smiled and bowed numerous times when we met."

In Washington, Destiny's third space "lunch bunch" for the school year started again during November. For Destiny's culturally diverse students, the weekly lunch gathering is an opportunity to spend time together with other culturally diverse students, learning to develop social skills through sharing, game-playing, and speaking. According to Destiny, "Our goal was to get them comfortable with our space and with us, so they felt like they had a safe place to go." Interacting informally yet socially promotes a third space where students can interact beyond surface level culture.

Surface Culture Family Engagement. Both Bess and Wendy reported surface-level cultural engagement with students' families through Holidays around the World celebrations in November's reflections. Wendy also reported both Around the World and Town Hall events in her school setting where students and parents are asked to prepare information about their culture to share with the rest of the student body. The material shared at the events often includes a culture's traditional clothing, descriptions of food, and some language components, but it also invites the engagement of students' home communities. Wendy also reflected on her community engagement outside of school, recounting how community groups were working together to meet the needs of the local immigrant population due to the number of immigrants in the area increasing weekly. According to Wendy, "Many agencies are coming together. At least [five] new English classes are beginning. People are trying to help with housing to get them out of the motels." However, Wendy did register concerns with the ways in which community groups were interacting with the immigrant population, noting a potential need for engagement with deeper culture instead of surface culture. Wendy offered the following reflection:

I think the agencies are trying to meet basic needs. I think it is wonderful, but part of me wonders if they are moving too fast without considering cultural needs and differences as well. We are very quick to help, but much of it is what we think they need.

Deep Culture Family Engagement. Much of the deep culture family engagement reported by participants during November involved translators or interpreters. Shannon reported using interpreters for parent-teacher conferences and to call students' homes to discuss how families' cultural views of education may clash with the expectations of the local school. For instance, some students' families do not prioritize formal education, and as a result, students have excessive absences. Brooke and Diana reported similar experiences, noting the hiring of a

translator in their schools to promote clearer communication with students' families, especially when families' cultural communication styles differ from the teachers' styles. Similarly, Loretta believes the lack of bilingual secretaries and translation services in her context is preventing deep culture interactions between the school and the families of her culturally diverse students.

According to Loretta, "Because cell phones are strictly forbidden, many of my students are more isolated than their English-speaking peers. I haven't decided what I will do about this yet, but it is an issue."

Beyond the numerous examples of translation and interpretation services allowing more opportunities for deep-culture third-space interaction between schools and students' home communities, Destiny's weekly student lunch gathering created what she describes as an "accidental" family engagement opportunity (see Figure 33). According to Destiny,

We began lunch again this year and into November. We had three kindergarten parents visit during lunch on the same day we were doing this. We invited the parents to come in and join us. This ended up being a great situation [where] parent[s] [who] speak three different languages, and are from three different countries, [were] all having lunch together with their students. Parents were able to ask us as teachers questions, interact with their student, and just enjoy time together.


Destiny continued:

Accidental parent lunch started a now year-long project. We ended up inviting parents to come to all of our lunch bunches. We've had success so far with different people coming. The parents are excited to see what the kids are doing and ask them questions about anchor chart[s] they see on walls or other examples of work around the room. The kids


are excited to have their parents in the classroom and it's turning out to be a great way to connect in a non-threatening way.

Figure 33

Artifact: Deep Culture Third-Space Family Engagement Lunch Group



LUNCH



LONCHE

Kindergarten

Please join us and come and eat lunch and play games with your student! Go to the lunch room and join us in room 101. If you are planning on eating, please bring food with you.
Come to one or come to many!
Please bring your ID to check into the office first.

Kindergarten

¡Por favor venga a comer y jugar con su estudiante! Vaya al comedor y luego al salon 101. Si usted quiere comer traiga su propia comida a la escuela.
¡Venga una vez o todas las que guste!
Por favor traiga su identificación y pase primero por la oficina.

Wednesday, December 6, 2023	11:00-11:45
Wednesday, January 10, 2024	11:00-11:45
Wednesday, February 14, 2024	11:00-11:45
Wednesday, March 13, 2024	11:00-11:45
Wednesday, April 10, 2024	11:00-11:45
Wednesday, May 8, 2024	11:00-11:45

Miercoles, Diciembre 6, 2023	11:00-11:45
Miercoles, Enero 10, 2024	11:00-11:45
Miercoles, Febrero 14, 2024	11:00-11:45
Miercoles, Marzo 13, 2024	11:00-11:45
Miercoles, Abril 10, 2024	11:00-11:45
Miercoles, Mayo 8, 2024	11:00-11:45

Experiencing Equity in November. When asked to reflect on whether their efforts during November resulted in more equitable educational experiences for culturally diverse students, all respondents answered affirmatively. For Amelia, integrating multicultural curriculum to leverage her students' cultural capital was the primary example, which coincides with her previous statements about incorporating students' cultural capital during Part II's semi-structured interview. Brooke reported seeing more confidence in her students after having equitable opportunities to engage in the third space of sports and reported students responding well to the increased parent involvement occurring as the result of having interpreters to contact students' families. In Shannon's context, students were reported as showing more interest in each other. Shannon noted, "I feel like the students interacting in my class with other cultures creates a more

equitable environment because even though a majority speaks one language, they are showing each other that they are willing and interested in learning about one another, not only with.”

In addition to reports of Amelia, Brooke, and Shannon about students experiencing more equitable learning environments, other participants noted more equity with regard to teachers’ efforts. For example, Loretta reflected, “I think that the efforts that my coworker and I have made to enforce the idea that we all have to get along in class has definitely helped most of the students.” As a result, Loretta reports her class is “becoming more cohesive.” While the cohesive nature of Loretta’s group is representative of the potential equity available in third-space interactions, for Loretta, it also highlights the isolation of the Turkish sisters to a greater degree. Wendy also reported more equity because of teacher efforts, writing, “I think that as teachers become more culturally aware, sensitive, and competent, that they will be more cognizant of the needs of their students.” However, despite the teachers’ efforts, Wendy did note some challenges. For example, Wendy reflected, “I think teachers have done a good job with translating but have not found a groove to make language accommodations.” Additional challenges were also noted by Wendy:

I will tell you from observing, though, that the teachers are overwhelmed with class sizes, the number of ELs in their rooms, and the many changes in schedules, expectations, and curriculum that has been put upon them. They want to do more, but lack knowledge, and sometimes time as some are just trying to survive.

Some participants also noted more equitable educational outcomes as a result of increased parent engagement. For example, Destiny believes increased parent engagement “absolutely” impacts the educational equity her culturally diverse students experience. Destiny provided the following reflection:

The lunch [b]unch accident with parents coming in has resulted in parents being more interested and aware of what we are doing and what their children are capable of. Some [were] surprised that we were studying different science areas and became excited and wanted to help, too. Often our parents are not involved in what we're doing in the classrooms as it's not as accessible to them. Allowing them to come in and eat lunch with us even once a month has opened the door, so they feel a part of what's happening.

Diana reported similar sentiments regarding the impact of family engagement on educational equity, especially in third-space interactions. As was mentioned in her Part II semi-structured interview, Diana again noted the value of heritage language communication as foundational for culturally diverse students to experience equitable academic environments. Diana offered the following reflection:

I have students whose families contact me on the translation app because they do not feel comfortable speaking to someone in the office. I feel using the translation app to text information to families has given us the opportunities to create discussions that elevate and alleviate circumstances for my students. This creates the third-space [*sic*] with a common goal and equity because the families have the ability to get information in their home language and respond more readily.

Conclusion

Chapter IV reported the collected data from Parts I, II, and III of the study's multiple explanatory case study investigation into teacher experiences with culturally relevant third space instructional practices and their impact on educational equity in for culturally diverse U.S. K-12 educational environments. Part I ultimately included usable questionnaire data recorded from 73 respondents recruited from social media and snowball sampling in order to identify potential

candidates who would serve as a few representative cases of current U.S. K-12 educators pursuing equity for culturally diverse students through culturally relevant third-space instructional practices. After narrowing the participant pool to 14, the researcher collected and analyzed data from semi-structured interviews with the selected participants during Part II of the study, further illuminating and elaborating on teachers' equitable, third-space instructional experiences. From the Part II data, three thematic categories became apparent after the researcher applied *a priori* coding using Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) CRP framework. With examples of CRP clearly seen as foundational to participants' instructional practices, the additional themes of Obstacles to Educational Equity, The Role of Advocacy and Support for Educational Equity, and Promoting Equity in a Third Space highlighted participants' experiences with pursuing equity for culturally diverse learners. Over a period of three months, several of the selected participants shared additional reflections and artifacts of professional practice during Part III of the study, capturing third spaces instructional techniques and community engagement practices in real time and providing triangulation for participants' reported responses. The collected data from Parts I, II, and III of the study fill the gap in current literature by providing actual examples of teachers' experiences with third-space engagement, further demonstrating the potential of such practices to positively impact equitable learning environments for culturally diverse students in U.S. K-12 environments. Further analysis, elaboration of the study's findings, discussion, and recommendations for future research regarding the study's topics will be detailed in Chapter V.

Chapter V: Discussion

Research suggests third-space instructional strategies may offer a potential educational approach for allowing culturally marginalized students to experience a more equitable learning environment, especially when diverse cultural funds of knowledge are included in the development of learning opportunities (Buelow, 2017; Chen, 2020; Durán et al., 2020; Gupta, 2020; Ratnam, 2020; Roe, 2019; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). However, a lack of practical examples of how to engage third-space instructional methods remains challenging for educators concerned with equitable, culturally relevant practices, particularly at the K-12 level in the U.S. (Buelow, 2017; Chen, 2020; Gupta, 2020; Ratnam, 2020; Roe, 2019). As a result, this study aimed to investigate and report U.S. K-12 teacher experiences with culturally relevant third-space instructional practices. Through a three-part, multiple explanatory case study design, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What are teachers' reported experiences with culturally informed third-space practices in a U.S. K-12 setting?
2. How do U.S. K-12 teachers report using community funds of knowledge to integrate practical, culturally relevant third-space practices to inform more equitable learning environments?
3. What are teachers' perspectives on how culturally informed third-space pedagogical practices impact equitable learning environments for marginalized students in a U.S. K-12 setting?

The following chapter will summarize results related to the study's research questions and discuss the study's themes relating to the theoretical framework and previous research. Additionally, Chapter V will provide conclusions based on the study's findings, offer

recommendations for future research, and discuss the implications of the study's conclusions for professional practice.

Summary of Results

The investigation of this study's research questions was completed in three phases through a multiple explanatory case study design (Schwandt & Gates, 2018; Tellis, 1997; Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2009, 2018). Data were collected first via a voluntary, online questionnaire in Part I and then from semi-structured interviews with select participants in Part II (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; McGuirk & O'Neill, 2016; Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2009, 2018). Additionally, in Part III, data were gathered through monthly reflective writing prompts and participant-shared artifacts of professional practice during September, October, and November 2023 (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Tasker & Cisneroz, 2019; Tellis, 1997; Yazan, 2015). The following sections will summarize and review the results of each study phase, answer the research questions, and discuss the study's findings in relation to current literature and the study's theoretical framework.

Research Question 1: Part I

The first research question of this study asked, "What are teachers' reported experiences with culturally informed third-space practices in a U.S. K-12 setting?" Initial feedback from educators completing the study's Part I online questionnaire showed a vast majority of respondents had minimal, if any, familiarity with third-space instructional practices by name (see Table 9, Chapter IV). Despite 86.30% (or 63 out of 73) of respondents reporting "always" interacting with culturally diverse students on a 5-point Likert scale and 93.15% (or 68 out of 73) identifying the importance of providing an equitable learning environment for culturally diverse students as "extremely important," 79.45% (or 58 out of 73) respondents indicated no familiarity with third-space instructional techniques. However, 89.04% (or 65 out of 73) respondents demonstrated at least a moderate level of familiarity with CRP practices. Such low familiarity

with third-space instructional techniques was not unexpected, as research discusses the highly abstract nature of the theory, and much of the recent literature about the concept comes from non-U.S. contexts (Gupta, 2020; Ratnam, 2020; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). Although respondents indicated a relatively low reported familiarity with third-space instructional practices by name, the selected pedagogical methods used within the classrooms of teachers who placed a high value on educational equity for culturally diverse students represented possible third-space techniques. Such results indicate respondents' general lack of awareness regarding the connection of said practices to third space theory (see Table 10, Chapter IV).

Several examples of potential third-space techniques reported by the 73 participants included prioritizing a socially and emotionally safe atmosphere where students from any cultural background can share their perspectives ($n = 72$), encouraging multiple cultural perspectives in the classroom ($n = 71$), promoting student collaboration across cultures (70), and ensuring no one culture has more privilege than another ($n = 61$). Additionally, numerous participants reported culturally hybrid interactions occurring between students within their classrooms, like using multiple languages and mixing cultural norms ($n = 54$). As a result of the high proportion of participants selecting examples of third-space instructional techniques despite indicating a lack of familiarity with the concept by name, data from responding teachers who reported a high level of importance for equity for culturally diverse students also demonstrated the existence of third-space practices within their academic contexts despite the educators being unfamiliar with the named theory behind the practices.

Research Question 1: Part II

To further investigate third-space experiences in participants' classrooms, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews to allow participants to elaborate on their classroom practices and elucidate the nature of the reported, potentially third-space practices. As a result of

the interviews, data analysis of participant responses indicated a clear theme of Promoting Equity in a Third Space, further clarified in the two subcategories Fostering Third Spaces and Experiencing Third Spaces, all connecting to the nature of RQ1 (see Table 12, Chapter IV). Regarding the subcategory of Fostering Third Spaces, example responses included participants Vanessa and Amelia acknowledging the purposeful use of third-space practices to ensure no single cultural group has any greater cultural capital than another in the classroom. Vanessa reported one example of fostering such environments through allowing all students to help curate a whole-class playlist of diverse music for students to listen to during independent work completion. The curation resulted in a culturally and linguistically diverse class playlist, where all students can experience both their own and others' cultures. Vanessa also reported allowing student cultural clubs to visit her classroom to present background information about the culturally diverse books she teaches. As a result, Vanessa reported students engaging authentically with numerous cultural backgrounds in her class. Similarly, Amelia reported actively engaging the culture of her students to make the academic standards she teaches more accessible to all, like choosing culturally diverse analogies and examples to explain academic concepts. Through such efforts, Amelia also mitigated any potential cultural privilege which might allow some students to have more access to the academic material than others. Amelia's efforts represented a purposeful fostering of an equitable academic third space in her classroom. However, Amelia also indicated a higher-than-average level of familiarity with third-space theory when compared to other study participants as a result of her previous doctoral studies, which should be noted.

In terms of Experiencing Third Spaces, some example responses included participants Nala and Bess both categorizing their own life experiences as representative of third space due to

their complex cultural identities, having spent significant portions of time in multiple different countries and cultures. Additionally, participants Debra and Diana reported students experiencing third spaces in their contexts, noting translanguaging as an example of how such spaces are experienced between students from different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, Destiny acknowledged her student lunch group as a type of third space, where students from multiple, diverse cultural backgrounds come together in a non-systemic environment to interact across cultural boundaries in an equitable, although not necessarily academic, space. Participant Shannon also reported students engaging in third-space experiences, although on a more informal or micro level, such as students interacting with each other across cultural backgrounds during school dances or assemblies. Conversely, Ashley, Wendy, and Vanessa all reported students experiencing systemic third spaces as a result of purposely fostered school-wide atmospheres. The school-wide expectations of culturally diverse and equitable interactions reported by Ashley, Wendy, and Vanessa included school-wide events highlighting students' diverse cultural backgrounds and atmospheric conditions, such as decorative posters celebrating and promoting diversity and diverse interactions.

Research Question 1: Part III

Participants who continued in Part III of the study by completing reflections and submitting artifacts of professional practice provided additional examples of fostering and experiencing third spaces in their contexts during September, October, and November of 2023. Wendy provided numerous examples of fostering third spaces, namely the systemic, school-wide efforts of Worldwide Wednesday, where the cultural practices and languages of students from various backgrounds were highlighted to promote acceptance, inclusivity, and a more equitable learning environment in Wendy's diverse primary school context. Shannon also provided

additional examples of students engaging in micro-third space experiences, reporting students interacting across cultural backgrounds at a school dance. However, Shannon also provided examples of a more systemically fostered third space when she described how she and a colleague initiated an activity focused on promoting Hispanic culture during Hispanic Heritage Month as part of a weekly school-wide read-aloud. Becky and Diana reported additional examples of third spaces regarding translation opportunities, where both educators had more success creating equitable exchanges with students and families after translation services became more readily available to families and school personnel via a mobile software application. Furthermore, Brooke mentioned students engaging in third space interactions through sports. Conversely, despite several participants' positive examples of fostering or experiencing third spaces during Part III, participant Loretta noted continued difficulty within her context to foster equitable third spaces for her culturally diverse students. Despite her noted difficulty, however, Loretta reported efforts to continue to build awareness of the potential for increasingly equitable environments for her culturally diverse students and perceived her efforts as having a positive impact on equity.

Research Question 1: Answers and Discussion

The first research question in this study asked, "What are teachers' reported experiences with culturally informed third-space practices in a U.S. K-12 setting?" In response to the research question, U.S. K-12 teachers in this study reported both micro-level and system-wide culturally informed third-space practices. Some micro-third-space examples reported by participants included students developing diverse music playlists for in-class work sessions, students engaging in translanguaging for academic and social endeavors, and students interacting cross-culturally during school dances, lunch groups, or sports, where cultural hybridity could be

observed. Additional examples of micro-third-space practices included teachers purposely including cultural capital from diverse cultural backgrounds during lessons and teachers communicating via translation services with linguistically diverse students and families. Micro-level participant-reported practices were often student or teacher-initiated and occurred infrequently or opportunistically. In contrast, participant-reported systemic practices occurred at regular intervals with obvious administrative support. Some system-wide third-space practices included weekly school-wide gatherings highlighting students' different cultural backgrounds and school-wide read-aloud activities during designated cultural heritage months. In addition to the themes present within Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) framework, findings from RQ1 represented the researcher-developed theme Promoting Equity in a Third Space. Further discussion surrounding the relationship between RQ1 findings and the literature and theoretical framework will occur in the following sections.

Promoting Equity in a Third Space: Micro vs. Systemic Third Spaces. Research reports smaller, non-traditional, or micro-third-space group settings outside of traditional classroom environments as a potential place of equitable student interaction (Hice-Fromille & London, 2023; Potter & McDougall, 2017; Valenzuela & Epstein, 2023). Literature suggests some examples of such micro third spaces might include makerspaces and community youth organizations, whereas others might include social interactions occurring during coffee breaks, lunch breaks, and in hallways or online environments (Burke & Crocker, 2020; Hice-Fromille & London, 2023; Jacobs et al., 2020; Potter & McDougall, 2017; Valenzuela & Epstein, 2023). Additionally, micro third spaces provide an informal social space for diverse individuals to interact non-threateningly, encouraging natural connections between parties (Burke & Crocker, 2020; Hice-Fromille & London, 2023; Jacobs et al., 2020).

Participant experiences provided in this study agree with current literature on the potential of micro third spaces to provide non-threatening opportunities for diverse individuals to interact. Participants shared other examples of students engaging in social third spaces outside of traditional academic exchanges, such as creating joint music playlists for classwork time, learning other cultures' dances at school social gatherings, and joining together for eating and playing opportunities during break times. For example, Destiny shared how her student and parent lunch groups developed as a non-traditional approach to promoting engagement across cultures in her elementary setting. Shannon also provided examples of micro third spaces occurring at school dances and assemblies between her adolescent and teenage students. Furthermore, Brooke and Loretta also reported sports teams as a location of micro-third-space interaction occurring outside of the traditional classroom environment. Overall, the micro-third-space examples provided by study participants concur with the current literature on the topic, affirming the role such interactions play in promoting equity for diverse individuals in a non-threatening environment.

Although the participant experiences shared in this study agree with the current literature on the potential of micro third spaces as social spaces where culturally diverse individuals can experience equity, current literature is largely silent on the topic of systemic third spaces (Burke & Crocker, 2020; Hice-Fromille & London, 2023; Jacobs et al., 2020; Potter & McDougall, 2017; Valenzuela & Epstein, 2023). Scholarship discusses the concept of third space as highly context-specific and abstract, with few practical examples of implementation, and does not further delineate between micro or systemic third spaces (Fortney & Atwood, 2019; Gupta, 2020; Jobe & Coles-Ritchie, 2016; Ratnam, 2020; Ticknor et al., 2020). As a result, literature neither provides actionable examples of systemic third spaces in educational environments nor

discusses the impact of such spaces on equity for culturally diverse students. Participants in this study, however, offered both context-specific examples of equitable, systemic third-space practices and provided perspectives on the impact of said practices for larger groups of students, often an entire student body population. Further discussion of participants' perspectives on the impact of systemic third-space practices will be discussed with regard to RQ3.

Promoting Equity in a Third Space: Natural vs. Mediated Third Spaces. Like the related literature, participant experiences relating to RQ1 in this study reported the existence of third space through examples of cultural hybridity, complex cultural identity, cross-cultural partnerships, and shared physical space (Beck, 2018; Behari-Leak & le Roux, 2018; Burke & Crocker, 2020; Burns et al., 2019; Jacobs et al., 2020). Some scholarship promotes the idea of such third spaces occurring naturally between students, especially with young children (Burke & Crocker, 2020; Gupta, 2020; Ordonez, 2021; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). Other literature suggest teachers or third-party individuals are key to developing environments conducive to third-space interactions (Jobe & Coles-Ritchie, 2016; Potter & McDougall, 2017; Southern et al., 2020). Although participants in this study did report a higher propensity for younger children within the K-12 grade range to easily promote and engage in equitable third space opportunities with culturally diverse peers, the interactions could not fully be attributed to natural occurrences separate from teacher mediation or initiation. Participants' reported experiences of younger students engaging in third-space interactions occurred within environments already conducive to such exchanges, with high levels of advocacy from teachers or administrators to foster or promote potential exchanges. Even in reported cases where students appeared to engage independently in third-space interactions through translanguaging, like in the examples provided by Wendy, Debra, and Diana, students had been prepared and encouraged by teachers to interact

with one another. As a result, despite study participants providing examples of younger children engaging easily in third spaces, students' ability to do so naturally without a mediating third party cannot be fully confirmed. Future research may investigate the concept of natural vs. mediated third-space engagement in K-12 environments more thoroughly, as an in-depth investigation into the concept was outside the scope of the current study.

Promoting Equity in a Third Space: Translanguaging. Through data provided in response to RQ1, participants in this study also further illuminated the concept of translanguaging as evidence of equitable third spaces, with reported instances of students bridging linguistic barriers by combining multiple languages across cultural boundaries to communicate both academically and socially. According to scholarship, translanguaging not only promotes communication across cultural boundaries but also challenges hegemonic, monolingual norms, thus demonstrating potential for developing a more equitable learning environment for culturally or linguistically diverse learners (Dutton & Rushton, 2023; Fernández, 2019; Kakos, 2022; Yilmaz, 2019). In this study, participants shared numerous examples of translanguaging, like Debra's junior high students communicating across three different languages, Diana's primary students using two languages to translate between other children, and Wendy's students using translation devices to skip English and translate directly into the language of a classmate. According to this study's participants, translanguaging efforts could be identified as an example of third-space interactions, as the reported use exists in accordance with the examples in published literature (Dutton & Rushton, 2023; Fernández, 2019; Kakos, 2022; Yilmaz, 2019).

Promoting Equity in a Third Space: Online Environments. As the result of the shift from in-person to online learning models necessitated by COVID-19 social-distancing, current literature suggests online environments may hold potential as equitable third-space instructional

environments (Bubb & Jones, 2020; de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Johnston et al., 2021, 2022; Lim, 2020; Uresti & Thomas, 2023). Although online environments represent an example of non-traditional or potential micro-third-space interactions occurring outside of traditional classroom environments, nearly all participants in this study reported COVID-19 online learning environments as non-conducive to equitable third spaces, contrasting with the suggestions of published literature. The sole exception was Diana, whose experiences showed agreement with literature regarding the potential of online environments as providing equitable third-space opportunities. Diana noted the potential of online learning environments for creating more equitable learning environments, mainly through including more elements from students' home cultural communities, family members, or environments. However, Diana also reported a greater-than-average level of effort and advocacy to ensure such potential for her students and their families, noted through her examples of driving to students' homes to set up internet connections and ensuring students' virtual attendance. Still, despite Diana's relative success with online learning for her culturally diverse students during the pandemic, she nevertheless described the situation as "a nightmare." Other participants, like Debra, affirmed the challenges of online learning for culturally diverse students, referring to online learning efforts for culturally diverse students as "horrific." Although recent literature suggests online environments may represent an opportunity for equitable third-space educational exchanges, data from this study demonstrates the opposite for a majority of this study's participants (Bradford & Norman, 2022; Bubb & Jones, 2020; de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Lim, 2020; Soudien, 2020).

Research Question 1: Connection to Theoretical Framework. In addition to the discussion surrounding RQ1 findings and current literature, findings from RQ1 can also be situated within Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) CRP framework. Specifically, findings from

RQ1 relate to two CRP framework themes: Identity and Achievement and Developmental Appropriateness. The presence of CRP framework themes represents the connection between CRP and third-space instructional practices. For example, Identity and Achievement was coded 245 times in Part II semi-structured interviews data and 32 times in Part III reflections and artifacts. The researcher-developed theme Promoting Equity in a Third Space was coded 344 times in Part II and 82 times in Part III. Participants noted examples of CRP's Identity and Achievement theme through affirming the diversity of students' cultural backgrounds, including multiple perspectives in classroom material, and publicly validating diverse students' home cultures (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Such examples occurred simultaneously with data coded as Promoting Equity in a Third Space when participants provided examples of culturally diverse students finding "safe" spaces within their classrooms, having opportunities to engage with one another, and sharing similar life experiences. Participants' foundation in CRP practices in the Identity and Achievement area provided the necessary foundation on which third spaces were built, as such practices are key to creating more equitable learning environments (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Welborn, 2019). Additionally, culturally competent instructors use learner-centered instructional techniques to make learning personal for students, and cultural awareness can aid in developing more collaborative environments among multiple groups (Acuña & Blacklock, 2022; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Knowles & Hawkman, 2020). Such collaborative environments among diverse groups represent the essence of equitable third spaces (Bhabha, 2004).

Also connected to the findings from RQ1 was the CRP theme Developmental Appropriateness, identifiable 157 times in Part II data. Regarding Developmental Appropriateness, participants referenced numerous examples of understanding and attempting to

meet the varied psychological and cultural needs of diverse students in areas like motivation, morale, engagement, and collaboration, again demonstrating student-centered techniques (Acuña & Blacklock, 2022; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Knowles & Hawkman, 2020). However, the Developmental Appropriateness theme was only identifiable four times in Part III's data, in contrast to the theme Promoting Equity in a Third Space, which was mentioned 82 times. Such disparity in coding frequency despite the clear connection between CRP and third space practices in Part II indicates an area where the current version of the CRP framework does not fully align with the concept of third space in practice. Additional discussion regarding the relationship between Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) CRP framework and third space will occur later in the chapter.

Research Question 2: Part I

The second research question for this study asked, "How do U.S. K-12 teachers report using community funds of knowledge to integrate practical, culturally relevant third-space practices to inform more equitable learning environments?" Results from 73 respondents to Part I of the questionnaire indicated 68 responses affirming the statement, "I make purposeful connections between students' home environments and school, especially with students from cultural backgrounds different from mine," 61 agreeing with the statement, "I encourage students of varying cultural backgrounds to be co-creators of classroom knowledge," 50 affirming the statement, "I try to incorporate different cultures' definitions of knowledge in my instructional practices whenever possible," and 49 demonstrating agreement with the statement, "I try to incorporate different cultures' definitions of success in my evaluation or assessment practices whenever possible." Participants selected for Part II of the study further elaborated on their

reported efforts to include the funds of knowledge from the cultural backgrounds of their students' home communities through semi-structured interviews with the researcher.

Research Question 2: Part II

Semi-structured interviews with participants revealed several examples of how the educators in the study attempted to access the funds of knowledge from the cultural backgrounds of their students in order to use the knowledge to develop more equitable third-space opportunities for students. An example provided by Amelia included contacting former students to learn more about cultural terms and experiences so she could bring relatable examples into the classroom. Amelia also reported using the funds of knowledge from her Guatemalan husband's cultural background to help her access meaningful material and connections for some of her culturally diverse students. Additionally, Vanessa, Ashley, and Wendy all reported efforts to invite members of the students' culturally diverse communities to participate in official school activities and programs, where the students and families act as cultural experts, sharing knowledge and experiences with the greater classroom or school community. Furthermore, Diana reported her efforts to engage with the community on her own initiative, visiting families' homes to ensure students' educational needs were being met, while also promoting clearer communication between families and the school. Becky reported efforts similar to Diana's, communicating with families via a mobile software application for translation and through translated e-mail messages, ensuring home communities could interact and connect with the school in more linguistically accessible ways.

In contrast to multiple participants' reported experiences during Part II, Loretta reported little-to-no personal or school-initiated efforts to engage with the communities of her culturally diverse students in her context, located within a sanctuary city in the U.S. Northeast. During Part

II's semi-structured interview, Loretta previously noted the "improper" nature of community engagement efforts in her context, as such efforts represented a transgression of clear boundaries between home and school. Like Loretta, many Part II participants indicated multiple challenges to engaging with the community, often noting the one-sided nature of the efforts, with teacher-advocates carrying the responsibility for creating opportunities to engage and connect with students' home communities. Despite participants' varying experiences with incorporating the community funds of knowledge of culturally diverse students, the participating teachers who reported purposeful efforts to engage students' home communities also clearly provided examples of an additional theme, The Role of Advocacy and Support for Educational Equity, which will be further summarized in connection to Research Question 3.

Research Question 2: Part III

Participants' examples of engaging community funds of knowledge continued to be displayed through Part III's reflections and artifact collection. Participants Ashley, Becky, and Diana affirmed their efforts to include the funds of knowledge from their student bodies' multiple cultural backgrounds through parent communication artifacts. Becky shared examples of how she interacted with her students' families through a translation mobile software application, Ashley demonstrated how her school's Back-to-School Night occurred bilingually, and Diana shared translated e-mail messages exchanged between herself and students' families. Shannon also provided examples of connecting to her culturally diverse students' home communities through the translation of her school's Trunk-or-Treat flyers, inviting students' families to engage in the event. Additionally, Bess reported a "Seven Wonders of the World" family night, where culturally diverse families and students worked together to complete engaging tasks and interact with school personnel.

Destiny shared an example of how she engaged funds of knowledge from her students' home communities through an "accidental" parent lunch program, where parents of multiple diverse students could join their students regularly for lunch. As a result of this accidental parent lunch, parents of Destiny's culturally diverse students could network with teachers and other parents to get more involved in classroom activities and students' academics. Wendy also provided unique examples of including the funds of knowledge from the cultural backgrounds of her culturally diverse students by hosting school-wide Worldwide Wednesdays where she invited parents and family members of culturally diverse students to participate as cultural experts when showcasing different countries and cultures each week. Additionally, Wendy shared her frequent involvement with community advocacy groups, including programs at the local library offering multilingual services for recent immigrants. Conversely, Loretta's experiences were confirmed during Part III when she reported a poorly attended school-sponsored Back-to-School Night in her context. Regarding her attempts to engage the culturally diverse funds of knowledge of her students' home communities, Loretta reported, "We have had no time to even consider this...I would love to do this, but we are supposed to have three MLL [teachers], and they can't find anyone to hire, despite constantly posting the position since August." While most of the participating educators' endeavors provided examples of including the funds of knowledge from the diverse cultural backgrounds of students, their efforts also continued to demonstrate theme The Role of Support and Advocacy for Educational Equity. Such advocacy and support efforts were key in helping study participants connect with and engage students' cultural funds of knowledge in the classroom. The Role of Support and Advocacy will be further discussed in connection with RQ3.

Research Question 2: Answers and Discussion

In response to the question, “How do U.S. K-12 teachers report using community funds of knowledge to integrate practical, culturally relevant third-space practices to inform more equitable learning environments?” participants offered several examples of connecting students’ home and school experiences. Several participants mentioned hosting community events like Back-to-School Night, family activity programs, weekly parent lunches, or holiday gatherings. To aid culturally relevant instruction, participants reported sending translated “Getting to Know You” forms to students’ families to help teachers plan appropriate lessons, welcoming families to assemblies and class gatherings to act as cultural experts, and inviting members of diverse cultural student groups to speak to classes regarding culturally diverse curriculum content. Participants also reported accessing funds of knowledge from students’ home communities by using translation software or services to communicate in families’ preferred language and joining community advocacy groups outside of school. However, such efforts were not without challenges. Most participants reported several obstacles to interacting with students’ home communities, including the one-sided nature of most connection attempts. In addition to Brown-Jeffy and Cooper’s (2011) framework themes, findings from RQ2 highlighted the researcher-developed themes Obstacles to Educational Equity and The Role of Advocacy and Support for Educational Equity, which will be discussed in greater detail in relation to RQ3. Additional discussion relating the findings of RQ2 to the literature and theoretical framework will occur in the following sections.

Obstacles to Educational Equity: Community Involvement. Corresponding with the focus of RQ2, research suggests students’ home communities play a crucial role in the creation and accountable maintenance of equitable educational environments (Buelow, 2017; Durán et al., 2020; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Gay, 2013; Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Sanczyk, 2020; Williams,

2018). Participants in this study agreed. As Debra reflected, “So, that is something that I think is so important, that teachers, administrators, decision makers, board members, like, they really need to understand the dynamics of the cultures of the community.” Wendy, particularly, provided several examples of successfully engaging with the community in ways agreeing with the published literature. For example, Wendy reported actively seeking practical examples of how to address inequity from the communities most affected by it, whether through inviting families to act as cultural experts in school-wide gatherings or by joining local community groups focused on meeting the needs of recent immigrants (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Sanczyk, 2020; Williams, 2018).

However, other participants in this study noted the difficulty of incorporating funds of knowledge from their students’ cultural backgrounds due to the challenge of engaging with the greater community. Participants noted various reasons why such difficulty connecting with the community may exist, including language barriers, issues of trust, or families’ concerns about citizenship or refugee status. Participants also noted the seemingly one-sided nature of community engagement attempts, with school personnel assuming the responsibility of reaching out into the community through events like Diana’s Back-to-School Night, Shannon’s Trunk-or-Treat, Wendy’s Worldwide Wednesdays, and Ashley’s weekly Community Circles. Several participants expressed frustration at the lack of mutually reciprocal interaction with students’ home communities. For example, Diana, Becky, and Loretta reported poorly attended Back-to-School Night events in their monthly reflections. Diana was particularly frustrated by the poorly attended event after she had ensured several translators would be available and had communicated with families about the event multiple times.

In contrast to some participants’ experiences, Wendy and Ashley provided successful reciprocal examples of engaging the community to help inform more equitable educational

opportunities by showcasing students' diverse backgrounds at school-wide gatherings. Destiny also provided an "accidental" yet successful example through the existence of a recently started parent lunch group. Although the successful examples of Wendy, Ashley, and Destiny confirm what published literature suggests about the importance of engaging the communities of culturally diverse students, the examples of difficulties experienced by other participants like Becky, Diana, and Loretta highlight a lack of discussion in the literature regarding how to accomplish the inclusion of community funds of knowledge when students' home communities are reluctant to engage. Despite published literature affirming the need for and ability of marginalized communities to speak out against inequity and hold unjust educational systems accountable, results from this study were mixed regarding participants' ability to gain access to the funds of knowledge from culturally diverse students' home communities in order to inform more equitable third-space practices (Durán et al., 2020; Freire, 2005; Welborn, 2019; Williams, 2018).

Obstacles to Educational Equity: Language. Research affirms the language of instruction as a foundational element for educational equity (Buchs & Maradan, 2021; Durán et al., 2020; Fernández, 2019; Gutiérrez, 2008; Karabon & Johnson, 2020; Roe, 2019; Sanczyk, 2020; Yilmaz, 2019). Although the literature clearly mentions language as a foundational element for equal access to instruction, with few exceptions, research does not overtly discuss language as a barrier to accessing community funds of knowledge to inform more equitable learning environments (Durán et al., 2020). However, one obstacle noted multiple times by participants in this study was the need for translation services in order to communicate well with the families of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Wendy, Becky, Destiny, Diana, Brooke, and Loretta all provided examples of needing translation services to gain better access to the cultural funds of knowledge from students' home communities. For instance, Destiny shared

how she is only able to communicate through e-mail with some families due to needing to translate messages. Furthermore, Destiny described the challenge of trying to communicate with students' families who speak unwritten language dialects for which no translation services are available. Loretta shared similar frustrations with the lack of translation services to aid in connecting home and school communities in her context, sharing, "One issue that really bothers me at this school is that there are no bilingual secretaries in the main office." Loretta elaborated, sharing how a lack of language services connecting families to the school furthers the isolation of already marginalized students. As demonstrated through this study's data, access to translation is not only key for instructional purposes, but also a necessity for communicating with students' families in order to include community funds of knowledge for more equitable learning environments. As Diana affirmed, "Language doesn't have to be a barrier."

Research Question 2: Connection to Theoretical Framework. Like RQ1, findings from RQ2 aligned conceptually with the Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) CRP framework, specifically in the areas of Teaching the Whole Child and Student-Teacher Relationships. Research demonstrates the importance of community involvement in educational equity opportunities, particularly for culturally diverse students (Buelow, 2017; Durán et al., 2020; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Gay, 2013; Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Sanczyk, 2020; Williams, 2018). Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) CRP framework echoes such importance within the Teaching the Whole Child category, particularly with the subtheme of Bridging Home, School, and Community. In this study, numerous results for RQ2 were coded under this category as participants relayed experiences about accessing funds of knowledge from the home communities of culturally diverse students. Additionally, results from RQ2 also aligned with the category of Student-Teacher Relationships, as teachers demonstrated care in seeking out funds of knowledge to support the needs of culturally diverse learners in an equitable classroom

atmosphere, aiming to develop student-centered environments to make learning personal and equitable (Acuña & Blacklock, 2022; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Knowles & Hawkman, 2020). However, the Student-Teacher Relationships theme was the least referenced in the study, again suggesting a disconnect between some elements of the current CRP framework and the concept of third space. Additional discussion surrounding the alignment of the theoretical framework and the concept of third space will be discussed later in the chapter.

Research Question 3: Part I

The third research question investigated through this study was, “What are teachers’ perspectives on how culturally informed third-space pedagogical practices impact equitable learning environments for marginalized students in a U.S. K-12 setting?” Although the purpose of the Part I questionnaire was to identify participants who would be suitable for additional phases of the study, one questionnaire item did ask whether participants were concerned with equity in their academic environments. In response to the questionnaire item, “How important is it to you that all students under your supervision experience an equitable learning environment?” on a Likert scale of 1 (*low importance*) to 5 (*high importance*), 93.15% of participants (or 68 out of 73) responded with 5, indicating a high level of importance placed on equity by respondents. However, 79.45% of respondents (or 58 out of 73) indicated no familiarity with the concept of third-space instructional practices prior to becoming more involved in the study. Such responses, although interesting, did not provide a clear connection between respondents’ views of how third-space instructional practices impacted equity and, as a result, were better investigated through additional participant elaboration during Parts II and III of the study.

Research Question 3: Part II

Semi-structured interviews showed a strong connection between respondents’ experiences and challenges and successes regarding equitable third-space educational

experiences for culturally diverse students. As a result of the data collected during Part II, two themes were further illuminated in connection with RQ3: Obstacles to Equity and The Role of Support and Advocacy for Educational Equity. Although participants reported placing a high level of importance on students experiencing equity in Part I's questionnaire, Part II's semi-structured interview responses revealed several obstacles interfering with teachers' abilities to consistently foster or engage in equitable practices for culturally diverse students. The obstacles experienced by participants were further divided into the subcategories of Internal Obstacles and External Obstacles, representing challenges occurring both inside and outside of the school system. The main internal obstacles to equity noted by participants included a lack of training for teachers, the general attitudes of colleagues, and a lack of resources. The leading external obstacles included language differences, changing demographics, COVID-19, and a lack of family support for students. Despite the challenges to equitable exchanges noted by participants, several areas of support were mentioned, as well. The primary areas of support mentioned by participants during Part II included administration, advocacy opportunities, and like-minded professionals. Reflecting on both the challenges and supports experienced when focusing on equity efforts through third-space practices allowed participants to provide a clearer depiction of whether students were experiencing equity. Participants discussed the impact of third-space practices on equity briefly during Part II's interviews but reflected in a more focused manner during Part III's monthly reflections.

Research Question 3: Part III

During Part III of the study, participating teachers reflected specifically on practices they believed to be representative of third space and whether the specific efforts undertaken during each month resulted in more equitable environments for their culturally diverse students. Overall,

responding participants agreed that their efforts each month resulted in more equitable environments for culturally diverse students. For example, Wendy mentioned how she began to see teachers make changes to their pedagogical approaches, like including the use of more translation services to interact with students' families. She also expressed how her efforts to engage students in cross-cultural third spaces have resulted in a school environment where diversity, equity, and inclusion are "normal." Becky echoed similar experiences regarding equity resulting from the use of translation services. Translation examples were also mentioned by Destiny, Diana, and Brooke as representative of more equitable environments. Shannon also mentioned her perspectives regarding more equitable student experiences, noting her culturally diverse students feel more "included" and "seen." Shannon also reported seeing students become more interested in and willing to interact cross-culturally. Furthermore, even Loretta, who consistently communicated difficulty in fostering and engaging third spaces in her context, believed her efforts were resulting in a more equitable educational environment. Loretta reported promoting conversations about empathy with her students and described seeing her class become more "cohesive."

Research Question 3: Answers and Discussion

All participants reported a positive impact on equity for marginalized, culturally diverse students as a result of implementing third-space pedagogical practices in response to the question, "What are teachers' perspectives on how culturally informed third-space pedagogical practices impact equitable learning environments for marginalized students in a U.S. K-12 setting?" However, participants also acknowledged several challenges to fully actualized equity, including language barriers, lack of resources and training, changing demographics, COVID-19, and a lack of family support for students. Despite challenges, however, supports allowed

participants to continue to focus on equity. Supportive elements included administration, advocacy opportunities, and like-minded professionals. Subsequent sections will discuss the findings from RQ3 in relation to the literature and theoretical framework, as well as the researcher-developed themes Promoting Equity in a Third Space, Obstacles to Equity, and The Role of Support and Advocacy for Educational Equity.

Promoting Equity in a Third Space: Critical Community Building. Despite all participants' reported commitment to promoting equity for culturally diverse students, only participants Amelia and Ashley provided examples of critical community building occurring as part of their third-space equity efforts, which contrasts with literature promoting critical community building as a vital component of equity (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Anderstaf et al., 2021; Cho, 2018; Green, Morales, et al., 2020). This study's findings also contrast with scholarship suggesting a critical pedagogy is more foundational to equity than a cultural pedagogy (Boyd et al., 2022; Galloway et al., 2019; Gorski & Dalton, 2020; Romijn et al., 2021). Amelia reported examples of purposefully building academic third spaces by engaging students' funds of knowledge, maximizing each diverse student's cultural capital, and mitigating issues of privilege in her public-school classroom. Ashley provided examples of how high accountability from colleagues and school administration both supported and stimulated systemic, equitable third-space efforts in her charter school. While the experiences of Amelia and Ashley align with recent scholarship surrounding the role of criticality in producing equitable environments, such examples also represent classroom or school environments where equity is an established expectation. For example, the primary goal of Ashley's charter school is to provide students with anti-racist education, producing a highly accountable atmosphere in terms of equitable practices. Similarly, Amelia holds a doctoral degree focused on educational equity and is well-known in

her school community for her support of equitable environments for culturally diverse students. However, other study participants described contexts where equity was not as regularly experienced or expected. As a result, participants who experienced fewer, less frequent equitable experiences reported more examples of advocacy, not accountability, to maintain equity. As a result, in contrast to current literature, participant experiences from this study suggest critical community building is a key element for equitable experiences only if equity is a well-established expectation within a context. In contrast, participant experiences suggested the role of advocacy as more crucial to participants' equity efforts in contexts where equity was not well-established.

Obstacles to Educational Equity: Teacher Training and Administrative Support.

According to this study's findings, a fully equitable learning environment where multicultural third spaces can be fostered by teachers and experienced by students requires advocacy at both the administrative and teacher levels to mitigate common obstacles or challenges preventing such an atmosphere. Active advocacy as a method for combatting challenges to equity in a third space contrasts with literature stating equitable third space occurrences happen naturally (Burke & Crocker, 2020; Potter & McDougall, 2017; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). Instead, as other literature suggests, relationships between diverse student groups must be cultivated, and the need to navigate challenges should be expected (Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Anderstaf et al., 2021). As nearly all participants mentioned, the obstacles preventing total educational equity within their contexts are numerous, coming from both internal and external locations in relation to the school. Having a dual approach to advocacy—both at the administrative level and within the classrooms themselves—suggests an opportunity where such obstacles can be addressed.

One obstacle mentioned by participants was a lack of proper training for how to incorporate equitable practices into the classroom. Scholarship suggests professional development designed to increase equitable practices positively impacts teachers' approaches to equity in the classroom (Riordan et al., 2019; Romijn et al., 2021; Villarreal et al., 2022). However, such developmental opportunities must be supported by district leadership, as administrators and school leadership are critical partners for alleviating hindrances to equity (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). Findings from this study indicate participants' agreement with the current scholarship, as the need for more training was mentioned as an obstacle to equity in many participants' contexts. For example, Nala, Debra, Shannon, Bess, Destiny, and Wendy all mentioned instances of lack of teacher training directly affecting the level of equity possible in their environments. According to Debra, "That's a huge obstacle, um, training people... and also supporting them in, like, being culturally responsive and culturally sustaining." Bess recalled similar struggles, mentioning the following:

We even asked to go to a specific program that was being taught—like a specific school for [equitable practices]—and take some of our Reg. Ed. Teachers to that. The finances of that training was [*sic*] about \$10,000 and the board said no. We swung for the fences.

We were hoping, but they were like, "Yeah, I don't think so."

Destiny succinctly summarized the obstacle of lack of proper training, stating, "...the training of the teacher and the awareness of a teacher will [determine] what a student gets."

Current scholarship and the findings from this study agree concerning the benefits of teacher training and supportive administration for increasing equitable learning environments (Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Shields & Hesbol,

2020; Villarreal et al., 2022). However, limited scholarship discusses advocacy as a necessary skill for ensuring equitable educational practices are put in place. Although advocacy is not discussed in depth, scholarship does discuss the need for more preparation and persistence strategies like social justice networking, self-care, and community involvement for educators who are involved in unjust school contexts (Medina, 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Ticknor et al., 2020). However, the literature's discussion of preparation and persistence strategies focuses more on what would benefit teachers, not necessarily administrators specifically. Findings from participant experiences in this study suggest advocacy skills at both the teacher and administrative levels are necessary for ensuring equitable practices are established for culturally diverse students in environments non-conducive to equity.

The Role of Advocacy and Support: The Impact of Administrators and Teachers.

Literature confirms administrators' important role in eliminating obstacles to educational equity (de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). However, administrators who lack proper training can impede equity in an academic environment (Navarro et al., 2020; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Williams, 2018). Participant-reported experiences with administrators in this study affirmed the findings of the literature. Overall, participants discussed their administrators' role in advocating for, promoting, and maintaining equitable educational environments. Several participants noted administrative support as central to their own advocacy efforts. For example, Diana mentioned how her current administrators set the expectation of maintaining a high level of training to best establish equitable educational environments and fully supported her in her efforts to intervene for her culturally diverse students during COVID-19 online learning. Wendy and Destiny shared similar positive views of the support provided by their administrators but also confirmed that

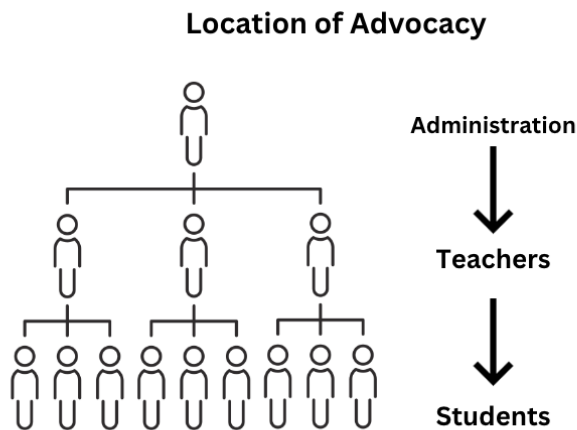
when administrators do not have a full understanding of the needs of culturally diverse students, equitable efforts will not be as effective. Brooke and Becky shared examples of having support from her immediate supervisors, but Becky also noted difficulties occurring due to not having the same level of support at higher administrative levels within the district. Diana summed up the impact of administration, whether positive or negative, in the following comment:

Because your admin, they're the barometer of the district, and if they're well versed in the needs or the needs of all students, not just the students that they thought they studied when they were getting their EDD or PhD, it's all students across the board. And that's not always the case. So, the obstacles were that I had directors that truly did not understand EL instruction, and what the needs were. That...was my number one obstacle.

For example, the systemic third space examples described by Wendy, Vanessa, and Ashley reflected advocacy for educational equity occurring at an administrative or district level within each school's organizational structure. In Destiny's opinion, advocacy efforts at the administrative level are critical if students are to experience equitable learning environments. Destiny offered the following reflection based on her experiences:

So, I think a big like a child's experience in their classroom can be shaped by the administration. If they're unwilling to push it. It's not going to happen...So, I think that it's going to have to come from admin to help change things.

According to participant experiences in this study, when advocacy is present at an administrative level, its effects permeate more of the organizational culture, starting at the top level of leadership and moving down to include faculty and students (see Figure 34).

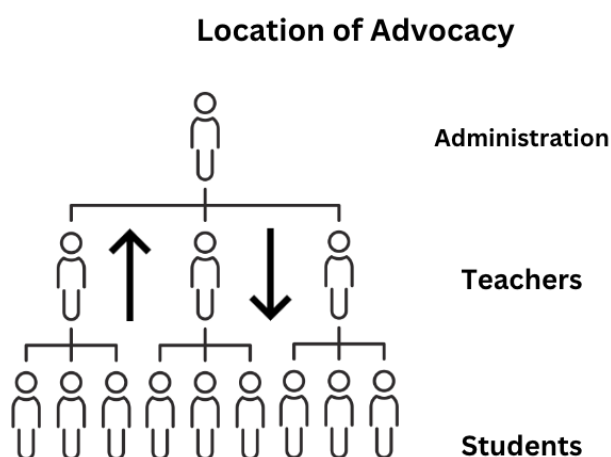
Figure 34*The Impact of Advocacy at the Administrative Level*

As an additional example, Ashley spoke consistently of her context’s school-wide approach to promoting an equitable and anti-racist education for the student body, where colleagues are held accountable by each other to do so. Such efforts at an administrative level flow downward through the school’s organizational structure to impact the students, who interact in weekly community gatherings where students’ different cultural backgrounds are celebrated and validated among the greater school community. Similarly, Vanessa spoke about her “little utopia” of third-space interactions between students as the result of administrative support and protection for her school’s uniquely diverse and equitable atmosphere. For Vanessa’s context, the support and advocacy of her administrators at the district level allowed for a greater application of equitable experiences throughout not just Vanessa’s classroom but also the greater student body. As demonstrated through literature and confirmed through the participant experiences in this study, administrative support remains a crucial factor for impacting educational equity for culturally diverse students (de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Shields & Hesbol, 2020)

Conversely, a majority of the advocacy efforts seen in the smaller-scale, micro-third-space experiences of Bess, Becky, and Shannon occurred at the teacher level, not the administrative level. Although most study participants indicated an acceptable level of support from their immediate supervisors, having less support at higher administrative levels was reported as an obstacle to equity efforts, especially regarding finances, resources, scheduling, and staffing (Navarro et al., 2020; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). As a result, participant-reported examples of advocacy were divided between efforts directly dealing with student interactions and efforts spent persuading administrative leadership to offer more support. Because of the dual directionality of advocacy efforts happening at the teacher level instead of the administrative level, the frequency and quality of impact of teachers' direct interaction with students was less broadly applicable (see Figure 35).

Figure 35

The Impact of Advocacy at the Teacher Level



As evidenced through the numerous micro third-space examples shared, study participants considered even minor examples of positive impact on equity to be valuable. However, all

participants expressed a desire to experience a greater positive impact on equity at a systemic level.

For participants in this study, the presence of advocacy and support at the administrative level resulted in more systemic third space experiences. However, this study's data also illuminated how teacher-led micro-third-space approaches can still exist within schools where district-level advocacy already reliably occurs. For example, Diana used a micro-level, non-systemic approach when she visited students' homes during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure the household had access to online schooling. While Diana consistently offered examples of how she advocated on a small scale for individual students, she also regularly reported supportive administration at her building and district level. Diana's administration supported her by allowing her to have freedom in the application of her role's duties, sending her for advanced equity training, and remaining abreast of current best practices in equity strategies themselves. As seen through Diana's example, administrative advocacy for equity at a district level provided opportunities for both systemic and micro third spaces to occur simultaneously, thus maximizing the potential impact for students to experience educational equity in a third space.

Research Question 3: Connection to Theoretical Framework. Like RQ1 and RQ2, findings from RQ3 also align with Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) CRP framework, particularly in the category of Equity and Excellence. The subtheme within the CRP category of Equity and Excellence aligning most with the findings from RQ3 is the area of Equal Access. This area of the framework is highlighted when hegemonic concepts of academic excellence are challenged through meaningful, culturally differentiated instructional approaches where students' cultural capital is prioritized and legitimized (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Mitton & Murray-Orr, 2021; Murray-Orr & Mitton, 2023). When diverse cultures hold equal rights in

educational settings, the mutual co-creation of a shared third space can become a possibility (Bhabha, 2004). Echoing scholarship surrounding culturally relevant practices, the CRP framework acknowledges equal access as a hallmark of equity for culturally diverse students (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 1999). However, the framework does not overtly discuss specific methods educators should use to promote environments where equal access can occur. In contrast, participants in this study demonstrated how school personnel, whether classroom teachers or administrative school leaders, must exercise advocacy as a necessary factor to ensuring equal access for culturally diverse students. Further discussion regarding the role of advocacy in relationship to the CRP framework, specifically in connection with experiencing equity in a third space, will be discussed in the subsequent section.

Theoretical Framework: Discussion of Study Themes

In addition to the previous discussion relating literature to this study's research questions, findings from this study indicate further discussion is necessary regarding the association between CRP and third space. As was discussed in earlier chapters, Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) CRP research served as the theoretical framework for the study, aligning with the study's research questions (see Table 6, Chapter IV). The role of CRP as a means for promoting more equitable educational environments for culturally diverse students has been widely researched (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Mitton & Murray-Orr, 2021; Sanczyk, 2020; Williams, 2018). However, unlike this study, no previous literature directly connects CRP to the concept of educational equity in a third space.

Within Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) CRP framework are five major themes: Identity and Achievement, Equity and Excellence, Developmental Appropriateness, Teaching the Whole Child, and Student-Teacher Relationships. The five themes of the CRP framework served as the

initial coding structures for Part II and Part III data analysis, providing a foundation on which researcher-developed themes were built (see Table 11, Chapter IV). Analysis of responses revealed numerous examples of participants engaging in CRP as part of the discussion surrounding their third-space practices. As a result, the presence and impact of CRP in the participant-educators' equity efforts were affirmed, as evidenced by the presence of each of the five CRP themes in the study's data.

To illustrate, an examination of the data in Part II of this study revealed the presence of all five themes from Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) framework (see Table 11, Chapter IV). The most frequently referenced theme in the framework was Identity and Achievement (245), and the least-mentioned theme was Student-Teacher Relationships (85). Similarly, themes from the CRP framework were also clearly identifiable in Part III data (see Table 13, Chapter IV). The most frequently occurring CRP framework codes in Part III's data were Teaching the Whole Child (64), Equity and Excellence (46), and Identity and Achievement (32). However, although the themes Developmental Appropriateness (4) and Student-Teacher Relationships (4) were identifiable within Part III data, each occurred with low frequency. The low frequency of occurrence of Developmental Appropriateness in Part III data may be indicative of the level of equity established in each participant's context. For instance, Amelia and Vanessa each provided examples of instructional practices clearly representative of Developmental Appropriateness, but both participants reported systemically conducive environments for such practices, allowing them to focus more on academics. For example, both Vanessa and Amelia reported supportive administration and settings where educational equity for culturally diverse students was the norm. Conversely, for other participants whose environments were not as consistently conducive to equitable experiences for culturally diverse students, the reflections and artifacts provided in

Part III revealed more examples of advocacy efforts aimed at increasing the level of equity within the context, not necessarily developmentally appropriate academic learning opportunities for culturally diverse students. Relatedly, the low frequency of Student-Teacher Relationships in Part III data may be a result of some participants providing more examples of student-to-student social interactions occurring in a third space than teacher-to-student academic interactions. Many micro-third-space examples provided by participants occurred in environments less systematically conducive to equity and demonstrated student social exchanges like translanguaging, lunch gatherings, and interactions through sports or school dances. Despite the low frequency of occurrence of two CRP themes in Part III's data, overall, the themes of CRP were identifiable across both Parts II and III of the study.

However, just as the five codes developed from the CRP framework were clearly identifiable in the data, so were the researcher-developed themes Promoting Equity in a Third Space, The Role of Advocacy and Support for Educational Equity, and Obstacles to Equity. Specifically, codes associated with Promoting Equity in a Third Space occurred 344 times in Part II data and 82 times in Part III data. Promoting Equity in a Third Space also occurred concurrently with the *a priori* themes present from Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) framework. The frequency of examples of Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) framework themes as well as the co-occurrence of the Promoting Equity in a Third-Space theme suggests the presence of a relationship between both the CRP framework and the concept of equitable third spaces for the participants in this study. However, a relationship between Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) CRP framework and third-space educational equity has neither been established nor examined in previous literature.

As a result of comparing the presence of Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) CRP framework's themes to the researcher-developed themes in the data, one connection between CRP and the concept of third space could be accounted for through the expansion of the current CRP framework to include third space elements within its themes or subcategories, as third space is not explicitly included as a marker of CRP. For example, within the CRP framework is the category of Student-Teacher Relationships, with subthemes including Caring, Relationships, Interaction, and Classroom Atmosphere. Such subthemes connect to essential elements necessary for the fostering of third-space educational opportunities, although the Student-Teacher CRP theme, by nature, limits the described interactions to those between instructor and students. However, Student-Teacher Relationships was the least frequently occurring code of the framework in both Part II and Part III data, while Promoting Equity in a Third Space was mentioned much more frequently. Although the subthemes present in the Student-Teacher Relationships category represent the elements a teacher might demonstrate toward students to engage in successful CRP approaches, it does not include any category describing the fostering and experiencing of third-space relationships between students from differing cultural backgrounds. The lack of such student-to-student interaction present within the Student-Teacher Relationships category suggests one reason why the code was referenced the least number of times across both Parts II and III data while the code Promoting Equity in a Third Space was referenced much more frequently. As a result, the Student-Teacher Relationships theme of the CRP framework represents an area for connection to the researcher-developed theme of Promoting Equity in a Third Space if the CRP category is adapted to include subthemes describing culturally hybrid, third-space interactions between students.

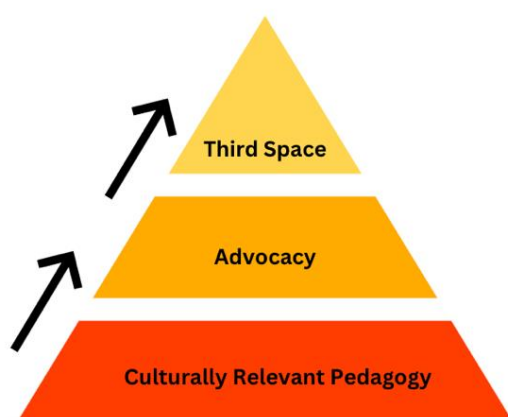
Similarly, the researcher-developed subcategories of Fostering and Experiencing Third Spaces within the Promoting Equity in a Third Space theme also align with the CRP framework's theme of Equity and Excellence. The theme's subcategories of Dispositions, Incorporation of Multicultural Content, Equal Access, and High Expectations for All suggest an alignment to equitable educational third-space ideals (Bhabha, 2004; Chen, 2020; Gupta, 2020; Gutiérrez, 2008; Kakos, 2022; Lim, 2020; Ratnam, 2020; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). The Equity and Excellence category promotes best practices on the part of the educator to establish a culturally relevant, more equitable classroom (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Gay, 2000, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Welborn, 2019). However, the Equity and Excellence theme does not include a category accurately describing how such equitable practices produce equitable exchanges or interactions between culturally diverse students. Through Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) CRP framework, the specific focus on the teacher's pedagogical practices—although important—highlights a fundamental missing element of how student-to-student relationships can also impact and demonstrate equitable classroom environments. As such, participant experiences in this study represent how the CRP framework could be adapted to include Fostering or Promoting Third Spaces among Students as an instructional practice subcategory within the Equity and Excellence theme to incorporate a critical facet of educational equity not currently represented in the extant framework.

Although expanding Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) framework to include third-space practices within the subcategories of the framework's existing themes represents one approach to defining the relationship between CRP and the concept of third space, an additional approach includes describing the relationship hierarchically. As seen through this study's reported data, participants' CRP practices served as a foundation on which third-space practices and

interactions were built, in order to produce continuously more equitable educational environments. If viewed in terms of a hierarchy of educational equity, CRP represents the essential foundational efforts of school personnel to initiate equitable practices. In contrast, third-space interactions represent the full actualization of equity in a classroom or school-wide environment (see Figure 36).

Figure 36

Sample Hierarchy of Educational Equity



In Figure 36, CRP practices represent a foundation of more frequently occurring educational equity efforts, and third space represents the less frequently attained actualizing point of true equity within a culturally diverse student group. As the foundation of the hierarchy, CRP efforts should naturally occur more frequently than the full actualization of equity in a third space, which is a concept supported by this study's data. For example, the combined coding frequency of all five themes from Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) framework across Parts II and III of this study was 1,098 (see Tables 11 and 13, Chapter IV) whereas the combined frequency of the codes categorized as Promoting Equity in a Third Space was 426 (see Tables 12 and 13, Chapter IV). Data from this study further demonstrates how reaching the third space portion of the hierarchy would not be possible without the foundational presence of CRP practices, as all coded

examples of third space became apparent after data were initially coded for the *a priori* themes of Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) CRP framework.

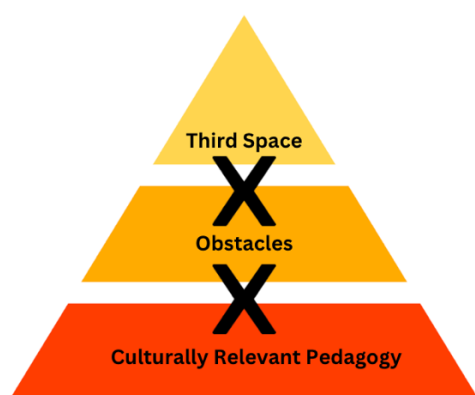
Similarly, the mediating factor granting access to fully experienced equity in Figure 36 is advocacy, as suggested by the presence of the theme The Role of Advocacy and Support in Educational Equity in the study's data. Advocacy provides opportunities for marginalized cultural groups or individuals to have their needs heard and addressed while also allowing pathways for unique cultural funds of knowledge from the greater school community to be brought into the educational environment (Durán et al., 2020; Freire, 2005; Green, Morales, et al., 2020; Jacobs et al., 2020; Janzen & Petersen, 2020; Roe, 2019; Williams, 2018). For example, Wendy demonstrated many examples of advocacy both inside and outside the school environment, promoting cross-cultural and third-space interactions among students while also going out into the community to research and help meet the needs of different cultural groups. Such advocacy informed Wendy's work within the school and created opportunities for her to build on her CRP practices, allowing more third-space experiences to occur within her context. Likewise, Destiny's advocacy efforts in developing student and parent lunch groups have created similar opportunities, providing more third-space interaction and more opportunities for equity in the school environment. Overall, the examples of Wendy and Destiny demonstrate how advocacy efforts can bridge CRP practices to equity in a third space.

According to this study's data, although advocacy links the foundation of CRP to the actualization of educational equity in a third space, obstacles represent an equally important influence impacting whether educational equity can be achieved for culturally diverse students. As is clear in literature and as evidenced by the frequency of codes mentioned in the Obstacles to Educational Equity theme in Parts II and III of the study, challenges preventing equity abound

(Ainscow, 2016; Anderstaf et al., 2021; Durán et al., 2020; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Freire, 2005; Gay, 2013; Kavanagh, 2018; Navarro et al., 2020; Um, 2019; Valenzuela & Epstein, 2023). Teacher participants in this study shared 458 coded examples of obstacles to educational equity in Part II (see Table 12, Chapter IV) and 12 examples in Part III (see Table 13, Chapter IV). Figure 37 demonstrates a visual representation of how the presence of obstacles, without the mediating factor of advocacy, prevent the actualization of educational equity in a third space by stymieing educators' culturally relevant pedagogical efforts.

Figure 37

Unsuccessful Hierarchy of Educational Equity



For example, Becky reflected on her personal advocacy efforts as essential to her successful instructional practices aimed at equity for culturally diverse students, stating, “Everything I do in class is made with my students’ backgrounds in mind.” Becky provided examples of incorporating food, facts, and videos from multiple countries into her lessons and promoting discussions about the differences between schooling in Ohio and schooling in other countries. She also reflected on the third space cultural hybridity experienced in her classroom, saying, “Again, my students come from all different countries, so they are ALWAYS [sic] working together.” However, although effectively using several CRP strategies and advocacy in her own

classroom, Becky noted such efforts were still being developed at the building and district level, and thus, obstacles to full-actualized equity remained. For example, Becky mentioned the lack of translation services as the main challenge to engaging culturally diverse students and their families more equitably. Because of the language barrier, Becky translated school forms and materials into multiple languages for students and families. Such efforts demonstrated how Becky's advocacy combatted the obstacles preventing more equitable educational third spaces from developing in her context.

Becky's experiences were not unique among participants. For instance, Diana also demonstrated how her advocacy efforts helped her culturally diverse students overcome impediments to educational equity resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Diana realized her students were not logging on for online classes due in part to linguistic barriers and other potential cultural and economic factors. When faced with the obstacles preventing her students from engaging in a more equitable third-space educational environment, Diana drove to students' homes, physically set up their technology, and personally logged them in to classes so they could participate despite social distancing requirements. Diana recounted the following:

So, I would just kind of undercover on Wednesdays go to various houses and go and hook up the Wi-Fi...Then I would go on and I click the button, but I'd be on the side, and I tell the kid, "Shh, don't tell the teacher I'm there [because of social distancing requirements]." But yeah, I mean, I kept going and my principal's like, "Yeah...what you're doing is, it's needed because you know, these children have no one. These parents do not understand the technology and the scheduling. So here you are and [if] you want to make this part of your role, do it..." But yeah, I'd continue to do the same thing I did,

because I'm not going to leave a child in the dark when I know his address. I'm just not going to do it.

Like Becky, Diana demonstrated examples of the challenges her culturally diverse students face, often preventing them from accessing equitable educational opportunities. Similarly, Diana's advocacy efforts mitigated several challenges, helping to provide a clearer path for her culturally diverse students to experience more educational equity in a third space. As shown through the participant experiences shared in this study's data, CRP practices alone do not guarantee equitable educational experiences in a third space for culturally diverse students. However, understanding the role of support and advocacy in mitigating obstacles is vital for connecting CRP practices to third-space equity in educational contexts. As demonstrated through the relationship of the *a priori* themes from Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) CRP framework and the researcher-generated themes derived from this study's data, CRP represents the foundational element necessary in a hierarchy of equity where third space represents the full actualization of equity in educational contexts.

Conclusions

Research is clear regarding the continued need to combat hegemonic practices and address educational inequity for culturally marginalized groups in culturally relevant, community-informed ways (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Durán et al., 2020; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Gay, 2013; Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Hunter et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Williams, 2018). The need for equitable solutions has become even more acute as the result of COVID-19 pedagogical shifts, providing educators with an opportunity to examine and correct ineffective, inequitable educational practices (de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Johnston et al., 2021, 2022; Soudien, 2020). Both CRP and third-space practices have been researched as potential methods

for addressing such inequity. However, little research has examined third-space practices at the K-12 level in the U.S., and no research has directly connected CRP and third space as part of a unified equity effort (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gupta, 2020; Ratnam, 2020). As a result, this study's objective was to investigate the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' reported experiences with culturally informed third-space practices in a U.S. K-12 setting?
2. How do U.S. K-12 teachers report using community funds of knowledge to integrate practical, culturally relevant third-space practices to inform more equitable learning environments?
3. What are teachers' perspectives on how culturally informed third-space pedagogical practices impact equitable learning environments for marginalized students in a U.S. K-12 setting?

After analysis of this study's data in comparison to published literature and theoretical framework, the following section explicates the conclusions drawn from the study's findings.

Research Question 1 Conclusions

First, CRP is the foundational element necessary for equity to exist in a third space, whether occurring at the micro-level or systemically. The participant experiences in this study support scholarship noting the importance of CRP for allowing culturally diverse students to experience increasingly more equitable educational environments (Anyichie et al., 2023; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Gay, 2000, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Welborn, 2019). Similarly, this study also affirms scholarship supporting the need for educators to develop increased cultural competency in order to implement CRP practices effectively (Abacioglu et al., 2020; Acuña & Blacklock, 2022; Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Romijn et al., 2021; Trumbull et

al., 2020; Wang et al., 2022; Welborn, 2019; Zelenková & Hanesová, 2019). The importance of culturally competent educators who engage in CRP connects with Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) CRP framework within the Developmental Appropriateness theme, which notes the importance of teaching styles, learning styles, and understanding the varied psychological needs of culturally diverse students. However, while agreeing with literature surrounding the importance of both CRP practices and culturally competent educators, this study furthers the scholarship surrounding equity pedagogy for culturally diverse students by identifying third space experiences as the fully actualized result of properly supported CRP practices.

Furthermore, this study directly connects the concept of equity in a third space to Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) CRP framework, demonstrating how the inclusion of third-space descriptors within the framework's themes allows for a more complete representation of realized educational equity for culturally diverse students. Additionally, participant experiences provided in this study demonstrate the promise of third-space instructional techniques as a method by which fully actualized equity for diverse K-12 educational environments can be observed.

Research Question 2 Conclusions

Secondly, the quality and frequency of involvement from the home communities of culturally diverse students will impact the quality, frequency, and availability of equitable third-space educational experiences. Research affirms the positive impact diverse communities can have on educational equity when funds of knowledge are included as a counterbalance to hegemonic academic norms (Durán et al., 2020; Freire, 2005; Green, Morales, et al., 2020; Jacobs et al., 2020; Janzen & Petersen, 2020; Roe, 2019; Williams, 2018). However, participant experiences in this study revealed numerous obstacles to community involvement, especially if culturally diverse communities are also linguistically diverse. If left unaddressed, such obstacles

to including the funds of knowledge from culturally diverse students' home communities will prevent fully actualized equity from occurring in a third space.

Furthermore, as a result of the numerous obstacles to engagement facing diverse communities, it is incumbent upon schools to take the initiative in seeking out, advocating for, and including cultural funds of knowledge to develop more equitable school environments. Initiating the inclusion of funds of knowledge from diverse cultural communities is especially imperative when schools have access to the power, influence, and resources otherwise unavailable to cultural groups within societal margins (Durán et al., 2020; Freire, 2005; Green, Morales, et al., 2020; Welborn, 2019; Williams, 2018). This conclusion contrasts with research suggesting marginalized communities must be the ones to speak out against inequity by speaking up for the needs of their own communities (Durán et al., 2020; Freire, 2005). Additionally, the cases presented in this study highlight common obstacles to involvement faced by diverse communities and offer practical examples of how advocacy at both the teacher and administrative levels mitigates such challenges. Through purposeful advocacy at multiple levels throughout a school organization, including funds of knowledge from culturally diverse communities can be achieved, as was demonstrated through multiple participant examples.

For example, Ashley and Wendy offered examples of public third space experiences where the cultural funds of knowledge from students' home communities are sought out and included in weekly student body gatherings. Similarly, Destiny's "accidental" parent lunches allow family members of students from multiple different cultural backgrounds to come together and be involved in students' learning environments. Additionally, when teaching novels from diverse cultural backgrounds to her high school English classes, Vanessa reported inviting students from diverse cultural clubs within the school, like the Muslim Club and Native American Club, to speak to her classes to inform both her instructional approaches and to aid her

students' understanding of the cultural backgrounds represented in the material. Shannon also reported efforts by her district to engage the community of her culturally diverse students through a school Trunk-or-Treat event as evidence of her district making strides in its efforts to increase educational equity.

Conversely, Loretta's lack of success engaging the community in her context should be noted, as she also reported great difficulty in establishing third-space interactions in her classroom. The lack of community buy-in regarding equitable educational practices and the difficulty Loretta experienced promoting equitable third-space environments within her classes demonstrates the connection between the quality and frequency of community engagement and the quality of equitable third spaces experienced by culturally diverse students. Initially, Destiny recalled similar difficulty with engaging the community prior to the creation of the "accidental" parent lunch due to the hostility of some of her colleagues toward culturally diverse students and their families. However, Destiny's acknowledgement of her own biracial identity became a connecting point with the families of her culturally diverse students, and she was able to engage more effectively with the community as a result. Destiny recalled:

Most of the kids I work with are Guatemalan. Of course, I am not Guatemalan. And they know I am not, but it doesn't seem to matter in that I'm brown. I'm closer to what they look like...I've worked with middle schoolers and my Philippine families, I've noticed, that come to me, even though they're not maybe my student. I've had a lot of parents who will come up to me and I think part of it, it's just, it's finding someone who understand their background a little bit. And I think that's, that was an unexpected thing that happened.

Additionally, the purposeful soliciting of cultural funds of knowledge from diverse students' home communities should occur at an administrative level, not just the teacher level. As previously discussed through this study's findings, advocacy occurring at the administrative level can influence equity for a greater number of students. Likewise, advocating to purposefully engage culturally diverse students' home communities can have a broad and far-reaching impact through increased frequency and quality of experiences. When the support for including diverse cultural funds of knowledge occurs at an administrative or district level, students school-wide have more opportunities to engage equitably in third spaces, like school-wide events such as Wendy's Worldwide Wednesday events or Ashley's weekly Community Circles. Furthermore, when administrators advocate to include funds of knowledge from diverse communities, teacher advocacy efforts are maximized, as demonstrated through Destiny's administrator-supported parent lunch gatherings. However, results from this study show how when such endeavors are supported only at the teacher level, although still impactful, the number of students affected regularly are fewer, much the like Becky's experiences translating for the families of students in her classroom because of the lack of having a school-wide translation service available. Ideally, once engagement opportunities have been initiated by schools, administrative, teacher, and community advocacy efforts to use diverse cultural funds of knowledge to inform more equitable learning environments should work in concert to produce an educational atmosphere with the most potential for experiencing equity in a third space (see Figure 38). Such joint efforts align with the Bridge Home, School, and Community subcategory within the Teaching the Whole Child theme in Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) CRP framework. Furthermore, joint advocacy efforts mitigate obstacles otherwise preventing equity in a third space, like lack of training on the part of teachers or administrators and linguistic or access barrier for communities.

Figure 38

Joint Advocacy Efforts to Include Cultural Funds of Knowledge



As an example, Wendy shared descriptions of such advocacy efforts working together both inside and outside of the school through her administrator-supported Worldwide Wednesday school-wide program for inviting students and families to share about their cultural backgrounds, her informal professional development efforts with her colleagues, and her engagement with numerous community advocacy groups to support the needs of her students' diverse communities. Wendy's reported efforts to engage diverse cultural communities' funds of knowledge approximate the joint advocacy efforts represented in Figure 38. Wendy shared the following as an example of her passion for advocacy at all levels:

But part of the problem I have is there's nobody in the administration around me even in my whole entire county, who has ever had any experience teaching these children. So that's part of the reason I joined this advocacy group because I just, I feel like I'm the one who has to do it, you know, and so but [my administration and I], I think we worked really well together...My principal's amazing. She's become a wonderful advocate for my kids. So, my principal, my supervisor, they're very open and willing, but I feel like...

I provide that knowledge and that experience and that pretty much the advocacy and the training.

Compared to her administrators, Wendy admits having more expertise for properly engaging with the needs of her culturally diverse students. However, Wendy benefits from the support of both her supervisor and principal, who provide her with a level of freedom that allows her to maximize her efforts working with communities. As a result, Wendy provided very clear and effective examples of how to incorporate cultural funds of knowledge to inform equitable third-space practices at a systemic, school-wide level. When compared to the difficulty experienced by Loretta in engaging community funds of knowledge, Wendy's efforts represent how fully administrative-supported, school-initiated engagement with the communities of culturally diverse students can result in truly equitable systemic third spaces.

Research Question 3 Conclusions

Finally, both micro and systemic third-space practices can result in increased educational equity for culturally diverse students, as reported by teacher participants in this study. Although case study results should rarely be generalized beyond the original context, the agreement of all participants in this study indicates promising potential regarding the positive impact of third-space instructional practices on equitable educational environments for culturally diverse students in U.S. K-12 contexts. Throughout Parts II and III of the study, participants reported more equitable learning environments as a result of their third-space efforts, whether occurring at systemic or micro levels. However, when probed to examine the depth of cultural equity being experienced based on Hall's (1976) cultural iceberg analogy, nearly all respondents mentioned surface culture elements like language, food, and festivals as the areas most addressed. According to literature, such surface representations do not represent true cultural equity

(Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Hall, 1976). When provided with the opportunity to reflect on the differences between experiencing surface or deeper cultural equity, most respondents noted the very real obstacles preventing deeper culture from being visited frequently within the educational context: lack of staff, resources, and time.

Considering the challenges preventing participants from achieving equitable third spaces at a deeper cultural level, participant experiences in this study demonstrate how truly equitable third space educational opportunities represent a sociocultural location which cannot be inhabited continuously but rather visited occasionally, much like the Distinguished category of Danielson's (2007) Framework for Teaching or the Self-Actualization category of Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs. As part of Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation, the ultimate level of the Hierarchy of Needs represents self-actualization. In comparison, experiencing third space as the ultimate level of an equity hierarchy represents the full actualization of an equitable educational community—a goal to be strived for, but challenging to achieve and maintain. Although the reported experiences of participants like Vanessa, Ashley, or Wendy may demonstrate what it might look like to experience a fully realized, equitable educational third space regularly, most respondents described examples representing only occasional opportunities to engage in third spaces, as the participant-reported obstacles to equity were numerous. However, as participant experiences from this study demonstrate, the ability to foster and engage in third spaces—in connection with the frequency and quality of such engagement—is directly connected to teacher and administrative advocacy and how connected schools are to culturally diverse students' home communities.

Just as equitable third spaces are impacted by teacher and administrative advocacy and quality connections with students' home communities, student-to-student interactions must be

acknowledged as a factor impacting equity in diverse educational environments. Although CRP aims to impact educational equity by promoting culturally relevant practices and increased cultural competence on the instructor's part, the treatment of how students interact with one another in diverse educational environments is missing from the discussion summarized in Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) CRP framework. As demonstrated through participants' experiences in this study, student interactions within micro and systemic third spaces represent observable educational equity built on the foundation of CRP practices. For example, participants shared examples like translanguaging, culturally hybrid social interactions, and even jointly created class music playlists as examples of equitable peer-to-peer, third-space interactions occurring between culturally diverse students. Conversely, the example of Loretta's students, who experienced consistent challenges interacting with one another in a shared third space, points to how fragmented student-to-student interactions can prevent equity in a third space from occurring, despite the instructor's best efforts. Thus, while the implementation of CRP is foundational to the pursuit of equity in a third space, educators must not ignore the impact student-to-student interactions can have in diverse educational contexts and must seek to foster educational environments supportive of cross-cultural peer relationships.

Ultimately, as demonstrated through this study's findings, consistently experiencing educational equity in a third space is the result of conducive environments, not specific practices. Although research calls for more specific and practical examples of third space practices due to its highly abstract nature, this study demonstrates how specific practices cannot exist without the right conditions. Instead, this study demonstrates how the combination of proper educator training, the foundational application of CRP practices, fostering supportive community and cross-cultural peer relationships, and the exercising of purposeful advocacy at both the teacher

and administrative level result in conducive environments where micro or systemic equitable third space practices can occur (Anyichie et al., 2023; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Gupta, 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Ratnam, 2020; Welborn, 2019).

Recommendations for Future Research

Prior research regarding third-space pedagogical practices has called for more practical examples of implementing the highly abstract concept in academic arenas (Gupta, 2020; Ratnam, 2020). Findings from this study have answered the call for more practical examples by recounting numerous examples of U.S. K-12 teachers' experiences with third-space practices and by highlighting the contextual elements necessary for third-space practices to occur. However, the provided examples should not be generalized beyond their immediate context due to the qualitative nature of the study. Future qualitative research may continue to examine additional practical examples of equitable third-space implementation in other diverse K-12 contexts. Similarly, further quantitative research may examine if there is a difference in impact between micro third spaces and systemic third spaces on educational equity for culturally diverse students in U.S. K-12 settings. Furthermore, throughout the current study, participants' responses indicated a mix of both social and academic elements occurring within third-space interactions, which were not always clearly separated. As a result, future research separating third-space experiences into separate social and academic categories may also provide additional areas for examination. Scholars might also consider investigating the connection between social and academic elements within third spaces and the impact each may have on the other.

Likewise, although participant experiences from this study offered qualitative examples of educational equity advocacy occurring at both the administrative and teacher levels, further quantitative research might measure the impact of advocacy at each level on equitable third-

space experiences for culturally diverse students. Additional quantitative research regarding the significance of advocacy as a mediating factor in addressing obstacles to equity and promoting equitable third spaces may provide further direction for how to best train in-service and pre-service teachers and administrators to foster and maintain more equitable environments for culturally diverse students. Moreover, further investigation highlighting successful advocacy practices in additional contexts may also help inform pre-service and in-service educator training for how to combat obstacles to equity and how to maintain equitable environments in the face of constantly changing classroom demographics.

Future research may also further investigate this study's initial connection between CRP and third space. Results from this study demonstrate how CRP is the foundational element within an equity hierarchy where third-space engagement represents the full community actualization of equity in academic contexts. Additionally, this study suggests advocacy as a method for enabling CRP practices to result in actualized third-space equity. Broader and more in-depth testing of this theory may provide additional insight into the process of how educational equity can be achieved and observed in diverse educational environments, whether within the U.S. K-12 realm or elsewhere.

Finally, future research should consider the potential of investigating both community and student perspectives on the impact of third space instructional practices on educational equity. The current study was concerned only with teacher perspectives, and as a result, was limited by participant interpretations of third-space examples. However, a direct examination of the perspectives of the diverse students and communities affected by such practices would continue to inform best practices in equity pedagogy (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018; Bubb & Jones, 2020; Caetano et al., 2020; Riordan et al., 2019; Szelei et al., 2019). As culturally diverse K-12

students represent a doubly vulnerable population, investigating student perspectives may be challenging (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022). However, to collect data ethically, scholars may consider focusing on the perspectives of students' families or investigating the past experiences of recently graduated students from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Implications for Professional Practice

There are several implications for professional practice resulting from this study, relating to the CRP theoretical framework and to each of the study's researcher-developed themes: The Role of Advocacy and Support for Educational Equity, Obstacles to Educational Equity, and Promoting Equity in a Third Space. Initial implications include suggestions for U.S. K-12 school administrators. Administrators have a crucial role in modeling and supporting equity efforts within educational environments (de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Green, Castro, et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). Participants in this study shared strong opinions regarding the role of administration and school leadership in leading equity efforts for culturally diverse students. For a school community focused on promoting educational equity among culturally diverse learners, administrators can support third-space and equity endeavors by offering support and advocacy at both the district and classroom level. For example, seasoned educator Destiny recalled the support offered to her by administration when she was able to purchase new curriculum and was provided with a physical space where her students could meet. Likewise, early career educator Brooke's reported experiences with supportive administration were more attitudinal, as her administrator provided reassurance and approval for her culturally diverse curriculum choices and extra-curricular club involvement. Additional examples of administrative support were also mentioned by Amelia, Diana, Debra,

and Wendy, stressing the importance of such support impacting equitable learning environments positively.

Furthermore, administrators must be aware of the numerous obstacles preventing truly equitable third spaces from occurring consistently, including the foundational nature of language as a vehicle for academic instruction and communication with family members (Buchs & Maradan, 2021; Durán et al., 2020; Fernández, 2019; Gutiérrez, 2008; Karabon & Johnson, 2020; Roe, 2019; Sanczyk, 2020; Yilmaz, 2019). Nearly all participants in this study mentioned the importance of having access to translation software or on-demand services as the foremost concern when promoting equity for culturally or linguistically diverse students. As a result, administrators must plan to provide financial or human resources for such services in order for equitable educational opportunities to be a possibility. However, tools and training alone do not produce equitable environments, but such resources must be combined with accountability and collaboration with the community and teacher-advocates to ensure effective results (Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Villarreal et al., 2022; Williams, 2018).

Administrators should also be aware of how their responsibility to impact equity positively includes ensuring teachers are properly trained in and capable of implementing the five areas of Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) CRP framework. Furthermore, administrators must then support and protect teachers who are well-trained advocates or pioneers for equity (de Klerk & Palmer, 2021; Pollock & Briscoe, 2019; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). By allowing highly trained teachers flexibility and freedom from typical school systems or structures, more opportunities for students to engage in equitable third-space learning experiences might occur. For example, Diana's administrators supported her endeavors to visit the homes of her culturally diverse students during COVID-19 online learning to help them log in to classes. Despite the

complaints of some of Diana's colleagues, Diana's administrators encouraged her to continue her endeavors but offered her social protection by not making her efforts publicly known to her colleagues. Likewise, Vanessa's principal provided protection for her school's "utopia" at a district level through similar quietly subversive efforts. Vanessa shared the following as an example:

Our building principal is going to, she's going to take what the district tells her to do, but she also just does what's best and she's like, "[Our building] is its own little animal. And we're going to do things around here that we know are going to be best for kids, whatever that looks like." And so, they just kind of let us go because we work and other schools don't. And so, within reason, they kind of let us step back and do things kind of our way.

According to Vanessa, her principal recognizes the vital role she plays in protecting the uniquely equitable environment in her building, as her staff's efforts have successfully fostered equitable experiences for the numerous culturally diverse students in her building, which Vanessa describes as a microcosm of the world.

Furthermore, administrators should allow highly trained equity advocates the freedom to develop, promote, and engage in equitable third-space efforts like the examples provided by Wendy, Diana, Debra, Destiny, and Amelia. All experienced educators with over 20 years of overall experience, Wendy, Diana, Debra, Destiny, and Amelia also possess either a doctoral degree or National Board Certification. The combination of training, experience, and passion for equity held by these educators should be recognized and supported. Efforts from educator-advocates like Wendy, Diana, Debra, Destiny, and Amelia should be respected and welcomed,

especially in situations where they may have more expertise in equitable pedagogical techniques than their administrators.

This study also has several implications for teachers currently working in culturally diverse U.S. K-12 contexts. The first implication includes acknowledging the rare existence of truly equitable third-space engagement or experiences, as third space exists as a sociocultural location to be visited, not inhabited. Scholarship has suggested the reason for such rare third-space occurrences may be due to students' inability to maintain a high awareness of systemic oppression (Cho, 2018; Jobe & Coles-Ritchie, 2016). However, results from this study indicate the frequency and quality of equitable third-space experiences may depend on the nature of individual contexts, where a more conducive environment—as developed through teacher and administrative training, advocacy, and community involvement—will produce more frequent experiences of third-space equity. It is essential, then, for educators to understand their role as advocates for promoting increasingly more conducive environments for educational equity, even if such efforts occur on a small scale. For example, Destiny's lunch groups, Shannon's school-wide culturally diverse book read-aloud activities, and Becky's translation efforts all represent micro-third-space experiences where equity can be experienced occasionally, despite occurring within environments not entirely conducive to systemic equity efforts. Although systemically implemented third space environments may be rare, findings from this study show non-traditional, micro-third-space opportunities are still viable methods for promoting and experiencing educational equity in less-than-ideal circumstances.

Another implication for practicing educators includes awareness of the critical role of advocacy in advancing equity from CRP practices to third space experiences. For example, Wendy and Diana demonstrated how their advocacy was key in promoting equitable third spaces

among the culturally diverse students in their contexts. For instance, in addition to Diana visiting the homes of her culturally diverse students during COVID-19, Diana also shared an example of accompanying the parents of her students during teacher conferences and telephoning translation services during the meetings to ensure equal access and clear communication between the family and the teachers. Such advocacy examples align with the CRP framework themes Teaching the Whole Child and Equity and Excellence (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Without such examples of advocacy, third-space exchanges may not have occurred for Diana's students, similar to some scholarship reporting the need for a teacher or other third-party presence to initiate third-space engagement (Jobe & Coles-Ritchie, 2016; Potter & McDougall, 2017; Southern et al., 2020). Although Diana's context includes administrators who are generally supportive of equity efforts, Diana's actions demonstrate how classroom educators can still advocate to ensure such efforts occur, which becomes especially important in environments not conducive to equity. For example, Loretta reported the challenging nature of her context, where third-space equity is very rarely experienced by her culturally diverse students. However, Loretta still believes her efforts to promote empathy and an atmosphere where all students must "get along" are positively impacting equity in her classroom. Despite her challenging environment and lack of third-space interactions between her culturally diverse students, Loretta still feels a passion and responsibility to advocate for her students to experience more equity, however small the endeavor.

Just as this study offers important implications for current teachers, it also includes several implications for PSTs and educator training programs, as well. One such implication is the importance of educating PSTs on the reality of the numerous obstacles preventing educational equity and, as a result, the rare existence of truly equitable third-space educational

environments (Cho, 2018; Jobe & Coles-Ritchie, 2016; Medina, 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Patterson, 2019). Because of the rarity of systemic, equitable third spaces, educator preparation programs should consider providing PSTs with examples of how to engage in micro-third-space interactions to promote equity when systemic approaches are not as readily practiced. Such efforts affirm previous research's call for specific persistence strategies to be taught to PSTs in order to prepare them to remain in challenging contexts where equity or social justice do not flourish (Medina, 2020; Navarro et al., 2020; Ticknor et al., 2020). Similarly, PSTs should also be educated on the importance of advocacy—both at the administrative level and within the classroom—in providing the necessary catalyst for initiating equitable third-space exchanges in any educational context, but especially in environments where multiple obstacles to equity exist.

A final implication of this study impacts PSTs, currently practicing teachers, and administrators. The foundational role of cultural competency in providing equitable, third-space environments for culturally diverse students at each stakeholder level cannot be overstated (Abacioglu et al., 2020; Acuña & Blacklock, 2022; Alarcón & Bettez, 2021; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Wang et al., 2022; Welborn, 2019). Just as Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) CRP framework represents a necessary foundation for equitable third spaces to be possible, cultural competency must exist among all educational stakeholders to guide culturally relevant instructional practices (Abacioglu et al., 2020; Acuña & Blacklock, 2022; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Navarro et al., 2020; Ticknor et al., 2020). Educators at all levels must be held accountable to possess effective cultural competency in order to impact educational equity for culturally diverse learners, especially in a continually changing and increasingly diversifying educational landscape.

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Appendix A: Permission to Reprint

Seeking Permission to Reprint Figure 1: The Principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

External > Inbox x



Sarah Harrison

to slbrown2, jecoooper ▾

Feb 11, 2023, 5:36 PM (17 hours ago)

☆ ↶ ⋮

Dear Dr. Brown-Jeffy and Dr. Cooper,

My name is Sarah Harrison, and I am a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership at Northwest Nazarene University currently working on my dissertation.

I am writing to request permission to use Figure 1 *The Principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy* from your publication *Toward a conceptual framework of culturally relevant pedagogy: An overview of the conceptual and theoretical literature* (2011) as a reprinted figure in my dissertation.

I would be extremely grateful for the opportunity to reference your work in my study.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Sarah Harrison, Ed.S.



Jewell Cooper

to me ▾

10:41 AM (36 minutes ago)

☆ ↶ ⋮

Ms. Harrison:

You have permission to use Figure 1 from our article, *Toward a Conceptual Framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy* (2011). We request you cite it appropriately. Best wishes as you complete your dissertation.

Jewell Cooper



Shelly Brown-Jeffy

to me ▾

Mon, Mar 6, 9:55 PM

☆ ↶ ⋮

Hello Sarah,

Please forgive my extreme delay in getting back to you. Yes you can use the figure. Please give us, the authors, proper citation for using the figure.

Shelly Brown-Jeffy
Associate Professor Department of Sociology
Affiliate, African American & African Diaspora Studies
Principal Investigator, [Spartans ADVANCE](#), National Science Foundation Award



Appendix B: Part I Online Questionnaire

Thank you for your willingness to participate. Your responses will serve to further research concerning equitable learning environments for culturally diverse K-12 students in the U.S.

Age Range: 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61+

Gender Identity: Male Female Non-binary/ Third gender Prefer Not to Say

Race or Ethnicity: _____ U.S. State where you teach: _____

Number of years teaching: 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26-30 31+

Number of years teaching in culturally diverse K-12 contexts:

1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26-30 31+

Current grade level assignment (Select all that apply): K-2 3-6 7-9 10-12

Current Role/Assignment or Subject Area: _____

1. In your current role, how often do you interact with students from diverse cultural backgrounds in group settings?

never sometimes about half the time most of the time always

2. How important is it to you that all students under your supervision experience an equitable learning environment?

not at all important slightly important moderately important very important extremely important

3. How familiar are you with the concept of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy?

not familiar at all slightly familiar moderately familiar very familiar extremely familiar

4. How familiar are you with the concept of third space instructional techniques?

not familiar at all slightly familiar moderately familiar very familiar extremely familiar

5. Please select any of the following statements you believe describe your educational practices.

_____ My classroom/educational assignment includes speakers of languages other than English. (RQ1)

_____ I encourage multiple cultural perspectives in the classroom. (RQ1)

_____ I promote student collaboration across cultures. (RQ1)

_____ I try to use equitable instructional practices for students from diverse cultural

backgrounds. (RQ2)

- _____ I use or adapt curriculum to ensure that it is applicable to the cultural backgrounds of my students. (RQ2)
- _____ I make purposeful connections between students' home environments and school, especially with students from cultural backgrounds different from mine. (RQ2)
- _____ I encourage students of varying cultural backgrounds to be co-creators of classroom knowledge. (RQ2)
- _____ I amplify or draw attention to the perspectives of culturally marginalized students. (RQ3)
- _____ I try to incorporate different cultures' definitions of success in my evaluation or assessment practices whenever possible. (RQ2)
- _____ I try to incorporate different cultures' definitions of knowledge in my instructional practices whenever possible. (RQ2)
- _____ My classroom/educational assignment has a family-style sense of community. (RQ3)
- _____ I prioritize making my classroom/educational assignment a socially and emotionally safe place where students from any cultural background can share their perspectives. (RQ3)
- _____ Culturally diverse students interact regularly with majority culture students in my classroom/educational assignment. (RQ1)
- _____ Students in my classroom/educational assignment engage in culturally hybrid interactions (i.e., use of multiple languages, mixing of cultural norms, etc.). (RQ1)
- _____ In my classroom/educational assignment no single culture has more privilege or social power than another. (RQ3)

6. If you are eligible, would you be willing to participate in a virtual interview with the researcher to further discuss your experience with equitable classroom practices for students from diverse cultural backgrounds? The interview will last approximately 30 minutes, and questions will be e-mailed to you beforehand for preparation purposes.

YES NO E-mail Address for Follow-Up: _____

Your responses have been recorded. Thank you for your time.

Appendix C: Part II Participant and Researcher Interview Protocols

Interview Protocol – Participant Copy

Purpose

As a participant, you will be given the opportunity to

- Elaborate on experiences with culturally diverse K-12 students in U.S. environments (RQ1)
- Elaborate on the use of culturally hybrid/third-space practices in culturally diverse U.S. K-12 environments (RQ1)
- Discuss how students' cultural funds of knowledge from home/family communities inform equitable instructional practices (RQ2)
- Verbalize the perceived impact of culturally hybrid/third-space practices on educational equity for culturally diverse students (RQ3)

Interview Protocol – Participant Copy

Directions

Thank you for agreeing to take part in today's interview.

My name is Sarah Harrison, and as part of my doctoral studies, I am researching equitable instructional practices for culturally diverse K-12 students in the U.S. You have been identified as someone who has experience in these approaches or with these groups of students, and your input in today's interview will be valuable for gathering information about them.

This interview will be recorded and should be completed in approximately 30 minutes. You may choose to answer or decline to answer any question at any time. You may also withdraw your participation at any time during this interview.

Interview Protocol – Participant Copy**Questions**

1. Do you give verbal permission for us to proceed with the recorded interview?
YES NO
2. (RQ1-3) Tell me about what has shaped you (either personally or professionally) to be interested in equitable environments for culturally diverse students.
3. (RQ1-2) Describe the student population you teach. What types of culturally diverse students do you work with?
4. (RQ3) Describe what an equitable learning environment looks like for a culturally diverse student in your classroom/school.
5. (RQ3) What, if any, kinds of support do you receive in your role to help you focus on educational equity for culturally diverse students?
6. (RQ3) What obstacles have you experienced when focusing on educational equity for culturally diverse students?
7. (RQ3) Has the COVID-19 pandemic had any impact on equitable learning environments for your diverse students? If so, please describe the impact.
8. (RQ2) How do the home or family communities of your culturally diverse students inform your equity-focused instructional practices?
9. (RQ1) Describe how culturally diverse students interact with majority culture students in your classroom.
10. (RQ1) Describe situations where cultural hybridization is observable in your classroom (i.e., use of multiple languages, mixing of cultural norms, etc.). Can you give some specific examples?
11. (RQ1) What, if any, techniques do you use to promote student interactions where no single culture is more privileged or socially powerful than another in your classroom/environment?
12. (RQ1) Some theorists have described cultural interactions where no single culture is more privileged or socially powerful than another as a cultural “third space.” In third-space interactions, a hybrid culture emerges between groups where privilege and social power are shared. In what, if any, ways might the concept of “third space” apply to the student interactions in your classroom?
13. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with diverse K-12 student populations or with third-space/culturally hybrid instructional practices?

Interview Protocol – Participant Copy
Preview of Part III

If you are eligible, Part III of this study will include sharing artifacts of professional practice and will require approximately 10-15 minutes of reflection via a privately shared Google Drive folder in each month of September, October, and November 2023. Reflections may be typed or created via the speech-to-text dictation feature in Google Docs. Variations of the following prompts will be the basis for the monthly reflections:

- **Third-Space or Culturally Hybrid Interactions:** During the past month, what culturally relevant instructional practices did you use that you believe promoted “third-space” or culturally hybrid interactions in your classroom/assignment? Please describe. *(Examples might include group work where students from multiple cultures cooperated, joint games or activities between cultural groups, students combining cultural values in communication, etc.)*
- **Using Home Community Cultural Knowledge to Inform Instructional Practices:** During the past month, what opportunities did the home/family communities of culturally diverse students have to inform your instructional practices? Please describe. *(Examples might include parent-teacher conferences, parent advisory committees, multilingual communication, home visits, cultural celebrations, etc.)*
- **Educational Equity:** During the past month, do you believe any of these practices have resulted in a more equitable learning environment for culturally diverse students in your classroom? Please describe.
- **Artifacts of Professional Practice:** Please upload to the shared Google Drive folder any artifacts of professional practice you used during the past month that you believe reflect third-space instructional practices, students’ home community involvement, or equitable learning environments for culturally diverse students. *(Examples might include Meet the Teacher handouts, assignments or activities designed for group work, assignments based in diverse cultural values, multilingual communication, etc.)*

14. If you are determined to be eligible, would you be willing to participate in Part III of the study? YES NO

If you are selected for Part III of the study, a summary of the researcher’s findings from the Part II interviews of this study will be e-mailed to you for member checking purposes.

Please provide your e-mail address for follow-up: _____

Interview Protocol – Participant Copy
Closing

Thank you for your time. Your interview responses will serve to further research concerning equitable learning environments for culturally diverse K-12 students in the U.S. If you have any further questions or if you would like to recommend a colleague who might be a good fit for this study, you may contact me via e-mail.

***If you agreed to participate in Part III,** I will be setting up a shared Google Drive soon and will contact you via e-mail with directions on how to proceed with Part III's reflections and artifact collection. This concludes our time together today. Thank you again for your time and investment in promoting more equitable learning environments for culturally diverse students!*

Interview Protocol – Researcher Copy
Purpose

Participants should be given the opportunity to

- Elaborate on experiences with culturally diverse K-12 students in U.S. environments (RQ1)
- Elaborate on the use of culturally hybrid/third-space practices in culturally diverse U.S. K-12 environments (RQ1)
- Discuss how students' cultural funds of knowledge from home/family community inform equitable instructional practices (RQ2)
- Verbalize the perceived impact of culturally hybrid/third-space practices on educational equity for culturally diverse students (RQ3)

Interview Protocol – Researcher Copy
Set-Up/Materials Needed

- Internet access, charged laptop
- Working web camera/microphone
- Google Meet link/recording capabilities in working order
- Otter.ai software in working order
- Phone for backup recording
- Pen/paper for notes
- Electronic protocol document for reading questions/taking electronic notes
- Link for Part II/III informed consent
- Participant-specific data from Part I: Questionnaire

Interview Protocol – Researcher Copy
Directions/Establishing Rapport

Thank you for agreeing to take part in today's interview.

My name is Sarah Harrison, and as part of my doctoral studies, I am researching equitable instructional practices for culturally diverse K-12 students in the U.S. You have been identified as someone who has experience in these approaches or with these groups of students, and your input in today's interview will be valuable for gathering information about them. I am currently a teacher, as well. I teach high school English and have experience with diverse students in both the U.S. system and abroad, from Pre-K through high school, so I am eager to hear more about your experiences.

This interview will be recorded and should be completed in approximately 30 minutes. You may choose to answer or decline to answer any question at any time. You may also withdraw your participation at any time during this interview.

Before we begin, please click on the link in the chat area that will take you to an informed consent page. (Ensure participant finds/can access the link).

I will briefly review the information with you, and you may indicate your permission by clicking the appropriate response.

(Review/highlight information by sharing screen. Ask participant to select permission response option. Ensure they have reached the “thank you” page before proceeding).

(If participant does not agree, thank them for their time and end the meeting.)

*(If participant agrees, click **RECORD** for Google Meet and Otter.ai and note the time).*

We are now ready to begin.

Interview Protocol – Researcher Copy

Questions

1. Do you give verbal permission for us to proceed with the recorded interview? YES NO

2. (RQ1-3) Tell me about what has shaped you (either personally or professionally) to be interested in equitable environments for culturally diverse students.

3.(RQ1-2) Describe the student population you teach. What types of culturally diverse students do you work with? (*Refer to participant-specific questionnaire*).

Probe a. What is the overall size of the student body/the diverse population within the school?

Probe b. Would you describe any of the diverse cultural groups as marginalized from the mainstream student population? If so, please explain.

Probe c. How do you gather culturally informed strategies for these groups?

4. (RQ3) Describe what an equitable learning environment looks like for a culturally diverse student in your classroom/school.

Probe a. What do you believe an equitable learning environment should look like?

5. (RQ3) What, if any, kinds of support do you receive in your role to help you focus on educational equity for culturally diverse students?

6. (RQ3) What obstacles have you experienced when focusing on educational equity for culturally diverse students?

7. (RQ3) Has the COVID-19 pandemic had any impact on equitable learning environments for your diverse students? If so, please describe the impact.

8. (RQ2) How do the home or family communities of your culturally diverse students inform your equity-focused instructional practices?

Probe a. How do the home or family communities... inform your curriculum choices?

Probe b. How do the home or family communities... inform your assessment practices?

9. (RQ1) Describe how culturally diverse students interact with majority culture students in your classroom.

Probe a. How do culturally diverse and majority culture students interact outside of the classroom? (Sports, larger school events, dances, etc.)

Probe b. How do culturally diverse and majority culture students interact in the community?

10. (RQ1) Describe situations where cultural hybridization is observable in your classroom (i.e., use of multiple languages, mixing of cultural norms, etc.). Can you give some specific examples?

11. (RQ1) What, if any, techniques do you use to promote student interactions where no single culture is more privileged or socially powerful than another in your classroom/environment?

12. (RQ1) Some theorists have described cultural interactions where no single culture is more privileged or socially powerful than another as a cultural “third space.” In third-space interactions, a hybrid culture emerges between groups where privilege and social power are shared. In what, if any, ways might the concept of “third space” apply to the student interactions in your classroom?

13. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with diverse K-12 student populations or with third-space/culturally hybrid instructional practices?

Interview Protocol – Researcher Copy
Preview of Part III

If you are eligible, Part III of this study will include sharing artifacts of professional practice and will require approximately 10-15 minutes of reflection via a privately shared Google Drive folder in each month of September, October, and November 2023. Reflections may be typed or created via the speech-to-text dictation feature in Google Docs. Variations of the following prompts will be the basis for the monthly reflections:

- During the past month, what culturally relevant instructional practices did you use that you believe promoted “third-space” interactions in your classroom/assignment? Please describe.

During the past month, what opportunities did the home/family communities of culturally diverse students have to inform your instructional practices? Examples might include parent-teacher conferences, advisory committees, multilingual communication, home visits, cultural celebrations, etc. Please describe.

- During the past month, do you believe any of these practices have resulted in a more equitable learning environment for culturally diverse students in your classroom? Please describe.
- Please upload to the shared Google Drive folder any artifacts of professional practice you used during the past month that you believe reflect third-space instructional practices, students’ home community involvement, or equitable learning environments for culturally diverse students.

14. If you are determined to be eligible, would you be willing to participate in Part III of the study? YES NO

If you are selected for Part III of the study, a summary of the researcher’s findings from the Part II interviews of this study will be e-mailed to you for member checking purposes.

Please provide your e-mail address for follow-up: _____

Interview Protocol – Researcher Copy

Closing

Thank you for your time. Your interview responses will serve to further research concerning equitable learning environments for culturally diverse K-12 students in the U.S. If you have any further questions or if you would like to recommend a colleague who might be a good fit for this study, you may contact me via e-mail. (If participant agreed to Part III): I will be setting up a shared Google Drive soon and will contact you via e-mail with directions on how to proceed with Part III’s reflections and artifact collection. This concludes our time together today. Thank you again for your time!

Appendix D: Part III Reflective Prompts & Artifact Collection

Thank you for agreeing to participate in Part III of my doctoral study surrounding equitable instructional practices for culturally diverse K-12 students in the U.S. The goal of this portion of the study is to document reflections and artifacts of practice used during the first semester of the academic year when you are regularly interacting with culturally diverse students.

Directions:

- Please respond to the three monthly reflective prompts regarding your classroom experiences in September, October, and November. For November's reflection, you also will be asked to think forward to what you may plan to include during the month of December.
- You may type your responses or use the voice-typing dictation tool within the Google Doc [LINK REDACTED].
- Please upload your responses and artifacts of professional practice for each month to the shared Google Drive folder by **September 30, October 31, and November 30**.

Please note: If you need additional time to submit the month's materials, please feel free to notify me via e-mail at [E-MAIL REDACTED] and submit the materials when you are able to do so.

- This task should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete each month.

Variations of the following prompts will be the basis for the monthly reflections:

- **Third-Space or Culturally Hybrid Interactions:** During the past month, what instructional practices did you use that you believe promoted culturally hybrid or “third-space” interactions in your classroom/assignment? Please describe. *(Examples might include group work where students from multiple cultures cooperated, joint games or activities between cultural groups, students combining cultural values in communication, etc.)*
- **Using Home Community Cultural Knowledge to Inform Instructional Practices:** During the past month, what opportunities did the home/family communities of culturally diverse students have to inform your instructional practices? Please describe. *(Examples might include parent-teacher conferences, parent advisory committees, multilingual communication, home visits, cultural celebrations, etc.)*
- **Educational Equity:** During the past month, do you believe any of these practices have resulted in a more equitable learning environment for culturally diverse students in your classroom? Please describe.
- **Artifacts of Professional Practice:** Please upload to the shared Google Drive folder any artifacts of professional practice used during the past month that you


believe reflect any of the following: culturally hybrid/third-space instructional practices, students' home community involvement, or equitable learning environments for culturally diverse students. *(Examples might include assignments or activities designed for group work, Meet the Teacher event handouts, assignments based on diverse cultural values, multilingual communication, etc.)*

Appendix E: IRB Full Approval

IRB Protocol Received Full Approval

External

Inbox x



Northwest Nazarene University

<reply-to+a47f3274-35fc-413e-9fed-033615176b0a@email.submittable.com>

to me

Mon, Apr 17, 5:31 PM

☆

↶

⋮

Submittable

Dear Sarah,

The IRB has reviewed your protocol: 0339. You received "Full Approval".

Congratulations, you may begin your research. If you have any questions, let me know.

Northwest Nazarene University

Dr. Jennifer Hill

IRB Member

623 S University Blvd

Nampa, ID 83686

REPLY

VIEW SUBMISSION

Submission ID: 36164700

Appendix F: ACRP Ethics and Human Subject Training Certification

Appendix G: Electronic Informed Consent Form

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Sarah Harrison, a doctoral student in the Department of Education at Northwest Nazarene University, is conducting a research study related to the impact of culturally relevant third space pedagogical practices on equitable classroom environments in diverse U.S. K-12 environments.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have experience as an educator with interacting with diverse student populations and/or families in U.S. K-12 environments.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, the following will occur:

1. You will be asked to sign or electronically sign an Informed Consent Form indicating your volunteer participation in the study.
2. You will be asked to complete one online demographic questionnaire with an approximate time commitment of 5 minutes (Part I).
3. If selected and you agree, you **may** be asked to complete a follow-up, recorded interview via Google Meet or Zoom with an approximate time commitment of 30 minutes (Part II).
4. If selected and you agree, you **may** be asked to electronically respond to reflective prompts and provide artifacts of your professional practices, with an approximate time commitment of 10-15 minutes in each month of September, October, and November 2023 for a total approximate time commitment of 30-45 minutes (Part III).
5. You may be asked to respond to an e-mail at the conclusion of either Part II or Part III of the study to confirm the analysis of collected data from the research process.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

1. Some of the discussion questions may make you uncomfortable or upset, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.
2. For this research project, the researcher is requesting demographic information. Due to the make-up of your organization's population, the combined answers to these questions may make an individual person identifiable. The researchers will make every effort to protect your confidentiality. However, if you are uncomfortable answering any of these questions, you may leave them blank.
3. Confidentiality: Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy, as is possible in online environments or through the use of cloud-based technology or AI software;

however, your records will be handled as confidentially as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study. All data from notes, surveys, and spreadsheets will be kept on a password protected computer or in password protected files. In compliance with the Federal-wide Assurance Code, data from this study will be kept for three years, after which all data from the study will be destroyed (45 CFR 46.117).

4. Only the primary researcher and the research supervisor will be privy to non-anonymized data from this study. As researchers, both parties are bound to keep data as secure and confidential as possible.

D. BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information you provide may help educators to better understand potential factors for influencing equitable learning environments for students of all cultural backgrounds.

E. PAYMENTS

There are no payments for participating in this study.

F. QUESTIONS

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact the principal investigator, Sarah Harrison, via e-mail at [E-MAIL REDACTED] or the faculty advisor, Dr. Heidi Curtis at [E-MAIL REDACTED]. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the NNU Institutional Review Board at IRB@nnu.edu.

Should you feel distressed due to participation in this study, you should contact your own health care provider.

G. CONSENT

You may print this consent at any time for your own records.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status as a student at Northwest Nazarene University.

Part I:

___ I affirm I am at least 18 years of age, and I agree to participate in the survey.

___ I do not wish to participate in the survey.

If selected for Part II:

___ I affirm I am at least 18 years of age, and if selected, I agree to participate in the recorded interview.

___ I do not wish to participate in the recorded interview.

If selected for Part III:

___ I affirm I am at least 18 years of age, and if selected, I agree to participate in the reflective prompts and collection of professional artifacts.

___ I do not wish to participate in the reflective writing prompts and collection of professional artifacts.

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Today's Date: _____

**THE NORTHWEST NAZARENE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW
COMMITTEE HAS REVIEWED THIS PROJECT FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN
PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH.**

Appendix H: Request for Site Permission

Dear _____,

My name is Sarah Harrison, and as part of my doctoral studies at Northwest Nazarene University, I am completing a research study regarding culturally informed third-space pedagogical practices and their impact on equitable learning environments for culturally marginalized student populations. For the study, I will be seeking input from educators who have experience working with culturally diverse student groups in U.S. K-12 settings.

The purpose of this correspondence is to formally request permission contact the members of _____ to recruit potential participants for this study to take place between July 2023 and April 2024. Volunteer participation would include the following:

1. Participants will be asked to complete one online demographic questionnaire with an approximate time commitment of 3-5 minutes (Part I).
2. If selected, participants **may** be asked to complete a follow-up, recorded interview via Google Meet or Zoom with an approximate time commitment of 20-30 minutes (Part II).
3. If selected, participants **may** be asked to respond to reflective prompts and to provide artifacts of their professional practices in September, October, and November, with an approximate time commitment of 10-15 minutes each month, for a total approximate time commitment of 30-45 minutes (Part III).

Individuals who volunteer to participate in the study would do so without interruption to their regular duties or responsibilities. If you are willing to permit me to contact the individuals under your leadership, an affirmative response to this e-mail will indicate permission.

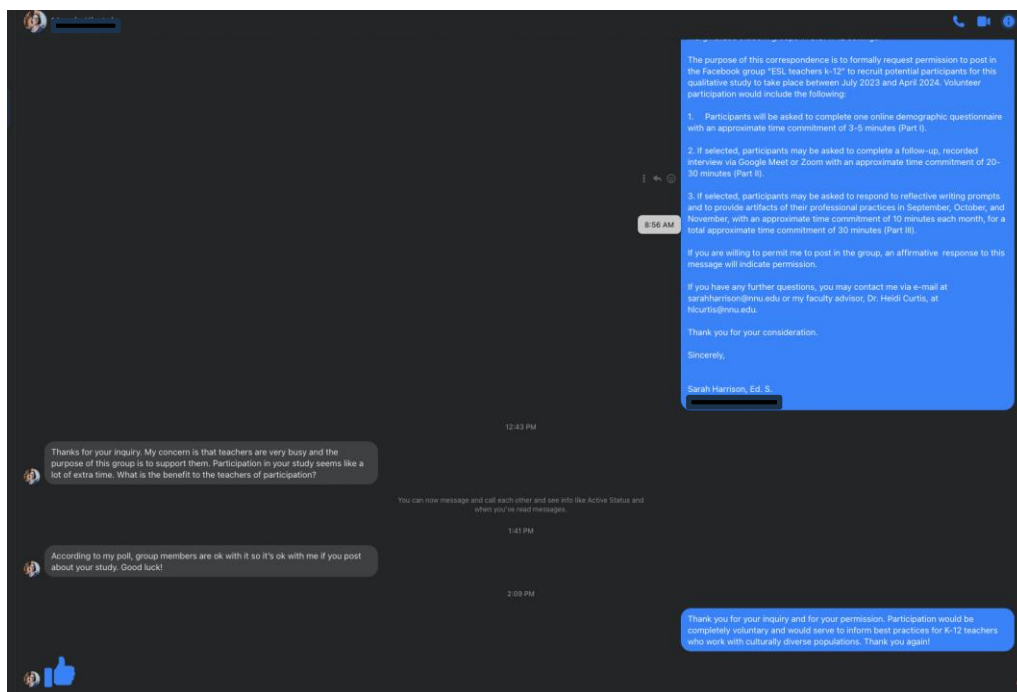
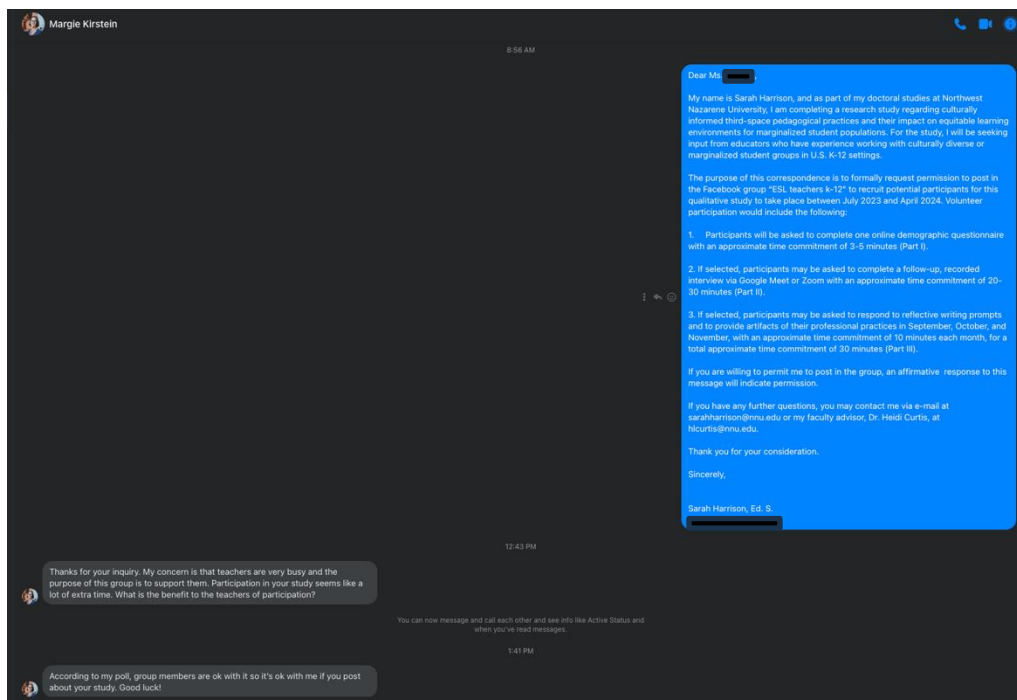
If you have any further questions, you may contact me via e-mail at [E-MAIL REDACTED] or my faculty advisor, Dr. Heidi Curtis, at [E-MAIL REDACTED].

Thank you for your consideration.

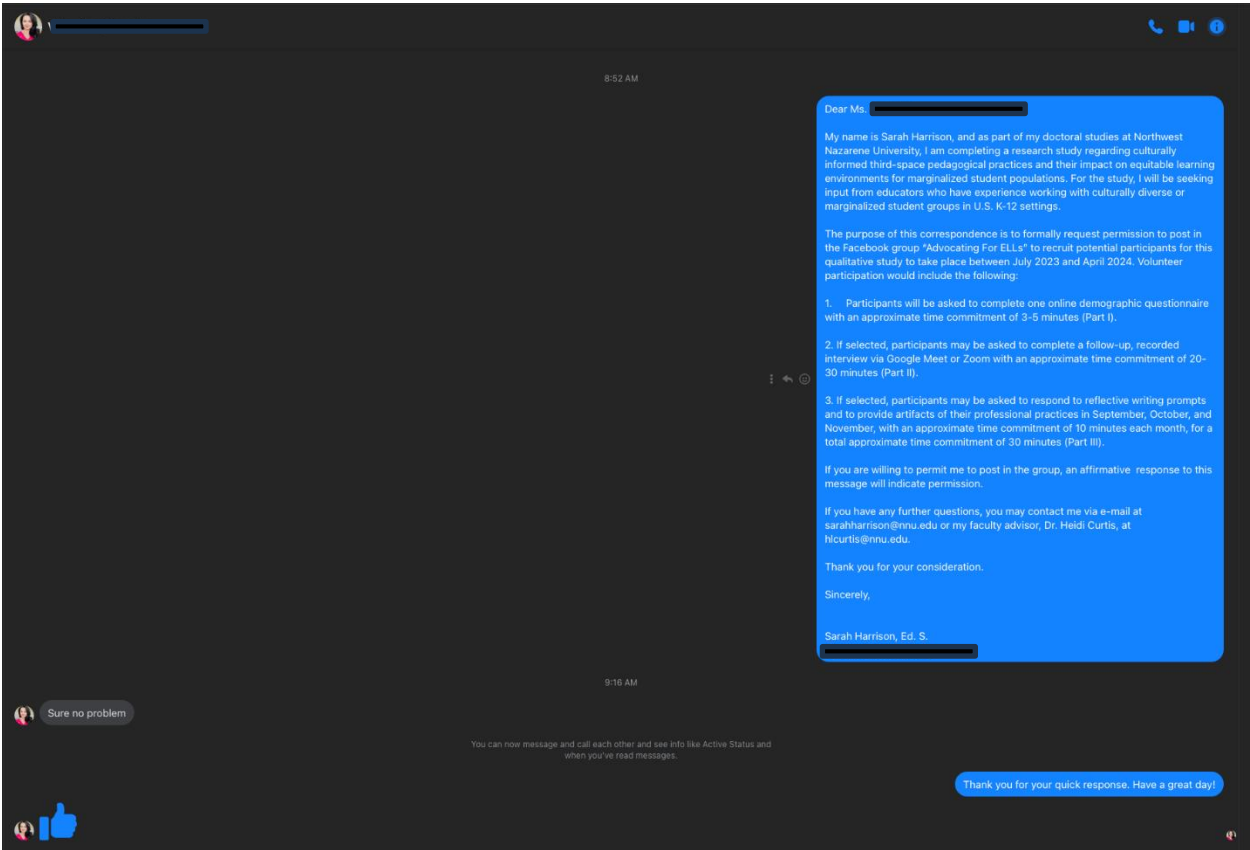
Sincerely,

Sarah Harrison, Ed. S.
[E-MAIL REDACTED]

Appendix I: Social Media Group 1 Site Permission Confirmation



Appendix J: Social Media Group 2 Site Permission Confirmation



Appendix K: Social Media Recruiting Post

Are you a current U.S.K-12 educator who works with culturally diverse students and is passionate about equitable educational opportunities for these learners?

Please consider participating in a doctoral research project regarding culturally informed third-space instructional practices and their impact on equitable learning environments for culturally diverse students.

Part I of the study consists of completing an online questionnaire regarding your experiences with culturally diverse students. The time commitment for this portion of the study is approximately 5 minutes.

If you are interested in participating in the survey portion of this research project, please click on the link below to begin the process. Further information about the study contents and informed consent information is available at the link.

[STUDY LINK REDACTED]

Additionally, selected participants who agree to Part II of the study may be asked to discuss their experiences in a one-on-one virtual interview with the researcher with a time commitment of approximately 30 minutes.

A select few participants may also be asked to participate in Part III of the study by providing reflections and example artifacts of professional practice during a personally convenient time commitment of 10-15 minutes in each of the months of September, October, and November.

If you have any questions regarding this study or the material, please contact me via e-mail at **[E-MAIL REDACTED]** or my supervisor, Dr. Heidi Curtis, at **[E-MAIL REDACTED]**.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Your participation will help to advance the cause of equitable education in diverse K-12 environments in the U.S.

Thank you,

Sarah Harrison, Ed. S.
Doctoral Student
Northwest Nazarene University
[E-MAIL REDACTED]

Appendix L: Snowball Sampling Recruiting E-mail

Dear Educator,

My name is Sarah Harrison, and I am a doctoral student at Northwest Nazarene University. I am conducting research on culturally informed third-space pedagogical practices and their impact on equitable learning environments for culturally diverse student populations. You are being contacted because of your experience with promoting equitable learning environments for culturally diverse K-12 student populations in the U.S.

I am writing to ask if you would consider taking part in my doctoral research study by completing an online questionnaire regarding your experiences with this student population. The time commitment for this portion of the research would be approximately 5 minutes.

[STUDY LINK REDACTED]

Additionally, if you are selected for and agree to Part II of the study, you may be asked to provide a follow-up virtual interview to discuss your experiences in a one-on-one setting with the researcher, with a time commitment of approximately 30 minutes.

A select few participants may also be asked to participate in Part III of the study by providing example artifacts of professional practice and by responding to brief reflective prompts during a 10–15-minute time commitment in September, October, and November.

If you are interested in participating in this research project, please click on the link below to begin the process. Further information about the study contents and informed consent information is available at the link.

If you have any questions regarding this study or the material, please contact me via e-mail at **[E-MAIL REDACTED]** or my supervisor, Dr. Heidi Curtis, at **[E-MAIL REDACTED]**.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Your participation will help to advance the cause of equitable education in diverse K-12 environments in the United States.

Thank you,

Sarah Harrison, Ed. S.
Doctoral Student
Northwest Nazarene University
[E-MAIL REDACTED]

Appendix M: Interview Scheduling

August 2023

Hello!

Thank you for completing the questionnaire for my doctoral research project regarding culturally informed third-space instructional practices and their impact on equitable learning environments for culturally diverse students in U.S. K-12 schools.

On the questionnaire, you indicated that you would be willing to participate in a one-on-one virtual interview with me to discuss your experiences with equitable educational practices for culturally diverse students, with a time commitment of approximately 30 minutes.

To schedule an interview at a time of your convenience, please visit the following link:

[LINK REDACTED]

If none of the available times work for you, please respond to this e-mail, so we can find a time that does. My goal is to complete these interviews before the end of August.

To prepare for the meeting, the following link includes the interview questions for you to review in order to make the best use of our time together:

[LINK REDACTED]

If you have any further questions, you may contact me or my research supervisor, Dr. Heidi Curtis, at **[E-MAIL REDACTED]**.

Thank you for your willingness to participate,

Sarah Harrison, Ed. S.
Doctoral Student
Northwest Nazarene University
[E-MAIL REDACTED]

Appendix N: Reminder E-mail for Part III Data Collection

Greetings!

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in my doctoral study regarding educational equity for culturally diverse students. I am grateful for the opportunity to study educators like you, who work each day to promote educational equity.

As we near the end of _____, please access our shared Google folder and respond to the three monthly reflection questions at your earliest convenience. These reflections should take no longer than 10-15 minutes of your time. You may type your responses or use the voice-typing feature, whichever is most convenient for you.

In the shared folder, please also upload any artifacts of professional practice that you believe might represent your experiences with the topics of this month's reflections.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. Thank you again for your cooperation.

Gratefully,

Sarah Harrison, Ed. S.
Doctoral Student
Northwest Nazarene University
[E-MAIL REDACTED]

Appendix O: Part II Member Checking E-mail

November 2023

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your recent interview participation in Part II of my study, “The Space Between: Examining Teachers’ Perspectives of Culturally Informed Third-Space Pedagogical Practices and Their Impact on Educational Equity for Marginalized Students.” Your interview responses indicated a strong alignment with the study’s purpose.

Please review the following summary of findings regarding U.S. K-12 teacher perspectives of equitable educational experiences for culturally diverse students that were generally identifiable across all participants’ responses. As a result of first-cycle transcript coding, interview responses showed a strong foundational connection to the categorical themes of Brown-Jeffy and Cooper’s (2011) Culturally Relevant Pedagogy framework, as detailed in Table 1 [LINK REDACTED]. The categorical themes were the following:

- Developmental Appropriateness
- Equity and Excellence
- Identity and Achievement
- Student-Teacher Relationships
- Teaching the Whole Child

During a second cycle of transcript coding, other themes were identifiable outside of the initial Culturally Relevant Pedagogy framework. As a result, the researcher developed additional codes and thematic categories to articulate participant experiences. The descriptive categories and codes are detailed in Table 2 [LINK REDACTED] and include the following:

- Obstacles to Educational Equity
 - Internal Obstacles
 - External Obstacles
- The Role of Advocacy & Support for Educational Equity
- Promoting Equity in a Third Space
 - Fostering Third Spaces
 - Experiencing Third Spaces

If you believe these findings do not accurately reflect your voice, input, or experiences shared during your interview, please respond to this e-mail with any questions or suggestions for modifications by Wednesday, November 15, 2023.

Thank you again for your support of this study. Your participation will help advance equitable educational environments for culturally diverse K-12 students in the U.S.

Sincerely,

Sarah Harrison, Ed. S.
 Doctoral Student
 Northwest Nazarene University
[E-MAIL REDACTED]

Appendix P: Part III Member Checking E-mail

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your recent participation in Part III of my study, “The Space Between: Examining Teachers’ Perspectives of Culturally Informed Third-Space Pedagogical Practices and Their Impact on Educational Equity for Marginalized Students.” The provided reflections and artifacts indicated a strong alignment with the study’s purpose.

Please review the following summary of findings that were generally identifiable across all participants’ responses from September, October, and November. Like Part II of the study, coded reflections and artifacts showed a strong foundational connection to the categorical themes of Brown-Jeffy and Cooper’s (2011) Culturally Relevant Pedagogy framework. The categorical themes were the following:

- Developmental Appropriateness
- Equity and Excellence
- Identity and Achievement
- Student-Teacher Relationships
- Teaching the Whole Child

Also like Part II, coded reflections and artifacts demonstrated a connection to the following researcher-developed thematic categories:

- Obstacles to Educational Equity
 - Internal Obstacles
 - External Obstacles
- The Role of Advocacy & Support for Educational Equity
- Promoting Equity in a Third Space
 - Fostering Third Spaces
 - Experiencing Third Spaces

In addition to the codes and categories listed above, the researcher also developed an additional code based on its recurrence within numerous participant reflections and artifacts in Part III:

- The Role of Advocacy & Support for Educational Equity: Translation

A detailed report of the frequency of codes present in the data is available for review in Table 1 [LINK REDACTED].

If you believe these findings do not accurately reflect your voice, input, or experiences shared through your reflections or artifacts of professional practice, please respond to this e-mail with any questions or suggestions for modifications by **Friday, December 15, 2023**.

Thank you again for your support of this study. It has been a distinct honor to study your experiences and best practices. May your efforts to advance equitable educational environments for culturally diverse K-12 students in the U.S. continue for years to come.

Sincerely,

Sarah Harrison, Ed. S.
Doctoral Student
Northwest Nazarene University
[E-MAIL REDACTED]

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