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TEACHER BELIEFS & IDENTITY: HOW CAN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
REDUCE DEFICIT THINKING ABOUT LATINX STUDENTS

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TEACHER BELIEFS & IDENTITY: HOW CAN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
REDUCE DEFICIT THINKING ABOUT LATINX STUDENTS

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## **DEDICATION**

A mis padres, que sin su gran amor y su ejemplo de dedicación y trabajo arduo no estaría aquí. To my sisters who are the most intelligent, talented, amazing mujeres I know whose support I have no matter what. To my husband, for your love and support always.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study is part of a growing body of research that suggests striving to be civic agents and continuously advancing social justice take a systematic approach to professional development (PD) to address the specific challenges teachers of Latinx students face. Despite interest from researchers on how teacher PD can address the challenges affecting the Latinx population needs, there has yet to be an agreement on the best PD approach (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Liou & Rojas, 2016; Sosa & Gomez, 2012). This intervention study focused on how the systematic implementation of participatory action research professional development (PARPD) influenced teachers' mindsets by allowing them to reflect on how their beliefs and actions impact their teaching practice. Focused interviews with self-identified feminist teachers provided insight into residual negative beliefs and biases that teachers may have toward their Latinx students. An action plan addressed the needs discovered during the investigation phase.

Findings demonstrated the awareness of the teachers of their need for PD that addresses their cultural competence, which in turn, as it develops, will impact their teaching effectiveness.

The findings in this study add to current research that suggests to districts and higher education the need for systematic implementation of PARPD to approach the challenges that teachers face when dealing with students from disenfranchised student groups such as Latinx students. The study highlights the importance of additional research on how teachers can be supported to further their understanding of PARPD and its application to classroom practice.

## Introduction

I arrived at the job fair a few minutes late and stood there with lines of teachers waiting for an interview with a suburban school in the Oklahoma City area. I did not want to be there, but it was part of the capstone of my last semester before I graduated and became a teacher. I got in the shortest line, went through my interview, answered questions, demonstrated my knowledge, and talked about my student teaching experiences. I repeated the same process three times, and by the end of the afternoon, I had two job offers to begin my career as an elementary classroom teacher.

Unfortunately, for the schools offering me the job, I did not believe I belonged to a suburban school district where the students' socioeconomic status is considered high and the racial makeup primarily white. My mind was made, and I visualized myself working as a teacher in an urban school in the Oklahoma City area. My reasoning was, as a Latinx educator, I would be the most fulfilled teaching students of color as the civic agent that my profession as an educator conceded. Moreover, it was my responsibility to ensure I was the voice of those who may not have found theirs yet. That was my calling, that was my choice, that was *mi deber*.

And so, I accepted a position teaching in a title school in the Oklahoma City district. I soon realized that my calling to become a teacher, to be a civic agent, and fight for social justice was not going to be easy. As a new teacher, I tried to learn from my colleagues, my administrator, the district's professional development opportunities, and the state department of education. I found myself feeling ill-equipped to deal with students of color who did not identify as Latinx. I was unable to make the connections.

Also, of all the training available to me, none seemed to support my goal of being a civic agent, and my colleagues, most of whom shared the same sentiment, could not provide me with the advice to help me advance social justice in my classroom.

Fast forward to today, as a professional development (PD) creator and provider, I still deal with some of the same challenges while assisting other teachers to become the civic agents they sought out to be when they began their careers. Is the solution something just as easy as attending a few PD sessions? Or, as some scholars suggest (Tanguay et al., 2018; Berg & Gleason, 2018), does it take a process to strive to be civic agents and continuously advance social justice? Can a systematic approach to PD help teachers promote equity in their classrooms and beyond?

As with my own experiences as a beginning teacher and my current grappling with teacher development, there is a body of scholarly literature that frames the importance of dealing with the racialized assumptions held by people and organizations within systemic schooling structures in the United States. What follows is a general introduction to the challenge this dissertation will address. I propose that PD can help teachers prevent deficit mindset and resolve “moral problems and ethical dilemmas” (Frick & Frick, 2010) presented in their careers.

In recent years, researchers and educational institutions are paying attention to Latinx education and how colleges and school districts can provide teacher PD to address this growing population's needs (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Liou & Rojas, 2016; Sosa & Gomez, 2012). One of the reasons for this new interest is that the Latinx population has reached the majority numbers in many districts (Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy [OICA], 2013). And it is the largest growing youth minority in the

United States, soon becoming more than half of the college-age population (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014).

One of the obstacles Latinx students face to reach educational achievement is the racist discourse that prevails in schools and among teachers and administrators (Liou & Rojas, 2016; Sosa & Gomez, 2012; Galvan & Parker, 2011). This discourse frames Latinx students' academic performance and ability as lower than their non-Latinx peers. Other assumptions related to this belief are that their families do not care about their children's education (Aleman, 2009; Stamps & Boson, 2006). These and different perceptions are pervasive and rooted in racism (either overt or unacknowledged). Most importantly, they show up in schools and from teachers' attitudes and beliefs of low expectations for their students (Aleman, Irizarri, Rodriguez & Monreal 2017, Perez Huber, 2011).

This type of discourse is also used to label the schools or areas where Latinx and other students of color live and attend school. For instance, the labels, urban schools, and urban areas are often portrayed in the media as schools riddled with gangs and violence where teachers come in to save the primarily black and brown children (Grant, 2002). In addition, preservice teachers' view of urban schools is mostly negative, such as lacking resources and experienced teachers (Aragon et al., 2014; Hampton et al., 2018; Saffold, 2008). They also perceive working in urban areas as a challenge as they believe they will be serving students who lack the skills to achieve academically (Hampton et al., 2008; Proctor et al., 2001). This label can be easily seen as unfavorable and is deeply rooted in racism and economic oppression (Matsko and Hammerness, 2014). This kind of discourse that characterizes children living in poverty as having cultural deficits not only

permeate the schools but goes well beyond them, and it is a national mindset (Jensen et al., 2018).

Some suggest solving low educational attainment in Latinx students can be done by observing what effective teachers of Latinx students do and believe and replicating it (Liou & Rojas, 2016; Sosa & Gomez, 2012). Liou and Rojas (2016) added that solutions can be found in placing emphasis on the study of how politically conscious teachers work with students and their impact on student educational attainment. Furthermore, she found that politically conscious teachers affect and impact the educational strategies they use to address Latinx students' academic needs.

Bustos Flores et al., (2011) case study about gateways of newly arrived Latinx populations also known as new growth communities, suggested that recruiting and hiring more Latinx teachers is the way to educational reform and Latinx educational attainment. Parting from the premise that ethnic minority teachers can serve as positive role models for minority students, the presence of Latinx and other minority teachers in schools increases student achievement for both white students and students of color (Brown, 2014; Plachowski, 2019; Sleeter & Milner, 2011). A "sound knowledge base about Latinx immigrants' needs... and the positioning of a new immigration gateway can be incorporated as a *point of pride* where New Growth Communities can develop strong cultural identities" (Stamps & Bohon, 2006, p. 1227). This knowledge about students is essential as many educational issues faced by Latinx students are very similar to problems other students of color face. Teachers have to be careful to understand that "many [issues] are unique to Latinx and underline the importance of taking Latinx

populations into consideration as a separate group and not just as part of a grouping of all minorities" (Scott, 2008, p. 138).

Teacher PD is central to support Latinx students' educational achievement, specifically, targeted development that grows an informed understanding of practice (Irrizarri & Raible, 2011). This means, in part, teacher PD must be developed in a way that is "more culturally responsive" (Irrizarri & Raible, 2011, p. 187). A process of knowledge-based development includes "living with and learning from Latinx families," (p.195) bringing *el barrio*, the community traditions, and nuances to their classroom to "connect emotionally with their students," (p.196) and valuing their knowledge or effort to learn their language and culture (Stamps & Bohon, 2006 & Auerbach, 2002). Schools should pursue those practices instead of "attempting to supplant the Latino culture with values more in line with the traditional education system" (Scott, 2008, p. 153).

Teachers must believe in the importance of "the storied pasts [students] bring with them to the classroom" (Lincoln, 1995 as cited by Auerbach, 1995, p. 1371), including their parents' experiences. Scott (2008) added that not only do Latinx families need to understand the system, "but teachers and administrators need to understand Latino families" to attain educational achievement and close the 'academic gap' (Scott, 2008, p. 152). The use of the phrase "academic gap" is problematic in that it refers (points) to persistent differences in standardized test scores which some scholars warn about its use as it is problematic as it points out the 'persistent differences' in standardized test scores, which some warn contain 'racial undercurrents associated with a 'standard' definition of success (Shukla et al., 2022). This 'standard' definition is often used based on white dominance views.

Studies found four themes that related to teacher's expectations for learning: (1) Academic rigor; (2) Empowering curriculum; (3) Social capital, and (4) Caring (Jensen et al., 2018; Liou & Rojas, 2016; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Mellom et al., 2018, Sosa & Gomez). Academic rigor and empowering curriculum were the most influential for effective teachers and the expectations for their students (Jensen et al., 2018; Liou & Rojas, 2016; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Mellom et al., 2018). Effective teachers require knowledge of the context where students learn and live to make the lessons more meaningful to their current situations (Mellom et al., 2018). They also require knowledge about their students' family habits, which can help develop classroom activities and strategies that better deliver a rigorous curriculum. The need for extensive training in all those areas is necessary to improve continually (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Jensen et al., 2018; Mellom et al., 2018). Other standards that aid in increased teachers' expectations include knowledge of their students' language and cultural and ethnic background (Irizarry & Raible, 2011). Teacher's view of their students' bilingualism as an asset is another example of teachers' knowledge building (Sosa & Gomez, 2012).

Extensive PD should be geared for the teacher to build their social capital and identity as a politically conscious educator (Matsko and Hammerness, 2014). Although many teacher preparation programs try to recruit teacher candidates who already exhibit investment in social justice and equity, PD is considered essential to make an "ideological shift" to build a stronger identity and culturally responsive pedagogical skills. A focus to build teacher capacity has proven beneficial, mainly when learning opportunities are provided over time (Mellom et al., 2018).



## **Problem Statement**

As one of the nearest states to the Mexican border besides Texas, Oklahoma has seen a considerable increase in Latinx students enrolled in the K-12 school systems. In Oklahoma, 68% of the children in immigrant families are from Latin America. Of those [immigrant families], 31% are more likely to live in poverty than native-born parent families (OICA, 2013). Latinx children are also one of the fastest-growing population segments, and they are mainly first- and second-generation immigrants (OICA, 2013).

However, there is limited research addressing the best approaches to serve Latinx K-12 students in the state. One challenge explicitly affecting K-12 students' success is the lack of teacher PD that includes English language development, awareness of linguistic services, connection to community groups, a commitment to advocacy, and other skills and resources (Potochnick, 2013).

In Oklahoma, like many other states in the U.S., the State Department of Education (OKSDE) requires teachers to complete a series of mandatory PD sessions ranging from alcohol awareness to autistic spectrum disorder to the Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (TLE) evaluation system. School districts must comply with these SDE teacher PD requirements each new school year (OKSDE, 2019). However, when it comes to PD intended to achieve equity in schools or create a culturally relevant pedagogy, the requirements are limited to the interpretation of each district leadership to determine what is needed and provided to their teachers. School districts and teachers are neither required to demonstrate how PD has affected their teaching or influenced their students' academic success, specifically that of students of color.

For educational reformers, emphasis has been placed on teacher PD to impact students' learning (Brown, 2021; Goodwin, 2021; Heckethorn et al., 2021; Lang et al., 2017). This emphasis is greater for marginalized student populations, where an 'achievement gap' between students of color and their white counterparts exists. Although a gap is factual, the 'achievement gap' has been more adequately defined and understood as an 'opportunity gap' (Berg & Gleason, 2018). Many scholars (Ladson-Billings, 2006., Milner, 2012., Quinn, 2020.,) suggest using the term 'opportunity gap' to avoid deficit thinking when referring to the performance of students of color. The term 'opportunity gap' it is intended to relate to and emphasize the differences in opportunities students have had throughout their educational history. "Compared with deficit models, the focus shifts from assigning responsibility for the gap from the individual to society" (Shukla et al., 2022). However, this term is also derived from a deficit model research framework.

More needs to be understood regarding teachers' mindset and awareness of their need to improve and learn new beliefs, dispositions, and skills. Unexamined mindsets can undoubtedly contribute to an opportunity gap. Attention needs to be given to PD to help construct the teachers' professional identity and adapt to a more culturally relevant pedagogy.

There is a widely affirmed notion that a good teacher is the most critical in-school factor that contributes to a student's academic success (Curby et al., 2009; Dreher & Singer, 1989; Lee & Yuen, 2019; Spilt et al., 2012;). However, when it comes to teacher PD, researchers have questioned the current definitions of good teaching and how it can be affected by PD. Some definitions include obtaining skills needed to achieve student

success in various settings (Jensen et al., 2018; Liou & Rojas, 2016), but good teaching continues to be defined in multiple ways (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005; Liou-Rojas, 2016; Jensen et al., 2018). On the other hand, researchers point out the need to develop specific PD programs based on teachers' unique contexts (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Dondero & Muller, 2012). Developers suggest teacher PD needs to be specific to students' cultural and socioeconomic characteristics (Berg, 2021; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Mayfield, 2021).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 76% of public-school teachers are college-educated, white females. This statistic implicates a cultural disconnect between the teachers and their Latinx students. However, strategies exist to remediate this dissonance, such as PD, that will better align teacher beliefs and mindsets to that of their Latinx students. Schools can benefit from their gendered workforce as women have been integral to social activism through different periods in history (Crocco et al., 1999, Massie & Ho, 2020). The profession's gendered nature implies its association with feminism, as the first members of the feminist movement were women, especially those who joined the education profession as teachers and scholars (Budgeon, 2001; Crocco et al., 1999; Massie & Ho, 2020; Ohito, 2019). Women joined the movement for independence from traditional roles (Ohito, 2019, Massie & Ho, 2020); feminism provides an emancipatory discourse that emphasizes universal rights to equality (Budgeon, 2001). Through historical evidence, female educators have shown that teaching is an avenue to feminist agency (Crocco et al. 1999). Feminism has been a resistance movement for social justice “which valorizes spiritual practice” (hooks, 2000,

p.105). Frick et al., (2019) suggested that privilege and a realization of equity require a spiritual response from educational leaders to realize the goals of a democratic school.

Feminist thought permeates the news, social media, and everyday lives. Issues of race and equity have garnered the headlines for most of the last decade. They impact national narratives, including the #metoo and Black Lives Matter movements founded by women activists invested in the fight for racial justice (Jackson, 2016). Women's voices have also informed the knowledge gleaned from labors and inquiries from movements like *Undocumented-Unafraid* and *#HomeIsHere* which are more significant for Latinx students (Ohito, 2019).

Feminist teachers can begin asking themselves what are they fighting for? And what are the outcomes that are expected? To redefine questions that are being asked (Jackson, 2016). Although some women may not identify as feminists, they share acceptance of the basic tenets of feminist ideology (Budgeon, 2001; Meijs et al., 2017). Teachers may not call themselves feminist in part because they believe that gender equality has already been accomplished (Robnett et al., 2012); they may or may not have exposure to positive roles of feminist models (Meijs et al., 2017). Other factors include generational differences between the initial feminist wave and the current view of feminism (Budgeon, 2001). However, teachers' acceptance of feminist tenets and schools' long tradition of being a democratic institution can be the medium for which our country maintains its democracy through its teachers acting upon their inherent role as civil agents (Mirra & Morrell, 2011, Moore, 2008).

Research indicated that teachers of color have an increased awareness of the racial and educational inequities in schools and therefore choose to be civic agents and fight

against the inequalities their students of color suffer from the system (Love, 2017; Neal et al., 2018; Plachowski, 2019; Sleeter & Milner, 2011). Others suggest that many teachers choose the profession of education because they feel a calling or are inclined to fight for social justice and be civic agents as part of their actual work as educators (Mirra & Morrel, 2011; Moore, 2008; Troutman & Jimenez, 2016). One could assume if the school workforce is comprised of educators who at a minimum share acceptance of feminism as a movement for social justice (hooks, 2000) or are sensitized to issues of equity and equality, they could benefit from PD aimed to curtail any privately held deficit thinking (either conscious or unconscious) that they may have of their Latinx students.

Deficit thinking is characterized by preconceived ideas and perceptions of the ability of students of color to learn and be successful (Liou & Rojas, 2016; Mellom et al., 2018). Teachers who consider themselves civic agents, activists, and educational reformers (Burns, 2020) can benefit from a systematic approach to self-examination. Teachers need to learn to be critical of mindsets that would limit their students' opportunities; in essence, "to become more aware of school's socio-historical, economic, and cultural assumptions and how these affect the practice of schooling" (Frick et al., 2019, p. 552). A change could happen due to their newly acquired awareness of their perceptions about their students. School districts could support their teachers to achieve the fully democratic purposes of schools. In the form of PD, this support could help advance teachers' social justice identity, even beyond their acknowledged feminist tendencies (Boylan & Wolsey, 2015).

Educational institutions must be aware that teachers can suffer from what, Cherry-McDaniel (2019) calls "settler teacher syndrome" (p. 241) due to many surrounding

“traps” that the education system plants in their way and that help perpetuate social injustice (Frick et al., 2019). These systemic traps include robotically following the curriculum, discipline rules, peer pressure, and placing considerable concern on job security, among other snares. Educational leaders, including teachers, need to examine “invisible privilege” in all the ways it presents to ensure “the active push towards edifying community, building equity, or the realization of deep democracy in schooling” (Frick et al., 2019, p. 553). This dissertation proposes such an examination can be facilitated by providing teachers with participatory action professional development (PARPD). To give them analytical and dynamic tools to develop “spiritual awakening that can hopefully lead to critical awareness, [and] professional and personal insight” (Frick et al., 2019, p. 553) that will disrupt deficit thinking toward their Latinx students.

I will never forget one of the first occasions I held parent-teacher conferences. While meeting with a parent and brainstorming about how she could help her student increase her reading skills at home, I suggested reading to her student in the language she felt more comfortable, Spanish in this case. The parent seemed surprised at my recommendation. She proceeded to describe an earlier conference with a younger child’s teacher, a bilingual Latina. She had discouraged her from reading or even speaking in Spanish at home, implying that it would confuse her child. I proceeded to assure her that that would not be the case and supported my recommendation with a couple of articles on language development. Next, I visited with my colleague to understand why she had discouraged the parent from speaking in Spanish to her children. If possible, I wanted to dispel any misconceptions she may have about bilingualism and its impact on academic achievement. This type of belief held by teachers that the practice of bilingualism is a

hindrance rather than recognizing the skills and knowledge it brings to the classroom must be scrutinized. Problematizing and effectively addressing beliefs such as this will enable teachers to better support their students.

Deficit thinking is a characteristic that has been found in many studies that evaluate a teacher's effectiveness and capacity to work with Latinx and other students of color. Although some teacher preparation programs have identified that most teacher candidates come with a certain level of deficit ideology, some programs have found it helpful to allow teacher candidates to bring those out to light. Once they are aware of their negative perceptions, teacher candidates are provided with opportunities to analyze and change those perceptions (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014).

Matusov and Smith (2005) found in their study that preservice teachers' deficit perception went so far as to assume "realities" of their students that did not exist. Teachers continued to hold erroneous ideas about the students they served even though they were unable to corroborate their assumptions when asked. Matusov & Smith (2005) observed that their preservice teachers worked with "imaginary children" because the students' realities compared to their perceptions did not match at all.

Liou and Rojas (2016) defined expectation as ideas corresponding to the beliefs that educators have about their students. Positive expectation supports the idea that students are intelligent, capable of learning, and can be challenged regardless of their race. Teachers who take the opportunity to understand and know their students deeply through creating personal relationships demonstrates high expectations. And developing learning environments in which they can strive and grow demonstrates their positive outlooks. Beliefs, expectation, thinking, and assumption influences pedagogy. The Liou

and Rojas (2016) study found that teachers' expectations of students play an essential role in improving the school. When positive expectations inform teachers' decisions about what and how to teach, school improvement follows. This definition of expectation is aligned with the idea of equity of education. If teachers have low expectations and lack political consciousness, they most likely hold beliefs that negatively affect their students based on their background, home language, and skin color (Liou & Rojas, 2016).

By studying race and equity issues, we can provide teachers with opportunities for PD that would allow them to question their beliefs while exploring the systems of oppression their Latinx students face. Teachers can then pursue eliminating systems of oppression and move equity forward at their schools. Additionally, local education agencies (LEAs) and their administrators need to determine the best ways to provide and deliver professional learning to teachers so they can provide robust learning opportunities to all students.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to understand if PARPD influences mitigating deficit thinking in teachers who self-identify as feminists and whether it influences those who do not identify as feminist in a similar or different way.

PARPD is defined as an “epistemological stance not framed by a concrete set of methods and processes but rather engaged in a pluralistic orientation of ideals and change” (Hales, 2016, p. 10). In other words, PARPD refers to the actions that people, in this case, teachers, might take themselves to improve the conditions of their lives. For this study, teachers will take actions to analyze and question their identities and beliefs and, as a result of their analysis, make decisions and act towards preventing a deficit mindset and how it adversely affects learning and social development among their Latinx students.



Awareness and participation in deep feminist thought through PD may allow teachers to confront unproblematized deficit beliefs about their Latinx students.

The confidence placed in professional learning is pervasive throughout the education sector (Brock et al., 2014; Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010; Lang et al., 2017; Roebush et al., 2009). Although the format in which PD is delivered to teachers varies from district to district, PD is provided for teachers to develop their teaching skills. However, PD is rarely used to provide teachers with the support that involves a deep inspection into their assumptions, values, beliefs, and dispositions toward deficit mindset. PD which focuses on technical skill for specific practice domains necessary to manage a classroom rather than exploring value propositions perpetuates deficit thinking.

For this dissertation, I propose that PD could disrupt teachers' deficit mindset by involving a value proposition. High quality PD that provides teachers with learning opportunities including critical thinking tied to their own emotional life and a range of dispositions that stand behind anything they have learned technically, is worthy of a formal investigation. Through this study, I will seek to answer the following questions:

1. Does PARPD help to change/reduce a teacher's deficit mindset?
2. How does targeted PD address a residual deficit mindset of feminist teachers who work with Latinx students?
3. Is PARPD a viable approach to change/reduce biased beliefs in teachers?

## **Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

Teacher PD emphasizing student learning, particularly of marginalized student population, evolved from the existing achievement gap between students of color and their white counterparts (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development [ASCD], 2021; Garcia et al., 2020; Berg, 2021; Knight, 2021; Snyder, 2019; Supovitz & Turner, 2000). The term achievement gap, which “has long dominated mainstream conversations about race and education” (Quinn, 2020), has been crucial in serving as a springboard for changes in educational policy including how teacher PD is viewed and designed (R.L.Carey as cited in Shukla et al. 2022). However, the same discourse feeds into the racist discourse that stereotypes Latinx students as “less intellectually capable” than their White peers (Quinn, 2020).

Researchers have questioned the current definitions of good teaching, including obtaining the skills needed to achieve student success in various settings (Jensen et al., 2018; Liou & Rojas, 2016). Deficit thinking is a characteristic that has been found in studies that evaluate a teacher's effectiveness and capacity to work with Latinx and other students of color. Deficit thinking is defined as the internalized belief that one is unable to learn and be successful; this type of thinking is disproportionately found in students of color (Liou & Rojas, 2016; Mellom et al., 2018). These negative views have existed historically and, until recently, have been "supported by law" (Nelson & Guerra, 2014, p. 70). By studying these issues, we can provide teachers with meaningful PD to increase awareness of structural biases and develop insight to combat them.

Recent research has explored ways to eliminate deficit thinking in teachers (Berg & Gleason, 2018; Kose & Lim, 2010; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014), hence preparing educators to be culturally responsive and advance social justice through teaching and relationship-building. Three categories of themes emerge from the literature, denoted by Berg and Gleason (2018): 1) beliefs, 2) actions, and 3) systems. They asserted all three as a set of elements and steps that have to be analyzed and questioned throughout the teachers' PD process. Universities and K12 districts bear the responsibility to prepare teachers to provide an equitable education to all students; therefore, it is essential to determine the best ways for local education agencies, districts, and administrators to deliver and provide PD to teachers.

Studies have not examined the effects of PD aimed at eliminating deficit thinking by scrutinizing each step of the PD process using a CRF lens to identify and prevent a repackaging of racism. Crenshaw (1998) points out by example how antidiscrimination law successfully eliminated “symbolic manifestations of racial oppression but has allowed the perpetuation of material subordination of Blacks” (1331). Educational institutions must join the “societal commitment to the eradication of the substantive conditions of black” and brown submission. (Crenshaw, 1998, p. 1336). Throughout this literature review I will point out the importance of using CRF as a theoretical framework that will help understand why, even after much research about how to eliminate deficit thinking, we still see large gaps when it comes to Latinx students’ educational achievement, ostensibly contributed to by the biases held by teachers. CRF provides an intersectional framework and “suggests ways in which political and representational

practices are connected to race and gender [and how they may] interrelate.” (Crenshaw, 1997, p. 247).

### **Beliefs and Identity**

Studies agreed that the first step in eliminating a deficit mindset is for the teacher to evaluate their beliefs (Berg & Gleason, 2018; Kose & Lim, 2010; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014). This evaluation needs to question how beliefs affect building their professional and personal identity. Most argued that the assumptions that shape a teacher's actions will never be an effective way to advance equity without first helping the teacher increase awareness (Berg & Gleason, 2018; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Of particular importance to this study is that PD must provide teachers with the knowledge to question their “white imagination, the experiential knowledge white teachers draw from to understand race, racism and whiteness” (Matias et al., 2014). Pollock et al., (2016) found that teachers reacted to race related PD with frustration, and they in turn exaggerated or, caricatured, in the authors words, the requests as unrealistic and as a superhuman effort. PD must address teachers’ white imagination, to help them recognize their thinking as partial to dominant racial ideologies (Matias et al., 2014). It must provide a process to identify teachers’ “caricatured” reactions which separate education from diversity work. This inquiry will then allow educators to stop normalizing whiteness to invisibility, with dispositions such as color blind ideology and avoid resisting learning about race (Matias et al., 2014)

Teachers possess negative beliefs about their students and their families (Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Berg and Gleason (2018) define beliefs as those deep-rooted views teachers possess and as such are difficult to change. Teachers lean into making decisions

based on views they believe are right (Berg & Gleason, 2018). Decisions based on deep-rooted beliefs make people feel safe. If equity is to be reached in education, it is important to question those beliefs as they are the ones that uphold systems of oppression. Beliefs are ingrained in our systems and sometimes we act upon them without being aware of them. Teachers' commitment to move equity forward should be paired with the promise of questioning those beliefs and changing their actions. As Berg and Gleason (2018) found, teachers' reflection of their biases will be reflected in their efforts.

Some teacher preparation programs have identified that most teacher candidates come with a certain level of deficit ideology (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Sleeter, 2017). However, only a few have found it helpful to allow teacher candidates to examine those beliefs to change those perceptions (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014). Other programs have not found a significant difference in the improvement of teaching skills either. Most of the participants in these types of programs are white, middle-class, female teachers working with students of color (Sleeter, 2017).

Matusov and Smith (2007) found that pre-service teachers' deficit perception went so far as to assume 'realities' of their students that did not exist. When teachers had an opportunity of corroborating assumptions, they were unable to do it. Without the necessary intervention and support to analyze assumptions, pre-service teachers will continue to uphold the same erroneous ideas of the students they serve. Matusov and Smith (2007) observed that their pre-service teachers worked with "imaginary children" because the students' realities compared with pre-service teachers' perceptions did not match at all. Nelson & Guerra (2014) noted that although many require a multicultural

course, many pre-service teacher preparation programs do not adequately address deficit beliefs.

Liou and Rojas (2016) define expectation as the belief that educators have that their students are intelligent and capable of learning and can be challenged regardless of their race. Not only a commitment to self-examination, unlearning, and relearning on a personal and professional level but also a commitment to ensure the belief is reflected in the steps the teacher takes to understand and know their students deeply by creating personal relationships. The study demonstrated that teachers' expectations of students and themselves play an essential role in improving the students' outcomes and school culture. Their definition of expectation, they found, aligns with the idea of equity of education. If teachers believe that their Latinx students have the same capacity for learning as their white peers, it follows that these students should be awarded the same opportunities for quality education. (Liu & Rojas, 2016).

PD facilitators should offer extensive learning opportunities to build teachers' social capital and a politically conscious educator identity (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014). Although teacher preparation programs recruit teacher candidates who exhibit investment in social justice and equity, substantive education is essential to make an "ideological shift" that can build a stronger identity and promote culturally responsive pedagogical skills. A focus on building teacher capacity has proven beneficial primarily when provided over time (Mellom et al., 2018). If we ignore feminist teachers' characteristics, such as holding positive beliefs and attitudes toward their students, those who do not have political consciousness most likely hold beliefs that translate into

attitudes that negatively affect their students based on their background, home language, and skin color. (Liou & Rojas, 2016).

Sosa and Gomez's (2012) empirical study on teacher PD, suggests time spent with students impacted teacher's capacity to relate to students. Spending time with students outside of the classroom allows teachers to question, to examine, and to modify previous beliefs leading to improved educational opportunities for students (Sosa & Gomez, 2012). Fernandez (2019) suggested that teachers must develop a critical identity to decolonize systems of oppression by analyzing them, including dimensions of marginalization related to race and power. Using indigenous epistemologies as a framework allows teachers to recognize other ways of knowing (Fernandez, 2019). Identifying other ways of knowledge may not be as difficult as it seems; most teachers come with a "general awareness of culture" (Nelson & Guerra, 2014, p. 87). Teachers can build on that knowledge of the students' culture and understand its value and the purpose it serves to their students' academic development.

Approaches to achieving equity in U.S. schools exist including policy making, access to quality educational resources, and culture conscious teachers who are key to delivery of equitable education to all (Berg & Gleason, 2018). By carefully analyzing and understanding their students' previous performance and outcomes, educators can fulfill their task of meeting their students where they are and moving them forward. With this information, they can make educational decisions on how to provide their students with the best opportunities. Responsible teachers take a continuous strategic look into their beliefs and make adjustments based on their knowledge of their students (Berg & Gleason, 2018).

Kayi-Aydar (2019) presented a case study of a language teacher and the development of her professional identity. She described how the teacher's identity was built while navigating higher education as a scholar and her work as a teacher in the U.S. The teacher, a Mexican immigrant, shared how her experiences, first as an undergraduate and then as a graduate student at a U.S. institution, helped shape her professional teacher identity. Kayi-Aydar (2019) suggested that, even though her participant's experiences were negative and life-defining, they also helped her develop a professional identity as a teacher that allowed her to view her students' struggles as her own. In addition, her personal experience motivated her to become a more active participant in dismantling the systems of oppression in the school, so her students would not have to experience the same oppression and self-doubt that she experienced. Teacher identities are formed in part by the systems they navigate, such as employment requirements, curriculum, peer relationships, standardized testing, among others. Teachers deal with those systems either by complying with them or deconstructing them to match their own beliefs (Kayi-Aydar, 2019).

One approach to PD explicitly designed to address teachers' challenges includes three-components: (1) awareness of biases; (2) actions; and (3) alignment of goals (Tanguay et al., 2018). The model aims to prepare teachers to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students, and it focuses on the needs of teacher educators working in teacher preparation programs. Although the approach seems to focus on how teachers of English Language Learners in particular would benefit, it also alludes to other aspects of culture such as race and gender. These aspects individually or in some combination are present in every classroom, and all teachers can benefit from acquiring a deep cultural



awareness of their students and themselves. Teachers relate their beliefs to their understanding of their own biases, actions, and the systems in which they work (Tanguay et al., 2018). If they align their program goals with their newly explored beliefs and actions, they can become culturally responsive (Berg & Gleason, 2018).

Studies found similar results about the effectiveness of development programs designed to question teacher's beliefs, even though these studies were conducted outside the United States (see Hajissoteriou et al., 2019; Vass et al., 2019). These studies focused on particular student populations like indigenous students in Australia or middle east refugees in Greece. Their conclusions did not vary much from situations in schools in the United States.

Hajissoteriou et al. (2019), in their study involving Greek teachers, suggested that the first step to transforming their teachers' approach to develop intercultural competence was to be aware of their "self". Teachers have to analyze and question the validity of their own identities as formed by biases and stereotypes. The analysis of self, in turn, can allow teachers to challenge the actions they take to educate their students (Hajissoteriou et al., 2019). In addition, the researchers concluded that teacher reflection, on their actions, allowed them to question the validity of their beliefs and, as a result, apply modifications to their curriculum and practice based on their students' responses and knowledge.

Vass et al. (2019) declared that teachers' beliefs and attitudes are the most crucial area that will impact their students' learning. They believe that addressing deficit thinking with PD experiences will positively impact those areas throughout a teacher's career. As a result, it will also affect student engagement and academic success. In Vass et al. (2019),

a systematic review of research carried out in Australia directly examined teacher PD and its impact on teacher practice when teaching indigenous students. They found that involving teachers as researchers allowed them to transform their beliefs and instructional approaches while reflecting on their practice. Colbert et al. (2010) found similar results in their study involving faculty at teacher preparation colleges. They agreed that faculty must examine their own beliefs, perceptions, and their students' values to develop culturally responsive teaching practices.

Although every study analyzed teachers' beliefs and identities and relationships to practice, some studies suggested that teachers examine their beliefs with a facilitator or coach's aid for best results. Others suggested a more collaborative approach to analyzing views, including participatory action research as their framework. Additional studies proposed that teachers should make their analysis as a personal self-reflection. On the other hand, some researchers failed to address how the study and reflection of preconceived ideas, biases, and beliefs should be approached.

Even more important, implementing the CRF tenets with teacher PD can ensure that teachers learn how their "white racial identity afford them privileges and supports their whiteness" so they can understand the interconnectedness of racialization of whites to that of their Latinx students as "white imagination reinforces a liberal narrative that says knowing one is white and acknowledging white privilege is enough to be anti-racist and socially just." (Matias et al., 2014, p. 298).

### **Systems**

Berg and Gleason (2018) defined systems as "made up of interconnected beliefs, practices, people, organizations, policies, and structures" (p.25). Systems often feel like

they limit teachers' beliefs and goals of advancing equity. However, they suggest that beliefs have shaped the systems over time, so the view that teachers cannot change those oppressive systems is not accurate. Teachers who believe in having the ability to counter-attack the structures and policies can eventually modify those systems and advance equity (Berg & Gleason, 2018). Teachers can advance equity by analyzing and reinventing their beliefs and actions.

In their study, Pollock et al., (2016) found that preservice teachers pushed back against race-related PD by caricaturing or exaggerating the request made by the course work to engage in the examinations of their beliefs and life experiences. The researchers identified frustration in pre-service teachers through reading their journals and observing their reactions when requested to complete diversity work. To this Pollock et al., (2016) suggested to include an examination of those caricatures as part of the process of PD to create awareness from the teacher candidates and in turn make it part of their development process.

In teacher preparation programs, like at Chicago UTEP, teacher candidates must examine structures that perpetuate systems of privilege and oppression. Through interviews, the researchers discovered that teacher candidates felt better prepared to be able to fight those systems after having the opportunity to examine such structures (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014).

Fernandez (2019) found PD that only addressed the ethnic studies content area is not sufficient for teachers to acquire the skills to question the systems of oppression that they face. This finding is more evident when teachers are faced with issues of race. Suppose PD is approached with a critical lens where the focus is on Freire's (1982)

counter approach to the banking methods of teaching where the teacher is the only one depositing knowledge in the students' knowledge bank. Banking methods of teaching assume that the student does not have anything of value to contribute to their own education (Freire, 1982). If instead teachers learn to consider their students as valuable contributors and to involve them in the process of learning, then PD can result in a social justice approach (Fernandez, 2019).

Additionally, Fernandez (2019) found that it is not sufficient to approach PD with a social justice focus. It is also necessary to counter deficit thinking so teachers' efforts to disrupt coloniality can be helpful. Effectiveness to disrupt coloniality relies not only on providing teachers with tools to fight it but also the ability to identify dehumanizing practices in curriculum development, language programs, and other elements that make up the educational systems. Berg and Gleason (2018) suggested that teachers should invest in PD that addresses issues of race to reach equity. Such PD will provide opportunities to identify and analyze the systems that create educational inequities for some and to be able to transform them.

Hajissoteriou et al. (2019) designed PD for cultural competence and described how it looked in practice. They pointed out that since schools have a different context and unique culture, designing and delivering PD must match those two areas, cultural competence and its practice. Nelson and Garcia (2014) found that leadership in schools hold deficit beliefs; however even when administrators supported their teachers in challenging deficit thinking, they are 'ill-equipped' or unwilling to do so.

Monocultural teachers face difficulties when teaching students that do not belong to the mainstream culture and their own culture (Conaway et al., 2007; Hasslen &

Bacharach, 2007; Lee, 2004; Pohan & Adams, 2007). Some colleges, including Midwestern University, include programs to prepare future teachers to be multiculturally competent (Hasslen & Bacharach, 2007). Teachers with multicultural competence can build a climate of mutual respect where language, culture, and academics are always considered (Hasslen & Bacharach, 2007).

Teachers with multicultural competence require knowledge of the context where students learn and live to make the lessons more meaningful to their current situations (Mellom et al., 2018). They also require knowledge about their family habits, which can help develop classroom activities and strategies that better deliver a rigorous curriculum. Research on PD agreed that there is a need to create specific training and programs based on the students' context and suggest it needs to be specific to their cultural and socioeconomic characteristics (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Mellom et al., 2018).

Studies were specific about systems of oppression such as curriculum and other school-related policies and oppressive regulations for students of color (Conaway et al., 2007; Hasslen & Bacharach, 2007; Lee, 2004; Pohan & Adams, 2007). Others simply mentioned some areas that the educators need to evaluate as possible systems that contribute to oppressive practices, such as those existing in their communities (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Mellom et al., 2018). Most seem to suggest that, for the most part, educators are aware of the systems that perpetuate racism and other oppression as institutional barriers that students of color face (Conaway et al., 2007; Hasslen & Bacharach, 2007; Lee, 2004; Pohan & Adams, 2007). Crenshaw's (1991) critique makes an important point about systems such as antidiscrimination rhetoric. She pinpoints the importance of "analyzing racism as an ideological pillar upholding American society" (p.

1356). This critical analysis of the hegemonic role of racism must be considered when designing PD for teachers, and this design must include what Latinx students believe is oppressive in the educational systems they navigate as well as other institutions that support, knowingly or unwittingly, racist ideology.

### **Institutional Barriers**

Many of the country's mandates and policies affect Latinx students' educational attainment, although these issues are not new (Aleman, 2009; Casellas & Shelly, 2012; MacDonald & Carrillo, 2008; San Miguel, 2005). "Attempts over the last 200 years to exterminate, push back (over the Rio Grande), disenfranchise, disposes, and dehumanize Latinos have proven futile" (MacDonald, & Carrillo, 2008, p. 9). An example on how policy has proven problematic for Latinx students' educational attainment was the No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB; Casellas & Shelly, 2012). NCLB included discriminatory and burdensome requirements in Title I and Title III and the consolidation and elimination of numerous programs that provided schools' resources. NCLB was opposed by the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (Casellas & Shelly, 2012).

Torre (2008) noted that "the research confirmed what others have found: a series of well-established policies and practices assure and deepen the 'gap'. Referring to an 'educational gap', namely achievement or opportunity gap, reinforces a deficit model connecting learning to student deficiencies there by perpetuating systemic discrimination which may be the reason why such mandates continue to exacerbate the problem instead of finding a solution (Quinn, 2020; Shukla et al.,2022). The more separate America's schools are racially and economically, the more stratified they become in achievement" (Torre, 2008, p. 109). These attempts are still very present and thriving in schools that

serve Latinx students. Nieto (1998) described Latinx students from Puerto Rico whose experiences included teachers' low expectations, lack of teacher preparation, victimization, racism against them, and limited resources. More recently, Velazquez (2017) describes current situations in schools and how they can be traced to "the historical violence and trauma, which have been present in the lives of Latina/o children for generations" (Velazquez, 2017, p. 2). Other studies explored how these attempts affect the degree and quality of education that Latinx students receive (Auerbach, 2002; Villenas, 2007). Villenas (2007) described the current situation as "a politically volatile climate around immigration" (p. 421) and suggested an alliance between different groups and political orientation to find common ground and find solutions to an already decaying educational system (Villenas, 2007). This type of violent rhetoric, such as the brown invasion, the border crisis surge, and descriptions of Mexicans as criminals, has continued and exponentially increased in the last five years as a recourse of political gain.

One study found that families in an area of Chicago were aware of their students' dire situation (Auerbach, 2002). They found the educational system "bewildering, frustrating, and unjust, which some of them recognized affected them collectively" (Auerbach, 2002, p. 1382). Many of the stories collected reflected "the power struggles over students' educational fates that are especially threatening- and alarmingly commonplace- for families of color" (Auerbach 2002, p. 1381). Parents of students of color related encounters with school staff who used their perceptions of the "differences in cultural capital" (Auerbach, 2002, p. 1381) to deny their students of educational opportunity. Jefferies (2014) described a similar picture in his article, highlighting the "political processes and the creation of discourses by which low-wage migrants have

been historically criminalized." (p. 65) He further pointed out that there have been many "restrictive" immigration policies that specifically target Latinx students over the last several decades (Jefferies, 2014).

Crenshaw (2012) agrees with others that engaging in rights discourse has helped to deradicalize and co-opt the challenge of utilizing rights rhetoric to gain rights. She also acknowledges that Blacks and other minorities have been viewed as 'other' with limited options to be heard in their demands of equity and inclusion. However, she offers a solution on how to chip away at racial domination and class hierarchy by uncovering its oppositional dynamic.

Cooper (1988) warned that race would be a conflict in years to come. Another example of this conflict in our public schools, is its view of intelligence. In schools, intelligence is viewed as white property, and measured with standardized tests. Students who do not perform well on these test and other measures of intelligence are deemed as different, as outsiders. (Garland-Thompson, 2011; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011).

Teachers need to question and resist the pervasive ideas deriving from the whiteness ideology such as "smartness" as white property (Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). Teachers need to be conscious that the notion of intelligence is another false abstraction and is measured as the perception of who is counting (Leonardo & Broderick, 2011).

When working with Latinx students in which diversity includes race, gender, language proficiency, and ability, feminist teachers need to be aware of their biases based on the systems they navigate. Race is not the only equity issue in public schools; other ways of othering people include gender, disability, gender identity and intelligence. All of these constructs play a role in how education is imparted and received. They also play



a role in access to educational opportunities which are defined based on their intersections.

PD must address Latinx students converging characteristics besides race and ethnicity so they do not fall into the void of one or the other because “when one discourse fails to acknowledge the significance of the other, the power relations that each attempt to challenge are strengthened” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1282) This is where CRF will allow us to identify PD that leads teachers to address the intersectionalities of Latinx students such as race and gender, cultural background, home language, skin color (Liu & Rojas, 2016; Tanguay et al., 2018), and intelligence (Garland-Thompson, 2011; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011).

Ellsworth (1992) challenged educators to find teaching methods that are not assimilationists, to stop considering others' differences as abhorrent or unfitting. Ellsworth (1992) proposed for teachers to commit "to the long-term effort to unlearn racism and to find ways of interrupting it and other oppressive formations as a white woman/professor"(p. 5). Ellsworth (1992) asked educators to "translate those unlearnings and commitments into the form and content of courses and (her) own teaching practices." (p. 5-6). Well-developed PD for feminist teachers can help eliminate the residual structural beliefs that limit their capacity to serve their Latinx students.

First, teachers must stop seeing children as "the property of their parents" (hooks, 2000, p. 72) and begin the humanization process, including humanizing oneself as a feminist. Second, they need to know how to identify a new belief system of caring and nurturing that embeds the understanding that "there cannot be love when there is

domination" (hooks, 2000, p. 103) to avoid perpetuating white supremacists' notions of property and objectification.

### **Actions**

Berg and Gleason (2018) define actions as the “practices and routines” that we perform, on autopilot, without stopping to question them. Those actions are done based on our beliefs and what makes us feel safe and comfortable. To advance equity, teachers must be conscious of their actions and analyze them continuously, as they may become a reflection of our unquestioned beliefs.

Noddings (2001) defines two types of care: care as a virtue, and care as a relation. Care as a virtue means to care based on our own perception of what the other needs. Care as a relation involves the perspectives of the person being cared for (Noddings, 2001). For feminist teachers to be invested in changing their actions to match newfound beliefs, they have to care as a relation for students. To care this way, the teacher must listen and show her students they have been heard while responding to their needs. Noddings (2001) asserts that if teachers only care by virtue, they will continue their well-intended actions that only perpetuate oppression against their students.

Scholars have identified beliefs that lead to actions that perpetuate oppression, such as colonialism and other isms (Garland-Thompson, 2011; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011; Pascoe, 2007; and Vaught, 2009). These actions subject Latinx students, as well as other disenfranchised students to an education system where they do not meet the definition of “normal”. To complicate matters more, the public school system is dominated and controlled by the teachers, parents, and community, who may be knowingly or unknowingly acting as oppression conduits (Pascoe, 2007).

One example of such unintentionally oppressive actions is an event that many public schools hold such as cultural nights. When teachers and administrators host multicultural festivities and clubs to support their claim to being a diverse and inclusive institution, they send a message that these students are not "normal," hence perpetuating the othering of the students being "celebrated" (Arvin et al., 2013). This type of language and inclusion practices are prevalent in schools and are used "unconsciously" as ways to permeate the dominant ideology in the United States (Ellsworth, 1992); they are just another way of using the tools of racism to examine the fruits of the same oppression (Moraga et al., 1983). These dominant ideologies define "difference as something to fear, as something that requires domination and justifies exploitation" (Ellsworth, 1992, p. 7).

Teachers need to educate themselves about their students and their communities. It is no longer acceptable to celebrate students' cultures with dances and food in our schools. Feminist teachers must take a more prominent stance to stop systems of oppression and exalting their students' differences not as such but as part of life.

In the words of Audre Lorde (as cited in Moraga et al. 1983) teachers must engage in deep reflection of common beliefs in order to analyze them; I urge each and one of us here to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives there. See the face it wears. Then the personal and the political can begin to illuminate our choices. (p. 35)

Arvin et al. (2013) suggested that teachers may begin by looking at the curriculum and how the materials they use depicts underrepresented groups and how the same groups are made invisible. As teachers become aware of what is explicitly and implicitly stated in the curriculum, they must also be mindful of the implications of modifying or creating a different curriculum as they may be at risk of developing a more damaging hidden curriculum. Davis (2015) illustrates the same irony as the one she calls the supreme irony

of slavery: which “in order to approach its strategic goal- to extract the greatest possible surplus from the labor of slaves – the black woman had to be released from the chains of the myth of femininity”. Latinx students have endured similar ironies when fighting for the end of segregating schools, in cases such as *Mendez v. Westminster* in 1946 (Strum, 2010)

Matusov and Smith (2005) suggested, in their mixed-methods study, that both curricula in teacher preparation programs and in-service teacher PD programs should promote subjectivizing and problematizing of students. ‘Subjectivizing and problematizing of students’ means to involve students in their education. This concept relates to what other researchers have suggested as indicators of what good teachers do (Jensen et al., 2018; Liou & Rojas, 2016). A good teacher actively asks the students about their thoughts and their knowledge, making the student a participant in their learning (Jensen et al., 2018; Liou & Rojas, 2016).

Curriculum in teacher preparation programs should include challenging the pre-service teachers' deficit thinking and creating awareness of the assumptions they bring to the table (Galvan and Parker, 2011; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Sosa & Gomez, 2012). Universities can include service learning in the curriculum and design community outreach programs to facilitate (1) greater and authentic exposure to another culture; (2) consistency in teacher candidates' engagement; and (3) an increase in their cultural competence. (Galvan and Parker, 2011; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Sosa & Gomez, 2012). To build cultural competence, Nelson and Guerra (2014) suggested that professional development must be designed to "help teachers and leaders understand how cultural identity is embedded in all aspects of schooling" (p. 90).

Kayi-Aydar (2019) found that other programs develop professional agency "through collective actions" and by teachers negotiating the power structures within the system in which they operate and the expectations of their beliefs. Teachers' deficit mindset not only affects their students and their students' outcomes but is also detrimental to other teachers of color who have to navigate similar marginalization from their colleagues, while simultaneously trying to deconstruct the systems of oppression their students face (Kayi-Aydar, 2019).

Tanguay et al. (2018) designed a PD model, which "approaches faculty development in three areas: (a) Awareness, (b) Action, and (c) Alignment" (p. 89) and focused on preparing teachers working with diverse students to evaluate the value of each component. Tanguay et al. (2018) found that teachers must experience their students' communities to challenge their deficit notions. Furthermore, they described how this model uses mentors to deliver PD. Teachers and mentors facilitate the dialogs that challenge the deficit mindset, biases, and beliefs they may bring to the classroom. This process allows teachers to change their thoughts into actions while modeling their change in their practice and attitudes (Tanguay et al., 2018).

To create consistency of expectations and goals for students throughout institutions, beliefs and actions of faculty, student teachers, and school administrators is advised (Tanguay et al. (2018). Alignment provides teachers with the skills necessary to address their diverse student population and maintain high standards while developing relationships with their students. Teaching for social justice should be a required skill for teachers to meet if they want to work with students (Tanguay et al., 2018).

A Greek study (Hajissoteriou et al., 2019) presented teachers' challenges that are very similar to what U.S. schools have seen in the past 60 years. Participatory action research allowed teachers to solve problems by analyzing and reflecting on the issues they face in their practice (Hajissoteriou et al., 2019). Like others, Hajissoteriou et al. (2019) found it helpful for the teachers to be part of the research process, including design, data collection, conclusions, and research implementation. The study also involved the alignment of the newfound beliefs to practice, including curriculum, teaching practices, and developing relationships with students. A collaborative research approach to PD to create cultural competence will support schools in maintaining an ongoing process that will be transformative and address the cultural mismatch they may be facing (Hajissoteriou et al., 2019).

Bartell (2013) found that teachers' effective PD provided them with authentic experiences in teaching social justice issues while including it in their curriculum. Bartell (2013) believed that this method of active participation of teachers in PD aligns with Freire's critical pedagogy definition of teachers, including their students of color, in their formation as professionals. The goal is the inclusion of the students in the teachers' development process. Teachers should also aim to address issues of racism and power structures that the students face (Vass et al., 2019).

When a cultural mismatch is present, teachers who experience and engage in indigenous studies can become more culturally competent (Hajissoteriou et al., 2019; Vass et al., 2019). Participating and engaging in their students' communities allow teachers to make reflections that analyze critically what they and the students are experiencing in the educational system.

The Vass et al. (2019) study applied culturally responsive pedagogy as a theoretical framework to allow the teachers to examine their beliefs and assumptions based on a created scenario. They concluded that awareness of the teachers' assumptions is the first step toward culturally responsive teaching. Awareness should be followed by the teachers adjusting their preconceived beliefs in order to teach diverse students effectively (Vass et al., 2019). The process of examining teacher beliefs works as a collaborative effort where all teacher candidates must work together to solve problems by interpreting them with different perspectives ensuring that they integrate their diversity, culture, and views into their problem-solving (Vass et al., 2019).

### **Process**

Although the literature does not agree on a specific PD process (Hajissoteriou et al., 2019; Kose & Lim, 2010; Vass et al., 2019), there is a consensus on the need for professional growth to advance education equity. Development should be a process where teachers learn to navigate the systems in schools that perpetuate students of color's marginalization and dehumanization (Bartell, 2013; Colbert et al., 2010; Fernandez, 2019; Hajissoteriou et al., 2019; Jensen et al., 2018; Kose & Lim, 2010; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Mellom et al., 2018). PD processes should be developed using CRF to recognize white imagination and deconstructing it by analyzing teachers' responses to the centering of their Latinx students' imagination (Matias et al., 2014). This, Matias et al., suggested should be done by examining how actions such as emotional disinvestment, lack of critical understanding of race, white guilt and hegemonic whiteness negatively affect their perceived roles as social agents. On the other hand, CRF will also help me address teachers' hyperbolic interpretation of PD phantom demands when they are

presented with race related PD as encountered by Pollock et al. (2015) where teachers separate diversity from education work and frame diversity as extra to teaching.

Colbert et al. (2010) focused their study on developing a culture of safety and reciprocity where learning can happen. To create a particular culture, faculty and students must understand their beliefs and perceptions and the power systems involved in their relationships. Studies suggested that there is a need for extensive training in all of those areas to improve continually. (Jensen et al., 2018; Kose & Lim, 2010; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Mellom et al., 2018). In their quantitative analysis, Kose and Lim (2010) found that it is crucial to understand that PD designed to be transformative and reduce deficit thinking may result in unintended consequences and create more problems than those trying to solve (Kose & Lim, 2010). PD aiming to eliminate negative beliefs and biases might reinforce such perceptions if done incorrectly. Incorporating follow-up training for in-service teachers as part of the process may be beneficial for teacher professional growth (Minaya-Rowe & Ortiz, 2010).

Fernandez (2019) described a PD approach that includes two main components: (1) Indigenous ways of knowing; and (2) an education collective, where the participation of their communities and families develop a wraparound process where all aspects of the teacher and student are considered. Their goal is to re-humanize PD by including all of those involved in the education process.

Teachers should question and evaluate their own beliefs to promote equity. When teachers' beliefs are challenged continuously and revised, they can be a tool to shape the system that supports equity (Berg & Gleason, 2018). Tanguay et al., (2018) shared how a specific PD program that includes book clubs reflecting on race and other equity issues



can target teachers' awareness of their biases and deficits. Another component of this PD had a "diversity exchange" to discuss how beliefs impacted the teachers' work. Colleagues facilitated the exchange to allow for a safe space to explore their professional identities (Tanguay et al., 2018). Schools should provide PD as an ongoing process of evaluating and questioning teachers' beliefs and actions to adjust along the way. PD should be a concerted effort from teacher preparation programs to professional settings in a progressive process.

Hajissoteriou et al. (2019) pointed out that there is no available research that describes how PD for building cultural competence is structured. They found that the literature available so far only illustrates the importance of building cultural competence in teachers and avoiding deficit thinking when working with students of color.

Bartell's (2013) study focused on teaching math for social justice and how teachers struggle to negotiate meeting the social justice objectives while aligning them with the curriculum. Math is taught following state and national standards and will provide students with the knowledge to be successful academically. Bartell (2013) found little research on how teachers can prepare to teach Mathematics for Social Justice (TMSJ) even though she found plenty of research highlighting the potential benefits of TMSJ to address equity issues in schools. She also describes PD aimed at social justice as a "complex" process that will develop over time as long as the teacher remains in the classroom.

Like others, Bartell (2013) analyzed teachers' reactions to the reflections and experiences with written reviews, journals, and interviews with their participants. Bartell (2013) was a participant in the research project reflecting on her own beliefs and learning

throughout the process by positioning herself as a white woman. She found that her participants felt uncomfortable when dealing with race and racism, and other power structures.

Bartell's (2013) study confirmed what others had already found. The fact that there was no coach or facilitator present during difficult conversations among teachers may have hindered the process of reflection. It may not have allowed the teachers to freely question and evaluate their own beliefs or deficit mindset, impeding them from developing a more developed lesson to address social justice.

Vass et al. (2019) recognized a PD that is only provided to teacher candidates will not be sufficient to address the growing concerns from education reformers and politicians looking for ways to close the gap in addressing social justice issues, and concomitantly student achievement. Researchers found that teacher PD aimed to eliminate deficit thinking is a process (Jensen et al., 2018; Kose & Lim, 2010; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Mellom et al., 2018). They agreed that this process involves discomfort with having conversations about teacher practice and discomfort in facing the fact that their beliefs will have to be questioned for real transformation. However, teachers of Latinx students must also be aware of the intersectionalities named above that affect addressing social justice issues for the PD to be effective. Crenshaw (1992) warns that political strategies, such as PD, "that challenge only certain subordinating practices while maintaining existing hierarchies not only marginalize those who are subject to multiple systems of subordination but also often result in oppositionalizing race and gender discourses" (p. 247).

Ellsworth (1992) challenged teachers in other educational realms to adapt the practices from a higher education classroom to the K-12 classrooms in public schools. Her main challenges are finding ways of teaching that are not assimilationists, meaning that we do not consider others' differences as abhorrent or unfitting. She proposed to commit as a white woman "to the long-term effort to unlearn racism and to find ways of interrupting it and other oppressive formations as a white woman/professor." and to "translate those unlearnings and commitments into the form and content of courses and into(her) own teaching practices" (Ellsworth, 1992, pp. 5-6).

To respond to both propositions of decolonizing feminism and teaching the unassimilated differences, knowledge and evidence need to be drawn from other feminists' diverse experiences. Such experiences include those from Patricia Hill Collins' (1999) work on othermothering, Nel Noddings (2001) and her work on care and nurturing, Bell Hooks (2000) and her work on black Feminisms as well as the different perspectives of feminism by women of color (Moraga et al., 1983). Being aware of views from other groups and communities concerning care and nurturing will help teachers in determining specific steps toward regular analysis of their own beliefs and actions. Hooks (2000) and Moraga et al. (1983) will give us tools to form relevant alliances where teachers can begin to talk about disrupting deficit thinking as a common front without erasing any voices or leaving others behind. To transform education as the practice of freedom teachers must enter the classroom with the belief that both teachers and students must be active participants, they must translate what Freire (1982) called conscientization into critical awareness and practice (hooks, 1994).

Freire's (1982) problem-posing method proposed that the view should be changed to acknowledge that students of color have always been part of the educational system. Freire (1982) pointed out all of this can be accomplished by understanding the dichotomy of man-world, which refers to the fact that to make the world exist, it has to be named by dialog. This dialog must happen between teachers and students, between teachers and teachers, between teachers and the community. Additionally, Freire (2005) positions teachers as role models for "setting forth the values of democracy" (p. 12) but requires teachers to avoid thinking of the project of democracy as an "individual struggle" (Freire, 2005, p. 12). Teachers must support each other while challenging the system and their fight and demands for their right to ongoing teacher preparation.

### **Theoretical/Conceptual Framework**

This study will be utilizing the Critical Race Feminist CRF framework, "critical race feminists are anti-essentialists who call for a deeper understanding of the lives of women of color based on the multiple nature of their identities" (Wing, 1997, p. 4). CRF which originates from critical legal theory, feminist legal theory, and critical race theory, promises to afford "legal and academic stratagem for studying and eradicating race, class, and gender oppression in educational institutions" (Wing, 1997, p. 2). CRF originated from the evolving tradition of Critical Legal Studies; it "includes postmodern critiques of individualism and hierarchy" (Wing, 1997, p. 2). I believe this is important as I will be studying how teacher beliefs and biases affect their practice when teaching Latinx students. I have to consider the multiple layers of the students' identities to understand better how their teachers view them.

CRF challenge to the dominant ideology, prevalent and pervasive in American schooling, will give my research a framework to understand how PD can effectively prevent or eliminate deficit thinking. Deficit mindset in teachers is considered, for some, as one of the main barriers to Latinx students' educational achievement. CRF's commitment to social justice frames my approach to identify if professional development can eliminate teachers' deficit thinking. The centrality of experiential knowledge, which I will collect from interviews of feminist teachers, will allow me to answer the questions posed.

I believe that CRF is the best approach for my study since it "offers conceptual tools for interrogating how race and racism have been institutionalized and are maintained" in institutions like K-12 public schools (Sleeter, 2017, p. 157). I will examine PD that proposes preventing or reducing teachers' deficit mindset present in classroom settings. A deficit mindset is present in the teachers' decisions on how and what to teach Latinx students and in teachers' professional and personal identities. It is crucial to understand how PD will affect teachers' deficit mindset, resulting from a more deep-rooted racist philosophy.

CRF promises to afford "legal and academic stratagem for studying and eradicating race, class, and gender oppression in educational institutions" (Wing, 1997, p. 2). Integrating CRF as a lens for this study would allow me to consider and propose new ways in which teachers across K-12 public schools in the United States can see themselves as vehicles for "eradicating the various forms of oppression" (Wing, 1997, p. 7). This oppressive system is embedded in public education, and teachers must navigate and challenge it in their pursuit of equity.

CRF would help explain why one must understand how feminists, including teachers receiving race and equity PD, knowingly or unknowingly, benefit from an oppressive system. CRF will allow me to understand the impact of the educational system on how effective professional development is in eliminating or preventing deficit mindset. CRF believes that such institutions "that mask deeply entrenched patterns of thought and action sustain white superiority almost automatically" (Cleaver, as cited in Wing, 1997, p. 39). White supremacy is the reason why a deficit mindset occurs in the first place. CRF will support teachers through PARPD to

disrupt the white imagination and refuse to silence the realities embedded in the [Latinx students] imagination by allowing the discomfort (in the form of guilt, white vehemence, and white uncertainty) of the teachers, feminist or not, to outweigh the people of color's terror. (Matias et al., 2014, pg. 302)

This is particularly noteworthy since this study is being carried out in Oklahoma, where HB 1775 was passed in 2021 as a law. The law clearly states

No teacher, administrator or other employee of a school district, charter school or virtual charter school shall require or make part of a course the following concepts: ...an individual, by virtue of his or her race or sex, is inherently racist, sexist or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously...(LegiScan<https://legiscan.com/OK/text/HB1775/id/2387002>)

The implication here is that in order to eliminate deficit thinking in teachers and, as a result, improve their practices which will provide a better education for Latinx students among other students of color, racism must be examined as contrary to the spirit of the law. Teachers will need to fully engage in the PARPD to disrupt the white imagination without breaking said law. This will have to be intentional if teachers want to make sure of involving the students into their own liberation (Freire, 1982). This intentionality can be achieved by school community "by imagining one's own story and the stories of others as fundamentally interrelated" (Frick et al., 2019, p. 555). Without this critical

engagement as a school community, teachers will not be able to achieve fundamental democratic change in schools.

Greater implications are to be considered by institutions of higher education as they are clearly prohibited from engaging in such PD by the same law. How then will they be able to prepare teachers in their early years? So, it is of most importance to this study to understand if PD for practitioners will be sufficient for attenuating deficit thinking and improving their practice with students of color. Can professional learning with incumbent teachers be effective for undoing habits of mind that have gone unchecked and unchallenged?

CRF will allow me to avoid becoming an "analogizer" (Grillo & Wildman as cited in Wing, 1997, p. 44). As a Latinx researcher, I have to make sure that I do not believe that my situation is the same as those students whose teachers are participants in my study. By avoiding being an "analogizer," I will avoid making judgments about my understanding of the situation both as a former teacher and a Latina. If successful, I can then focus on grappling with the participants' realities and make sense of it (Wing, 1997). At the same time, I can use analogies of my experiences to understand the teachers' experiences, and this Grillo and Wildman (as cited in Wing, 1997) suggest will provide me with "both the key to greater comprehension and the danger of false understanding" (p. 45). Ladson-Billings (1995b) found that Black feminist thought propositions in Patricia Hill Collins' work were able to accomplish both goals, to acknowledge her viewpoints as a "native" researcher and allow her to problematize said viewpoint. CRF would help explain why one has to understand how feminists benefit from a patriarchal

system. Thus, teachers' approach to implementing a relevant curriculum of care and nurturing for Latinx students may pose a challenge for even the most committed feminist.

I will be utilizing Freire's (1982) problem-posing methodology as I will be trying to understand if teacher PD can eliminate deficit thinking in teachers working with Latinx students. I want to ensure that I am also analyzing the problem and the data obtained through Freire's lens (2005). Freire's theories came out of Brazil where they have inherited paternalistic and colonizing views from their history with their European colonizers. In my position as a Latinx researcher, I want to make sure that I do not fall into colonizing and paternalistic views, such as believing I am an expert and have nothing more to learn, which Macedo and Araujo Freire (2005) warn.

My approach to constructing new knowledge along with the fundamental view of CRF and my experiences as a Latina will give me a different idea of how PD for teachers can help prevent deficit mindset. As a woman of color, my experiences, which differ from those of a white middle-class majority, will give me a different view of how professional development can help prevent a deficit mindset. My perspective will help me focus on how the reduction of deficit mindset in teachers may affect the "lives of those who face multiple discrimination based on race, gender, and class" (Wing, 1992, p.3). Hooks (1994) points out that Freire's work affirmed that "education can only be liberatory when everyone claims knowledge as a field in which we all labor." (p.14). However, Freire (1987) also suggests that one must have a critical understanding of the world, to discern the difference between what we know and what we don't understand. This understanding must transcend from the concrete reality which "can begin to change the moment the unmasking of concrete reality begins to lay the whys of what the actual



understanding had been up until then” (Freire, 1992, p.42). My view of what Hooks (1994) calls “education as the practice of freedom” along with CRF will allow me to recognize the teachers who believe our vocation is sacred and have the courage to disrupt the “assembly-line approach to learning” (Hooks, 1994).

In *Teachers as Cultural Workers*, Freire (2005) suggests that educators and students must aim to liberate each other and themselves from the system. The way people act, he adds, is the function of the way they see the world. I will analyze how teacher practice is formed or transformed by the PD opportunities they receive to eliminate deficit mindset. Freire's (1982) problem-solving theory can provide a unique lens to analyze the teachers' responses to PD It will help me understand how the interaction with their Latinx students affects their view of self.

Freire (2005) proclaims that "we must dare to say scientifically, and not as mere blah-blah-blah, that we study, we learn, we teach, we know with our entire body" (p. 5). He adds that teachers must "dare" fight for social justice and become role models to fight for democracy. Freire also believes in the awareness of the need to see change (Crotty, 1998), this perspective will allow me to understand what feminist stance the teachers are taking with their teaching. It will help me analyze the PD view that helps them shape their mindset from deficit thinking. Teachers' awareness of the need to see change as possible and to take action now is different from Freire's awareness of this need.

Lastly, Freire's (2005) position on teacher PD suggests that trainers do not continue to develop it in the traditional way, where theory and practice are separated. Instead, he calls for "theory emerged soaked in well-carried-out practice" (p. 39). This pairing can be done by teachers' critical analysis of their actions, practice, thoughts,

mindset, beliefs, and theory. With my study, I am trying to identify PD that works to eliminate the teacher's deficit mindset when working with Latinx students and look for those elements in the PD currently available for teachers and their effectiveness in eliminating the deficit mindset.

### **Participatory Action Research as PD**

Studies agreed that teachers must advance equity and avoid deficit thinking by using Freire's (1982) problem-posing methodology or a similar approach (Bartell, 2013; Latzke, 2015; Vass et al., 2018). They believe that teachers should view students as part of their education. Advancing equity happens when teachers consider education as a two-way process in which both teachers and students contribute to the process and their emancipation from oppressive systems.

Studies used participatory action research (PAR) as PD (Bartell, 2013; Colbert, 2010; Hajisoteriou et al., 2019; Vass et al., 2018) because they believed that teachers need to work collaboratively to learn and grow professionally. In one study, they use PAR as their framework. Teachers created a PD approach to inquire about multicultural education at their school. Their approach, they found, helped facilitate discussions among teachers that involved "multicultural education, curriculum, and pedagogy" (Kalamaras, 2015, p. 36).

Another study found that PARPD allowed participants to "scaffold transformation, empower teachers and emancipate research participants" (Zuber-Skerritt 2011 as cited by Hales, 2016). They defined PAR as an "epistemological stance not framed by a concrete set of methods and processes but rather engaged in a pluralistic orientation of ideals and change" (Chevalier & Buckles, 2008; Kemmis & McTaggart,

2000; McIntyre, 2008; Sluys, 2010; Wadsworth, 1998; Whyte, 1991 as cited by Hales, 2016, p. 10).

Using PARPD allows both teachers and researchers to ground research in “real life challenges in education” (Simmers, 2021, p.4) such as equity and liberation, and as a result, construct knowledge that can be accessed by other educators and that have an immediate impact on their students (Simmers, 2021). This striving for equity and liberation, Crotty (1998) adds, marks feminist research indelibly.

## CHAPTER THREE

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In this study, I tried to understand if PARPD can reduce deficit thinking in teachers of Latinx students. In addition, I examined how PARPD can reduce deficit thinking. To conduct my research, I relied on a feminist critical inquiry approach. Critical inquiry helped me keep the "spotlight on power relationships within society so as to expose the forces of hegemony and injustice" (Crotty, 1998, pg. 12). I studied teachers' backgrounds and previous racialized experiences and how those may shape negative perceptions about their students. Crenshaw (1998) states that "no measure of a process' effectiveness can be wholly separated from the purpose for which it was initiated" (p.1344). For that reason, understanding how the school context, which inherently places teachers in a power position, impacts their beliefs and is worth studying with a CFR lens. I investigated how teacher awareness of those dynamics helped shape the PARPD in which teachers engaged. Moreover, I noted the impact PARPD had on such perceptions, which may negatively affect how they teach their Latinx students.

I utilized the tenets of Constructionism as my epistemological stance. Constructionism "is the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty 1997 p. 42). The research questions were answered depending on the context in which the teachers were operating and their varied experiences and backgrounds: Does PARPD help reduce a teacher's deficit mindset? How does targeted PD address a residual deficit mindset of feminist teachers who work with Latinx students? Is PARPD a viable approach to change biased beliefs in teachers

both who identify with feminist views and those who don't. What are the differences in their acceptance of the PARPD?

Through PD, teachers constructed new knowledge to identify and avoid deficit thinking toward their Latinx students. Using Constructionism as my epistemological stance led me to look for the “complexity of views rather than narrowing meaning into few categories or ideas” (Creswell, 2017, p.8). In addition, Constructionism allowed me, the researcher to focus on social issues, centering on marginalized groups such as Latinx students in schools. (Creswell, 2017)

I chose a critical inquiry approach for this study because this type of research design seemed to fit the study best and is commonly found in the field of education (Creswell, 2017). A critical inquiry approach gave me the tools to understand, interrogate and observe the transformation of knowledge, values, and assumptions held by the participants in the study while at the same time “challenging conventional, social structures and engaging in social action (Crotty, 1998, p. 156). As previously identified, the educational achievement of Latinx students lags behind their African American, Asian, and White peers. Scholars have identified that a lack of understanding of culture and ineffective teacher PD may be barriers (Scott, 2008; Auerback, 2002). This lack of understanding may contribute to feminist teachers’ deficit mindset and impact their desire to seek out training. Lack of understanding can also impact teachers’ beliefs about becoming better teachers. Using a general qualitative inductive model for this study, I identified the qualities of PAR that influenced teacher development. This investigation focused on studying the participants’ beliefs and perceptions towards their Latinx students and how participating in PARPD led them to a reduction of any intended or

unintended deficit thinking. As such, the nature of the study itself led me, the researcher, to use the general qualitative inductive model (Mertens, 2015).

### **Research Design**

The type of research design that best fits the study is qualitative PAR, which according to Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998), intends to evaluate a reality in social settings for an end goal of changing such reality. Utilizing PAR allowed me to name the problem of race and racism in schools that contribute to teachers' deficit mindset towards Latinx students. PAR paired with CRF as my theoretical approach was logical for this study as both paradigms have begun to interbreed. In other words, Constructionism is being influenced by facets of PAR (Mertens, 2015). For this study, I evaluated the level of feminist thought that a teacher workforce has and how this mindset can evolve to confront issues of race through their participation in PARPD.

Using a qualitative method approach, the study focused on interviews with self-identified feminist teachers to obtain feedback on their acceptance of their Latinx students' culture and its impact on their teaching practice. The interviews also provided insight into the residual negative beliefs and biases that teachers may have toward their Latinx students. The teachers' answers provided me with an idea of how they view themselves as part of pushing equity forward and working toward social justice.

This intervention study focused on how PARPD influenced teachers' mindsets by allowing them to reflect on how their beliefs and actions impact their teaching practice. The study recruited teachers from the Crooked Oak School district in Oklahoma with an email invitation to voluntarily participate in a district sponsored PARPD (Appendix A). Potential participants were contacted directly and briefed about the beginning and ending

period of the PD session with a written explanation of the nature of the study through informed consent (Appendix B). The study interviewed two groups of teachers in the Crooked Oak school district who, at recruiting, self-identified as feminists based on the answers to questions below and those who do not identify as feminist and were willing to participate in PARPD with the intent of addressing inequities in schools.

Teachers were grouped either as identifying as feminist or not feminist by completing the Gender Attitude and Belief Inventory (GABI) (Appendix D). The GABI was created to help those completing it to (a) find the link between sociological theory and their personal beliefs and (b) exploring common conservative and feminist theories. I chose the GABI because in the words of McCabe, one of its co-creators, “[the instrument] also might encourage students to self-identify as feminists through facilitating accurate information, which is one road to feminism” (McCabe, 2013, pg. 290). I asked the participants to individually complete the GABI and to make sure to allow for time to think about the answers as suggested by the author (McCabe, 2013).

By using purposeful sampling, I sought to select information rich cases from which I couldn’t learn a great deal about issues of central importance in teacher PD and its role of reducing deficit thinking in teachers of Latinx students (Patton, 1990).

The procedures to administer the GABI were as follows. I made a copy of the GABI including the instructions on how to complete for each participant. I met with each participant individually and explained the directions on how to complete the inventory. Participants were instructed to answer each of the questions from the GABI inventory using an interval rating scale. Once the participants completed the inventory, I collected

their surveys to determine their ratings and classifications based on the GABI instructions.

Based on the results of the GABI, those participants who scored a strong alliance to Multicultural Feminism were included in the feminist teacher Group A. And those who showed a score of disagreement to Multicultural Feminism were included in the non-feminist identifying Group B. Once the groups were identified I proceeded to conduct the teacher interviews. Teacher interviews were conducted based on the teacher's availability. Interviews were conducted during teachers plan time and before and after school. To keep track of the interviews and the group to which they belong, feminist or non-feminist, I created a two-column spreadsheet with pseudonyms for the teachers, their interview time and the folder where the interview recording and transcription were stored. Due to logistics involving contractual time and PD district requirements, I scheduled and conducted multiple PD sessions with mixed groups including Group B and Group A participants following a 4 month learning agenda (see PD plan below). The groups attended PD sessions and notes were taken to note the participants reactions and comments to the PD sessions based on their classification. I was trying to understand if race-related PD changes deficit mindset and, if there is a difference, to what degree for the different groups. Comparing the teacher classifications this way corresponds with the literature review which is focused on the dispositions and outlook of ideological feminism. Unfortunately, this PD session set up may have allowed in the influence of either group to corrupt the effects I was trying to capture in some manner.

Group A (Appendix A), consisting of self-identified feminist participants, and Group B (Appendix B), consisting of non-identifying participants, were interviewed



during their planning time or before and after school. Members of each group were interviewed before and after attending PARPD addressing deficit mindset to determine if they changed with respect to how they think, view the world, and carry out their teaching practice.

PARPD was chosen as the intervention in order, as suggested by Mirra and Morrel (2011), for teachers to become civic agents and accomplish a democratic school, they "must present themselves as public intellectuals who produce knowledge about the practice of teaching, speaking back to the academic research establishment with their own action research" (p. 413). In addition, PARPD seems the best approach for this intervention, as noted by NCATE (2010), because this type of professional development is aimed to transform teacher preparation addressing the learning challenges of high needs schools, including Crooked Oak.

The PARPD intervention was facilitated by me, as a participant researcher, through a series of 8, 45 min sessions, twice a month for four months. The PD plan followed the five steps of action research: (1) Making the commitment, (2) Designing a study, (3) Making sense of the experience, (4) Beginning again, and (5) Improving practice (Rust & Clark. 2007) as illustrated in Figure 1. We investigated issues related to teachers' deficit thinking within our schools and create an action plan that addresses the needs discovered during the investigation phase. Throughout the PARPD, I collected field notes of my observations of the process and the participants' reactions. Participants were encouraged to maintain a journal to note any thoughts after each PD session and their practice following each session.

**Figure 1**

*Steps of action research*



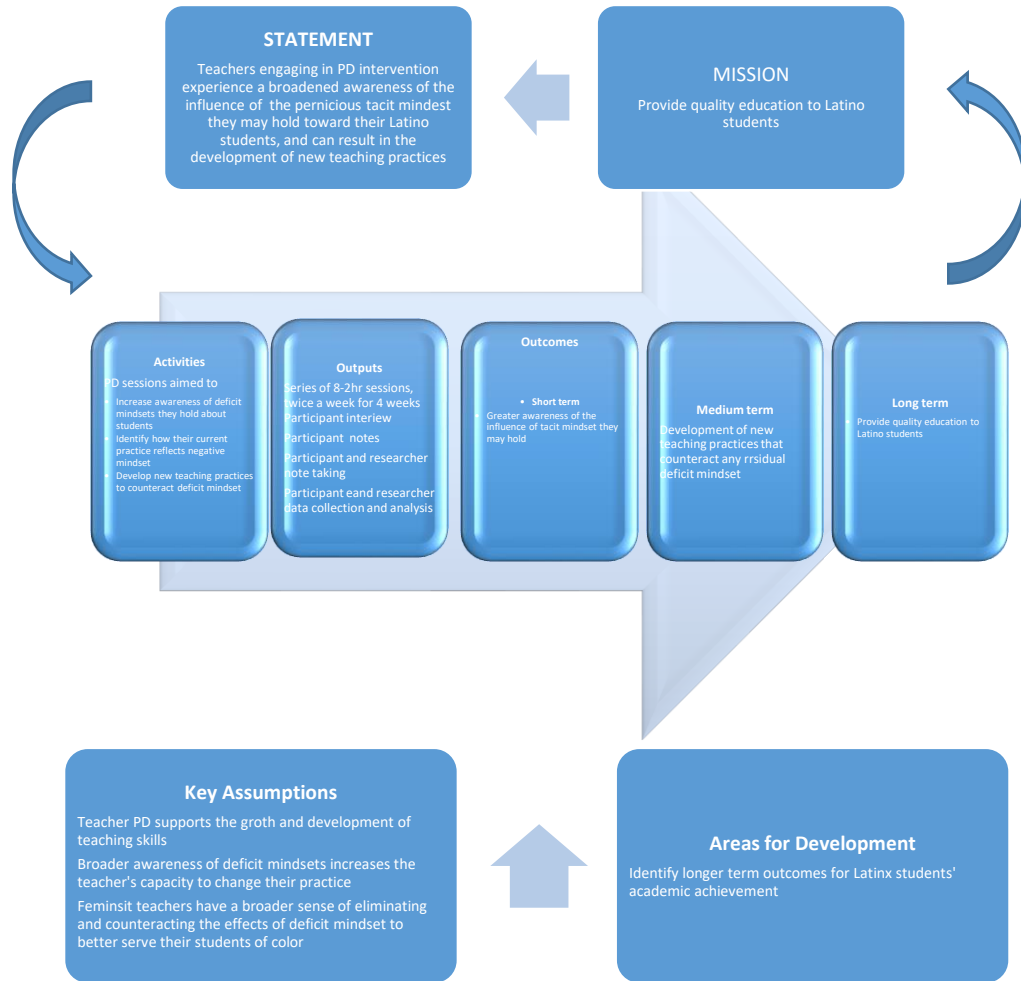
(Figure from *How to do action research in your classroom*. Teachers Network Leadership Institute TNLI. [www.teachersnetwork.org/tnli/research](http://www.teachersnetwork.org/tnli/research))

*PARD Plan*

The participants, including myself, the participant researcher, followed a modified version of Rust and Clark's (2010) guide to conducting action research in the classroom. This PD is an implementation for hypothesized improvement. The action research model we followed as our PD plan is expected to allow teachers to experience a broadened awareness of the influence of any deficit mindset they may hold. This awareness and the teachers' observations in their data collection of how it affects their practice was aimed to orient the participants toward both changes in their mindset and changes in their practice. This theory of change illustrated in Figure 2, and the subsequent PD plan explains the changes I hoped to bring about and what were the activities intended to do this.

**Figure 2**

*Theory of Change*



*Month 1*

I began with an ice breaker to create an atmosphere of trust and collegiality.

I then proceeded with the agenda for the session, which included individual reflection followed by group discussion and collaboration. The closure of each session included the assignment to each participant of an action item related to the activities performed during the session.

Teachers read assigned portions of *How to do Action Research in your Classroom* by Rust and Clark (2010) and discussed it during collaboration.

Teachers read "Step one- Make the commitment, The call to inquiry" (Rust & Clark, 2010).

Teachers watched portions the film *Stolen Education* (Aleman & Luna, 2013). Teachers then discussed the film and identified any issues that are similar in their district with my support as the facilitator.

During this session participants reflected and identified any possible pernicious tacit theories they may hold about their Latinx students. Examples were given for teachers that were not be able to identify any deficit mindset present in their experiences.

Teachers read "Step two- Designing a study to frame a good question" (Rust & Clark, 2010).

Teachers were given time to come up with a first draft of question(s), discussed it with the group, and made it researchable as suggested in the guide. Once the group decided what question they were to answer, they discussed with the group an action plan to collect data, such as what type of perceived ideas are they trying to overcome while planning their lessons, is their practice changing and in which ways, what do they observe in student feedback from the new teaching practices, observations about their approach in planning their lessons. This process was meant to allow them to answer the question(s) selected by the group.

Teachers were guided to come up with questions based on their newly identified mindsets which they believed were affecting their practice. Teachers were supported with

an evidence-based practices guide (Krasnoff, 2016) as a resource for culturally responsive teaching and peer discussion.

Teachers were encouraged to evaluate and discuss readings from works such as Freire (2005) and Ladson Billings (1995b). In addition, participants were presented with case studies involving professional ethics (Bass, et al. 2018) for study and analysis. Teachers collected data. Teachers observed their practice and determined what actions contributed to the problem and possible solutions.

Teachers read "Step three- Making sense of the experience."

Teachers became familiar with research tools to collect their data, their observations about how their practice had changed based on their newly acquired awareness of any negative mindset.

Teachers were tasked to think about how to answer their questions to improve the situation and some action they can take in the classroom.

### *Month 2*

Teachers discussed their new findings from their observations. Teachers continued their action plan, applying the interventions and collecting additional data.

Teachers were provided with articles related to their issue selected and similar interventions used. They were encouraged to read additional materials and take notes about their issue and what further action they needed to take.

Teachers read "collecting the data" section (Rust & Clark, 2010) and continued collecting data as they applied the intervention.

### *Month 3*

Teachers re-read and discussed "Step three- Organizing and Analyzing your data."

Teachers began their analysis. Teachers observed their practice and determined any changes made as a result of the intervention the group developed.

Teachers continued to review "Step three- Organizing and Analyzing your data" as a framework and began their analysis.

Teachers utilized different ways of representing their data succinctly and how it related to the readings and discussions.

Teachers analyzed their data based on how their awareness of their mindsets allow them to change practice. The following questions were considered to assist with the teachers' data analysis: What changes did you apply in your practice? How those changes directly or indirectly impacted your practice? How has your mindset changed or has not changed?

#### *Month 4*

Teachers created a plan of action for improving their practice.

Teachers discussed with the group about what they have learned so far. Teachers answered these questions as a guide: What will you keep? What will you try? What other wonderings do you have? The focus was placed on whether teachers notice other influences on students' learning and their own practice.

#### **Data Collection**

The study used semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix B) to allow participants to elaborate on their responses. An interview protocol was planned and developed for asking questions and recording answers. I recorded the teacher interviews using a manual voice recorder and my cellphone to ensure recordings back up. I took notes using a notebook as a journal to record any additional observations during the

interview, including the teachers' body language (Mertens, 2015). This process was consistent for both the first interview prior to the PD experience and the second interview after the PD experience.

The participants were informed of their right to decline to answer or pass any questions they were not willing to answer and to add any details they deemed necessary to any answers. They were also notified that, if further probing questions from the main researcher were prompted during or after the interview, the main researcher will ask them during the interview or contact them afterwards.

There were 10 teachers interviewed for the study. Six teachers identified as feminist and four teachers identified as non-feminists according to their responses to the GABI. Teachers experience and background ranged from 1 year to 30+ years of experience. Two teachers self-identified as novice teachers, three identified as experience teachers. Participants teacher assignment included elementary, middle and high school. Three teachers were elementary teachers, two were middle school teachers. One teacher taught both middle school and high school students and 4 were high school teachers. Interviews took place at Crooked Oak district and lasted up to one hour each. Eight of the teachers were interviewed in their classrooms. One teacher chose to interview in my office. Teacher interviews were conducted during the teacher's plan time or before or after school depending on their availability. Two of interviews were conducted electronically via email due to illness.

Teachers, including myself as a participant researcher of the PARPD session, engaged in discussions following the PARPD plan. As a participant researcher I collected descriptive and reflective notes from each session (Creswell, 2014). These reflective

notes are included in the data collection and data reporting of the PARPD sessions. As I was trying to understand if PARPD is a valuable approach to address and alter teacher deficit mindset, I considered several things. I paid close attention to the context in which teachers interacted, including the students, the parents, and the community they serve.

These considerations allowed me to interpret teachers' perceptions of the process and effects of PARPD and whether or not it made a difference in their mindset. The data collection plan helped me to analyze how PARPD affected participants' perceptions of their teaching practices. This knowledge was essential because, as noted by Kathleen Neal Cleaver (as cited in Wing, 1992), white feminists cannot oppose racism until they can discover its insidious ways of constricting the lives of their students.

### **Data Analysis**

For this study, data from interviews were analyzed using inductive data analysis described by Creswell (2017). Data analysis began by transcribing the interviews using a transcribing software service and then manually inspecting to ensure that the transcription was accurate. Transcripts of interviews underwent member checking to determine if the raw data was what the participant intended to communicate.

Interviews and reflective notes were analyzed using coding (first level), categorization (second level), and thematic (third level) data analysis process. Data was coded by following Tesch's (1990) steps as cited by Creswell (2014): (1) Get a sense of the whole by noting ideas while reading the transcriptions carefully. (2) Select one interview and ask probing questions to find underlying meaning. Repeat the process with observation data and document data. (3) Make a list of the topics and group them into categories. (4) Write codes next to the rest of the data and determine if other categories



surface. (5) Turn topics into categories that best describe the interrelated topics. (6) Abbreviate and alphabetize the codes. (7) Add all data to each one of the categories and conduct a preliminary analysis. I sorted the data according to the participants observed. I then identified patterns from the responses given by the teachers. After determining the patterns, I organized the patterns based on the research questions they answered.

I read the transcripts multiple times to begin to determine the best method of organizing the data I had a notebook where I kept thoughts and made notes of emerging themes of the transcript's readings. I have since organized those notes for future reference.

I then reviewed the data to ensure that the transcriptions were correct. I listened to the recordings following along with the transcriptions to make sure they were accurate. Once the data was cleaned, I emailed the participants the transcription of their interviews to ensure I was not changing the meaning of their answers and made a few corrections as they were necessary.

Once the data was clean and organized, I printed the transcripts on different colored paper according to each participant to organize the interviews into sections. I tried to divide the sections mostly as determined by the research questions on one level and then by the themes in the participants' responses. I cut out the answers from each question and laid them out on the floor to organize them by questions. Once this first level was completed, I cut out the patterns that I found from those questions and laid them out along the first level organization. However, when deeply analyzing the data, I realized that the data was very complex and very difficult to divide into specific segments because many of those would intermingle between patterns. As a result, I reprinted the

transcriptions on white paper and then decided to move into line-by-line coding for better capture of the different patterns that were intermingled. To help with line-by-line coding I utilized multicolor pens to underline the concepts that emerged.

Following line-by-line coding, I listed each code into a google document to compare each transcript and observation to facilitate the finding of patterns (Shank, 2002). This process allowed me to identify different categories that emerged and better match the codes to the categories (Morse, 1994).

Once this was completed, categories were named and defined. Categories were placed into a chart for organization and hierarchy, and, finally, I created a data codebook. For each step, interviews and notes were analyzed separately and then together to identify patterns in the totality of the data collected.

Interviews and reflective notes were analyzed using thematic data analysis. Thematic data analysis finds themes that arise because of the "inspections" of the raw data (Shank, 2002). I analyzed the data several times through different lenses. First, as a teacher, by analyzing my own practice, how it is affected by my perceptions and experiences, and what I have been able to use to change them. Then, I analyzed the data as a professional development creator to identify the most effective ways of facilitating professional development for social change. Finally, I analyzed the data as a researcher to find other perspectives on the effectiveness of PARPD to eliminate deficit thinking. This process assisted me in the identification of methods for the organization of the data I could use. I then wrote all of the thoughts and notes that came out of the transcript's readings, and I kept them in a journal and organize them by themes or patterns.

Analytical memoing and writing up findings after winnowing the data were part of the data collection and qualitative study (Creswell, 2014). I made notes of my thoughts and impressions that came from the reading of interview transcripts. I organized the notes by themes and checked them for accuracy. Transcripts were printed in different color paper according to each participant to organize all the interviews into sections first, then follow the same process with field observations. All field observation notes were word-processed into finished notes. Themes were determined by the research questions on one level and then by the patterns in the participants' responses.

### **Trustworthiness**

According to Creswell (2017), the use of member checking is a common practice "to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings" (p. 201). To ensure that the study's findings are valid, I used the reflective notes collected during PD and during the parsing of the interviews of participants to express their perceptions. The interviews were presented to the participants with only the directive to respond as they perceived their reality and reassurance that their responses are anonymous.

A triangulation partner was used to ensure trustworthiness and minimize researcher bias (Shank, 2002). The triangulation partner is a fellow doctoral student that understands and has been trained in the importance of ensuring trustworthiness in a qualitative study. I provided the triangulation partner with data segments so she could code them. Once we finished the coding on our own, we met to discuss the coding of the data. I identified uncertain codes, provided the codes to the triangulation partner and let her code the data segment. We then discussed agreements and disagreements in coding the data. Based on our discussions I either kept the original codes, reworded the original

codes, or completely changed the codes. To aid in this process, I filled a data triangulation table that included the data excerpts (participant pseudonym and line number), my code, the triangulation partner's code, agreement or disagreement, the reason for disagreement, and the final decision about the code.

### **Feminist Teachers**

Teachers' acceptance of feminist tenets and schools' long tradition of being a democratic institution can be the medium for which our country maintains its democracy through its teachers acting upon their inherent role as civil agents (Mirra & Morrell, 2011; Moore, 2008).

Based on the GABI answered by the participants, their thoughts may partially align with at least one of the feminist thoughts offered in the inventory (appendix D). This may relate to what scholars explain when teachers may not call themselves feminists. Teachers may not see themselves as feminists partly because 1) they believe that gender equality has already been accomplished (Robnett et al., 2012); (2) they may or may not have exposure to the positive roles of feminist models (Meijs et al., 2017). Other factors include generational differences between the initial feminist wave and the current view of feminism (Budgeon, 2001).

During the interviews, feminist identifying teachers expressed a more positive disposition than their non-feminist-identifying counterparts. Feminist-identifying teachers commented in their answers that PD and specifically culturally relevant teaching and pedagogies PD was essential for their formation and general improvement of their teaching skills. However, when it came to the actual attendance and engagement in the PD session, the reactions were varied and distinct depending on the topic and the engagement of their peers. In contrast, the non-feminist identifying teachers expressed their indifference or even dislike to PD sessions, arguing that, for the most part, they could be an email or a video showing what they needed to learn. During their interviews,

some non-feminist teachers defined PD as redundant and not necessarily productive. However, during the treatment, engagement variation was similar between the feminist and non-feminist groups. For both feminist and non-feminist teachers, the amount and quality of engagement depended on how comfortable they felt with the topic and the level of engagement from their peers.

Interestingly, some of the feminist identifying teachers showed a lower level of vulnerability. Throughout the PD sessions and post interviews they continuously reaffirmed the fact that the information that was presented was already known to them and maybe had been redundant and of little value to them as they already had that knowledge. They seemed surprised that many of their peers did not recognize social justice principles while working in a minority majority school. On the other hand, the non-feminist identifying teachers for the most part showed great vulnerability admitting the things and facts they did not know about their students, the level of cultural proficiency or deficiency that they had. They were very honest in sharing the microaggressions and other oppressive practices they had committed against their students because they did not know better. Their vulnerability and honesty allowed for the sessions to engage in real dialog where they were able to question their beliefs and explore solutions to implement in their classrooms moving forward.

Multicultural feminists believe that many inequalities are present today, not only gender. In addition to gender inequalities, they focus on race, ethnicity, and class—and sometimes add sexuality, nationality, age, disability, and others. They believe people experience gender differently depending on their location in the structures of race, ethnicity, and class. Therefore, there is no universal female experience. For this study, we

looked specifically at how participants thoughts aligned with the multicultural feminist views to determine which group of feminists or non-feminists the teachers would be assigned.

It is essential to mention that Crooked Oak district comprises 90% Latinx students. Their backgrounds range from multigenerational families of Mexican - American students to newcomers from Central and South American Countries such as Nicaragua, Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala, and Honduras. The students' stories range from American citizens who have lived in the US their whole lives to ex-pats returning home to Oklahoma. It includes political refugees and minors facing many perils traveling alone through multiple countries to join a relative in the US in search of better opportunities.

The themes that emerged from this study are presented in a way that answers the research questions. Many of the emerging themes answered more than one of the research questions.

Scholars have suggested that many teachers choose the profession of education because they feel a calling or are inclined to fight for social justice and be civic agents as part of their actual work as educators (Mirra & Morrel, 2011; Moore, 2008; Troutman & Jimenez, 2016).

Three main themes emerged from the study concerning how teachers view themselves as teachers and change agents. One theme is that all teachers believe they are change agents and that their background helped shape their current views of education and their role as change agents. Another theme surfaced as a sense of vocation; teachers shared that they always heard the "calling" to be teachers. Even when trying other

professions, they knew they wanted to make a difference, so they chose education. Some went as far as to say that one can only be an educator with the mindset of becoming a change agent. The other theme that emerged is that they believe they are role models for their students. The themes were the same among the group of teachers who consider themselves feminists as those who do not. These may be partly a result of how teacher preparation programs recruit teacher candidates who exhibit investment in social justice and equity (Mellom et al., 2018).

### **Teacher background**

When teachers were asked if they viewed themselves as change agents, they inevitably began talking about their background and experiences growing up that shaped their view of education.

Most of the teachers, reminisced about their experience with diverse populations and the impact it had on how they viewed their role as change agents, especially when working with a diverse student population. A non-feminist teacher was the only participant who did not mention having prior experiences with diverse populations.

All teachers interviewed believe that as teachers, they are change agents. They believe that they have access to influence and or inspire their students to make decisions about their lives and their futures. The teachers believe that they can be a positive influence in students' lives. However, some considered the possibility that only some of the impact they have on their students will be positive. During their interview, a novice secondary teacher whose teaching is a second career, reflected: "...every teacher has to be some type of change ...Even for bad or for good...Hopefully all good". The teacher



also commented that the decision to be a change agent may or may not be a conscious decision of the teacher but is inherently implied due to the type of work educators do.

Interestingly, a novice elementary teacher, made sure she clearly defined what a change agent meant before applying the term to herself. Raquel is a recent graduate of a traditional elementary education program. She defined a change agent as "...someone who comes in and wants to create positive change ...". She then proceeded to give an example of how she meets the definition: "I think that I try to, look at all the situations and just try to, you know, turn it into a positive one, especially if it is a negative...".

Most teachers mentioned the words 'role model' when defining themselves as change agents. In his interview a veteran secondary teacher reflects: "Sometimes I am one of the only influences in their lives, whether that is great. I mean, I consider myself a pretty good role model...".

One of the veteran teachers who is traditionally trained as an educator and has recently switched from a predominantly white, middle-class high school to Crooked Oak, (a title I school, with a ninety percent Hispanic/Latinx population) mentioned: "...if you coach somebody for four years and you are a good role model, etc, I think you are a change agent...".

These themes that emerged from the teachers' interviews seem to agree with scholars who point to schools' long tradition of being a democratic institution and the inherent role that teachers have as civil agents or agents of change (Mirra & Morrell, 2011; Moore, 2008).

## **Vocation**

Both groups of teachers expressed their vocation for teaching. Even though some of the participants are not teachers by trade or traditionally trained they also expressed a vocation for teaching that related to their view of themselves as change agents.

Some of the teachers expressed that they wanted to be teachers, although their paths did not directly lead them to teach in the first place. This veteran teacher relates her beginnings first working as a youth counselor, which led her to education- "When I went into teaching, I had the same idea of helping [students] more than just their education". Similarly, to this teacher story, this alternatively certified teacher asserts, "I always wanted to be a teacher" and goes on to explain why "That's actually why I love teaching. I get to shape that formative time in their lives".

Both elementary teachers recall knowing they wanted to be a teacher from a very young age. The veteran teacher connects her decision to be a teacher and her commitment to be a change agent. "I partly became a teacher to be a change agent". Interestingly, this teacher belongs to the non-feminist group based on her answers to the GABI. While the other elementary teacher made a similar statement about her decision to become a teacher because "I am passionate about making sure these kids get the best, education that they can".

## **Residual deficit mindset**

*All squares are quadrilaterals, but not all quadrilaterals are square.*

In the state of Oklahoma and everywhere in the US, there is a requirement for districts to identify English Language Learners (ELL) and determine if additional services are required. This requirement stems from Lau vs. board of education, among other historical lawsuits. Every one of the teachers participating in this project mentioned

English language development as one of the issues that may be interfering with their students' academic performance. For some, it is the first thing they look at when dealing with their Latinx students. Crooked Oak ELL population ranges close to 50% of the student population. The district has a system where teachers can see whether their students qualify as an ELL. The teachers also have access to the students' language development plans that include the individual student's learning plans and goals.

One challenge explicitly affecting K-12 students' success is the lack of teacher PD that includes English language development, awareness of linguistic services, connection to community groups, a commitment to advocacy, and other skills and resources (Potochnick, 2013).

During the interviews, it was evident that teachers had in the front of their minds that English language development is a factor that interferes with their Latinx student's population academic performance. All teachers participating in this study mentioned this factor during their interviews. The level at which the teachers feel they can have an impact in optimizing learning for Latinx students who are also considered ELL varies. One of the novice elementary teachers offered her approach- "Personally, I think I'm not an expert at noticing those things. That is why I always, seek out, outside help [to determine what is interfering with student learning] ... Sometimes I don't know if it is language [or something else] ...".

One of the alternatively certified secondary teachers, however, showed an awareness and understanding that language development might not be an issue that affects all Latinx students. Moreover, he is aware of other intersections that may play a role in his Latinx students' success- "When we say it's cultural, it means more than race...

but then within that are different sex and culture. And so, it's hard to kind of mainstream all together. So, we have ELL folks and that, and that's a challenge....".

Another veteran secondary teacher equated ELL identification to Special Education identification. Moreover, she separated those two groups from the high-performing students- "I always consider, how I am going to modify this... how can I make it challenging for them.

A veteran teacher mentioned that something as simple as knowing the language the students speak would be helpful. "If they would give me some professional development that would help me with Spanish in particular." However, she then expanded her thought to include more information on intersections that may particularly affect Latinx students. "If I could get some more like Ruby Payne come in and talk about poverty. Well, I think that the poverty of the white people is different than the poverty of black people, which is different than poverty of Hispanics".

One common theme across the interviews with teachers was that all ELL students are Latinx; however, only a few will reverse the meaning as with the quadrilateral example and point out that only some Latinx students are ELL. However, even if they would apply the quadrilateral rule to the statement, it will still be inaccurate. Within our population, we have Asian and Eastern European students who are also considered ELLs.

One of the most common feminist and non-feminist teachers' responses to assessing what interferes with their Latinx students' academic performance was language.

One of the novice elementary teachers commented, "Sometimes I don't know if it's language or I don't know if it's, not understanding. I'm not really sure on that." She

mentioned that once she gets to that crossroad with a student, she relies on the Emerging Bilingual teacher for advice on how to approach the student's needs and to refer them for additional assessments to determine what is interfering with that student's progress.

Another teacher said: "because they tell me, sometimes they tell me {it} is a language barrier" this teacher is a veteran teacher and can communicate with students in both English and Spanish. He, however, noted the disconnect between what some teachers expect of the students and how they teach rigorous content. He explained, "I have noticed that many teachers use language that is convenient for communication at the time instead of language that could produce an increase in vocabulary in the academic setting for students".

Another teacher mentioned that the language barrier may take more than a simple conversation with students to determine if it is interfering with the student's academic success, they pointed out that "I think it depends on a lot of observation, talking to them... is it understanding?... Testing whether they can write in English".

Although most participants equated ELL with Latinx students, one veteran teacher gave a glimpse of an understanding that it may not be that simple. She said, "The students that I consider not to be an English language learner, I'm surprised to find they are ELL because I think they, in my conversations with them in class and stuff, I feel like they really understand me....".

This generalization was not pervasive when teachers were asked how they plan for their diverse students. Although some still referred to language acquisition as part of their plan to address their diverse student population; they also mentioned other aspects they address when planning lessons.

### **If I had a dollar...**

If I had a dollar every time the phrase “the student knows no English”, “the student does understand anything”, “the student doesn’t know anything”, from teachers and colleagues. The problem of school funding will have already been resolved.

During the meetings this was a common comment said by teachers when they were referring to a Latinx students who may have just arrived in the country.

When further information was requested from the teacher regarding their assessment of their student’s English proficiency and overall content mastery. The responses were simplistic at most if not nonexistent. With comments such as “the students do not talk much in class” or “if I ask them something they don’t respond” teachers claim to have assess all the skills and proficiency level of a student that has recently enrolled in their class. Considerations such as the student being new to the class, school, state, and country do not seem to be taken into consideration with making those arbitrary assumptions. Language proficiency is often used as a measure of intelligence by teachers who work with emerging bilinguals.

A couple of secondary veteran teachers referred to how they consider the students learning styles to plan their lessons and keep students engaged. Both addressed diversity in a teaching/learning approach rather than a culturally relevant approach. One teacher said, "I think I treat them like they are diverse and, try to break it down as many different ways as I can and try to engage them in as many different ways I can". Along those lines, "My goal is to be able to hit every kind of learning style." This teacher explained how she reaches many students based on how they learn by providing different opportunities to experience the content she is teaching. After a moment of reflection, she added language

development considerations and concluded that they were addressing the cultural background of their students while addressing learning styles. "I don't think there's any statistics that I've seen that says that one, one race does more [of a learning style] than the other."

Other teachers explained how they look at their students' backgrounds and seek their students' input while planning their lessons to maintain engagement in their learning. One elementary teacher explained, "I like to pool their ideas, their thoughts into like what we're going to learn about and just, kind of, the different ways I like to get student input"

Likewise, secondary teachers utilize a similar approach to design their lessons. This teacher provided examples of specific reading lessons he had taught. He planned the lessons considering their students' background and gender. "I would take into consideration where the students were coming from, so that I would choose specific authors from the countries that their families are from... classes where I've had, for example a larger than usual concentration of women, I've tried to choose women authors or women artists".

The second secondary teacher, from the non-feminist group, explained that the lesson objectives are what drive his lesson. However, he also makes other considerations to keep students engaged with the material. "My expectations are of course to follow the standards the best I can for what they are learning...number two how am I going to keep everyone engaged to be interested in it?" as if trying to make a point the teacher explained ... "that would be leaking into someone's diversity cuz (sic) what's gonna (sic) interest you culturally or as a person or individual or what's gonna (sic) pique your

interest." The teacher seems to view the incorporation of culturally relevant material more of a teaching strategy rather than a vehicle to achieve equity in education by saying, "Any tricks you can do if it's based upon heritage, based upon just like movies, based on tv shows... just try to keep them interested or make them ask more questions about".

### **PD as a viable approach to reduce deficit mindset**

#### *Definition of PD*

While most participants agreed on a definition of PD, the most common being that PD is delivered in the form of a presentation by an expert in the area or topic being presented some had alternate formats on how PD can be delivered. In contrast with other studies' findings (Harris & Sass, 2011; Feng & Sass, 2013) implying that experience is more effective in teacher growth than attending PD.

The other formats that participants considered for professional development were varied and included co-planning, peer observations, college courses, and reading articles and books.

#### *PARPD*

According to Turk et al. (2002), teachers are empowered through PARPD. PARPD process allows for teachers to collaborate with their peers to solve real immediate problems in authentic classroom settings. This was evident from the comments from teachers while they participated in the unique PARPD intervention utilized in this research project. One experienced teacher mentioned that he did not need a meeting with colleagues to learn teaching techniques. He preferred watching a video. On the other hand, he appreciated the discussion about the problems occurring in the



classroom. The teacher understood the benefit of collaboration. He defined PARPD as a way to give and receive advice from peers facing the same problems.

Another teacher was grateful that our sessions were a safe place where issues of race and education were addressed. Moreover, she was thankful to learn from more experienced peers their approach to mitigating the negative effects of the mismatch of cultures between teachers and students. In her words “I do not need to meet for an hour to talk about something that could be said in an email; I need to talk about the challenges I am facing while uncovering the things I don’t know in a respectful and open space”.

The teachers were very explicit when determining the efficacy of PD. With comments from a veteran teacher such as "I am not a fan of here's this, this and this, and we don't ever like actually get to go practice it". It is worth mentioning that this teacher considered a presentation and co-planning with colleagues and peer observations as a type of PD. A younger teacher with a few years of experience has a more expanded view of professional development "PD can be anything where you're like gaining more knowledge or skills for your profession." She then adds, "good PD is ongoing...you come back to it... you are actually using the thing that you've had training on."

In contrast, one of the veteran teachers explained that in his experience many PDs he has attended can be summarized with a link to a video or article. This teacher definition of PD might explain his reservations on the quality of PD. "I am thinking you have someone come to speak to us or give us an activity...the purpose is maybe to educate or teach you or to give you a different perspective or you have someone or something doing that. That is what I would consider professional development".

The definition that participants had of PD was as simplistic as "learn from somebody that we don't see all the time or interact with that has a whole new set of ideas." This teacher narrowed the idea of PD even further when she mentioned that collaboration with their team does not qualify as PD because "we have to get outside of the situation that we're in and kind of get new ideas to be able to share with each other".

*PD as support*

Both groups of teachers, feminist, and non-feminist, agreed in answering this question. The central emerging theme from this question was teachers' need for knowledge about their students' culture. The mismatch between the teacher's culture and the student's culture. Teachers mentioned that they needed to learn more about the culture and become more familiar with it. One high school teacher reflected on the fact that he needed PD to learn teaching strategies and techniques but also need to learn more about Latinx culture as he "had no idea or no exposure to [Latinx populations] culture...". Another teacher acknowledges the mismatch in cultures; "I would agree [PD] would [help] because hey, I'm not Latino. I'm not part of that culture. So that is something where I think I could get some value out of it. ..."

Others pointed out other intersectionalities, such as poverty levels, immigration status, language proficiency, etc., that need to be considered and that they believe will be beneficial if they learn more during professional development. An experienced high school teacher newly hired at Crooked Oak particularly mentioned how poverty might be experienced differently depending on its intersectionality with race. "...So, I know that poverty is different from culture to culture. So, I would like more specific on Latinos and poverty...".

A veteran high school teacher alluded to the need for PD, which does not paint the Latinx culture as monolithic, and the problem of a lack of Latinx PD presenters. "...sometimes it feels like some, definitions of what a Latinx community is given by people that are not Latinx...And then hear them opine as experts...".

To this teacher's point, most teachers also pointed out that the PD must be quality and contain essential and valuable information.

Teachers agreed in defining PD as a presentation given by a person or people, some considered other sources such as articles, books, videos, and coaching also as a source for PD.

#### *PD needs assessment*

The post-PD interviews provided insight into how PD can be more effective in addressing the residual mindset of feminist teachers who work with Latinx students. Teachers must analyze and question the validity of their identities as formed by biases and stereotypes. The analysis of self, in turn, can allow teachers to challenge their actions to educate their students (Hajissoteriou et al., 2019). One of the themes that surfaced from the interviews was the belief of those teachers who agreed with feminist principles and who also believed they understood the values and cultural differences between their students and themselves. They did not believe they had learned anything new during the PD sessions they participated in.

Moreover, although the analysis of their identities was not explicitly addressed during PD, their comments highlight the importance of the analysis of self. "Honestly, I am already understanding of being non-judgmental based on my own life experiences and the experiences I have already come across within my teaching. I do not think I need

professional development to accomplish this. As a teacher I am very aware of what I was coming into and that all students and families are different and come from different backgrounds". During the same interview, however, this teacher acknowledged that other teachers might have a deficit mindset about their students. The teacher tries to grapple with the idea, "I feel as though everything that I have been provided with makes me concerned that there might be others out there who are more biased or not as understanding their students and the environment. I am unsure how an educator could be in this field and hold such beliefs". One of the veteran secondary teachers seemed surprised by the realization that there may be other teachers that are not aware of the history and background of their students' struggle. He had assumed that all teachers possess the knowledge can help them improve their connections with students and the planning of their lessons –"Even though I already had some knowledge of the civil rights struggles of Latino students in the classroom, I found it surprising that teachers who participated during collaboration over Latino Civil Rights in schools did not realize that such things had occurred concerning Latino students. It made me realize that just because I think it is common knowledge that is not the case for other teachers".

The teacher, however, makes a renewed commitment to fight inequalities for her students. She acknowledges that she can learn more "as I stand strong to what I believe and that I must remain unbiased, which makes me a strong and powerful teacher who can hopefully spread my wealth of knowledge and understanding to hopefully change those that might differ from me."

Teachers must believe in the importance of "the storied pasts [students] bring with them to the classroom" (Lincoln, 1995, as cited by Auerbach, 1995, p. 1371), including

their parents' experiences. Another teacher showed the same awareness. He recognized that there might be information that can support a teacher in fighting inequalities in the classroom. He believes that by modifying their identities and beliefs, "I have not had any changes so far, but a classroom is a dynamic place, and you need to always be ready to consider anything and ready to make changes if you want to be successful."

Only one of the secondary teachers said that teachers must understand their Latinx students' culture is not monolithic and to be able to relate to the students they must know the specifics of their background and heritage. This agrees with scholars that believe that effective teachers require knowledge of the context where students learn and live to make the lessons more meaningful to their current situations (Mellom et al., 2018). They also require knowledge about their students' family habits, which can help develop classroom activities and strategies that better deliver a rigorous curriculum. Extensive training in all those areas is necessary to improve continually (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Jensen et al., 2018; Mellom et al., 2018). Other standards that increase teachers' expectations include knowledge of their students' language and cultural and ethnic background (Irizarry & Raible, 2011). He points out that "many professional developments, I feel, are aimed more at the general population... it is interesting that, you know, so many people get grouped up as Latinx when that's such a very large group of people with so many different values and traditions."

### **What is learned and unlearned**

Several studies have examined teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward the professional development provided to them (Antoniou, 2013). The teachers' attitudes

range from oblivion to excitement, depending on the type of professional development (Barrett, Butler, & Toma, 2013).

Most teachers in the study seemed to agree that the most helpful form of PD provided them with knowledge about the student population they were working with, and PD that would teach them strategies to address specific learning issues or disabilities. The degree to which the participants believed they needed to understand the culture of their Latinx students varied based on their experiences and their awareness of the impact of the cultural mismatch present.

Some teachers pointed out the intersections that students may face include more than just race. A secondary teacher asserts, "The more you learn about culture..., the socioeconomic status, you can get a different perspective". Others were more specific about the need for culturally relevant PD based on their teaching context. One teacher shared, "this is Oklahoma. This is a predominantly rural Caucasian state. So, I need anything I can to crack that extra walling and figure out what's going on; I am going to take advantage of it".

The teachers' awareness of more specific types of professional development they need was brought to light during the second set of interviews once they had received specific PARPD addressing Latinx students' education. During their interview several teachers referenced conversations that we had during our collaboration time together: "Like what you said in the meeting...do you give pause, think about what is going on, and try to look at it in a different way".

One participant even compared sessions where we had just discussed the troubled history of Latinx education in the US and how some teachers had mentioned that we had

come a long way. Things like segregation in schools were not allowed to happen. This teacher reflected on those comments "...we say we've done better with anxiety and bullying and racism... we keep having these PDs. But I actually think we've gotten worse..." The teacher was referring to practices that have been derived from schools trying to advocate for social justice but may have in fact widened the achievement gap in the process.

For many teachers, including those with multiple years of experience, the PARPD that specifically addressed Latinx students' education had never been experienced before. Although some of the teachers thought the topics of our PARPD were either general knowledge or something they had learned along the way, many still shared these comments:

"I really haven't had a lot [PD], honestly, just from what I get from you." "I don't know I've had a lot that would've made many people question their beliefs." "[H]onestly stuff you present, stuff you think the average person would know, but the thing is they don't. You know, basic respect and so forth."

Teachers were questioned about how what they learned during our PARPD had changed their classroom practices. The answers varied from very simplistic changes to more complex reflections about how they are teaching and what the students are learning. Some teachers began adding bilingual books to their classroom libraries and implementing more culturally relevant lessons, while others began questioning retention guidelines, specifically for emerging bilingual students.

One teacher reflected on her classroom practices as she considers those universal, "good teaching is good teaching" but added, "I wouldn't say classroom practice. I would

say my classroom environment and the way I communicate, the way I talk, the way I listen." Another teacher began to think further into the system, and he reflected on what he had learned "that made me start saying. Maybe I'm making these grand assumptions, or I'm just whitewashing everybody and trying to fit them into the same pigeonhole that I am."

Interestingly enough, many of the teachers who were part of the feminist group were the participants that shared minor learning/growth from our sessions. Comments such as "I'm not really sure if like changed my aspect. I mean, I think it's not even PD, it's just being in the environment" and "I don't know I've had a lot that would've made many people question their beliefs." These younger teachers related that most of the content we had discussed during our collaborations were already known to them either through their recently attended colleges courses (these teachers are currently in a Master's degree program) or based on their background and experiences. Perhaps this is what Crenshaw (1998) warns about: the smoking mirrors of successfully eliminating the "symbolic manifestations of racial oppression" in schools. This prevents feminist teachers from seeing and evading the perpetuation of material subordination of their students of color.



### Summary

This study aimed to understand if PARPD reduce deficit thinking in teachers who self-identify as feminists and whether it influences those who do not identify as feminists similarly or differently.

I can identify some of the topics that merge with the current literature from my findings. The literature suggests that one of the teachers' characteristics is their vocation to make a difference in students' lives and as active agents of social justice (Mirra & Morrel, 2011; Moore, 2008; Troutman & Jimenez, 2016). This study found that Crooked Oak School district teachers have that calling. Every teacher identifies themselves as a change agent inherently associated with being a teacher. However, when comparing the non-feminist group to the feminist group I concluded that both groups shared similar reasons for becoming teachers.

The interviews and PD sessions showed that even those feminist-identifying teachers had some residual deficit thinking about their Latinx students. Their views on what interferes with their Latinx student academic success varies from language proficiency to other cultural factors, such as the perceived priority Latinx families give to education. As both groups of teachers participated in the PD sessions, it was evident that such assumptions were primarily made out of ignorance or the perceived reality of their students' lives. Matsuvo and Smith (2005) found similar beliefs among pre-service teachers who worked with "imaginary children" as their perceptions did not match their students' realities. However, it was evident that as more information was presented to allow teachers to understand and know more about their students' culture and

background, the teachers were able to mitigate some of the deficit mindset and better relate to their students. We confirmed that some of the standards that aid in increased teachers' expectations include knowledge of their students' language and cultural and ethnic background (Irizarry & Raible, 2011). Our findings matched those in other studies where mentors and teachers participated in conversations that challenged their beliefs. The process allowed them to change their practice and attitudes as part of the process (Tanguay et al., 2018).

The PD sessions were uncomfortable for teachers at times. As a facilitator, I had to become more of a coach or even a presenter of information depending on the topic being discussed and the group of teachers participating in the PD session. For some teachers, both feminist and non-feminist, it was easier to try to disengage or fly under the radar during the sessions. In contrast, others wanted to quickly change the subject or make light of the topic being presented to ponder. As a facilitator, it fell on me to keep the conversation going to be able to accomplish the PD session's goals. Witnessing the teacher's discomfort was essential because, without discomfort, the evaluation process of their beliefs for teaching transformation could not have been possible (Jensen et al., 2018; Kose & Lim, 2010; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Mellom et al., 2018). My role as a researcher participant proved to be beneficial in facilitating the process of reflections on the teachers' beliefs, just like in other studies (Bartell, 2013); my presence as a facilitator/coach facilitated a freer questioning of their beliefs to develop better solutions for their classrooms while addressing social justice topics.

Past studies found that effective teachers require knowledge of the context in which students learn and live to make the lessons more meaningful to their current

situations (Mellom et al.,2018). This study also agrees with scholars who believe teachers need knowledge about their students' backgrounds and habits to develop classroom activities and strategies that better deliver a rigorous curriculum. (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Jensen et al., 2018; Mellom et al., 2018). In the end, as evidenced by the increased deeper conversations among colleagues during the PD sessions and the increased vulnerability of the participants allowed for a safe space for teachers to explore their professional identities. This collaborative approach had similar results in a study by Tanguay et al. (2018), which studied teacher identities. As well as their responses to the post-interviews, the participants shared how the conversations with their colleagues and the information gained from our times together during our PD, along with their time for reflection about those conversations, had an impact on how they view their students, how they approach their teaching, and how to evaluate the curriculum teachers will use to teach their Latinx students and other students of color.

### **Implications**

As the director of language acquisition services and as a teacher coach, I have learned of the value PARPD can have to reduce deficit thinking in teachers of Latinx students and other students of color. PARPD was a practical design to create a collaborative research approach. Due to its design, PARPD created an ongoing process where teachers were part of the research process that sometimes resulted in a change in beliefs and a realignment of those beliefs to their practice (Hajissoteriou et al., 2019). At times the conversations became difficult and even detrimental to the purpose of our treatment. However, it is essential to mention that we noticed, like other scholars suggest, that this type of PD should be a process that occurs over time to be beneficial for

teachers' professional growth (Minaya-Rowe & Ortiz, 2010). The teachers showed a change, even if it was slightly in their views about their Latinx students, their families, and how their teachers approach teaching in these communities. Proof of the effectiveness of the PD was incremental as we continued with the treatment. This agrees with studies that focused on building teacher capacity and was proven beneficial, mainly when learning opportunities were provided over time (Mellom et al., 2018).

Most importantly, it was evident that teachers felt more comfortable as the sessions evolved and continued throughout several sessions. This confidence showed in the vulnerability of saying what they did not know and their willingness to learn more about their students. This is important, as was mentioned before, because Oklahoma only requires a certain number of PD hours related to culturally responsive teaching and language learning acquisition. (OKSDE, 2022). However, this requirement needs guidance on what type of professional development and the specific topics to be addressed. The requirement needs to specify the length of time this professional development should be attended. School districts, scholars, and teachers should consider what other scholars have found, that PD should be continuous and specific to the populations they serve. PD should also consider what the teachers know and what they want to know to make it more meaningful.

Another implication derived from this study is that PD should address the mismatch between the teacher force and the student population and address it openly. Scholars noticed the profession's association with feminism and its role in education as a resistance movement for social justice (Budgeon, 2001; Crocco et al., 1999; hooks, 2000; Massie & Ho, 2020; Ohito, 2019). This study found that even when teachers may

not self-identify as feminists, they still share and agree with some of the tenets of feminism, and this should be taken as a springboard to explore how districts can take advantage of this mindset and grow it into a teaching force prepared to further social justice in schools and fulfill the public school mission of being a democratic institution. Scholars have noticed that the profession's gendered nature implies its association with feminism, as the first members of the feminist movement were women, especially those who joined the education profession as teachers and scholars (Budgeon, 2001; Crocco et al., 1999; Massie & Ho, 2020; Ohito, 2019).

### **Recommendations for future research**

The study and its findings can inform important constituent groups such as teachers, school administrators, and policymakers about the future of teacher PD and its impact on student academic achievement. Particularly impact the achievement of historically disenfranchised groups such as Latinx students.

For teachers, this study provides essential information about how they can advocate for their professional development needs by requiring their administrators and district opportunities to collaborate with colleagues. They must engage in PARPD, which allows them to analyze and evaluate themselves, including their identity and beliefs, and determine how they can utilize that knowledge to mitigate institutionalized practices that affect their Latinx students. Teachers can apply the skills learned through in this study to any other mandated PD to critically think about how it applies to their classrooms.

The teachers can use the information in this study to develop PARPD, which allows them to think critically and engage with their colleagues to find answers to daily issues in their classrooms that may not occur in other school settings.

This study and its findings can inform administrators about how to support their teachers and students better. Administrators should provide teacher with PD opportunities allows teachers to engage collaboratively with their peers instead of deciding what their teachers may need. Administrators' preparation for and careful implementation of the PARPD process is key to teacher success. Administrators can support teachers by providing them with the tools to understand the PAR process and how to implement it well. This must be done with significant reservations to avoid falling back to the delivery of the traditional institutional approach to adult learning but rather as a grassroots effort. Administrators must also allow teachers the time and resources to conduct PARPD in an environment where uncomfortable conversations about race and racism will contribute to the advancement of social justice in schools.

Finally, for policymakers, this study can inform how policies regarding addressing student achievement and teacher PD must consider teachers' capacity to conduct educational research that may have a tangible impact on student learning. Policy should be written with the lessons learned in this study in mind, which found that teacher PD must be designed based on the teachers' identities and beliefs and the context in which they teach. As such, PD mandates cannot take a one size fits all approach. As a result, funding and other requirements should consider the context in which students, teachers, and administrators' function.

### **Conclusion**

The study sought to understand if PARPD reduces deficit thinking in teachers who self-identify as feminists and whether it influences those who do not identify as feminists similarly or differently based on the answer to the teachers' interviews and the

notes and observations that I the researcher participant made during the PARPD session I can conclude that PARPD can influence in mitigating deficit thinking in teachers of Latinx students. The study found that PARPD influenced both groups of teachers, those who self-identified as feminists and non-feminists. The difference presented in how the non-feminist group of teachers was more resistant to what they viewed as traditional PD versus our treatment, in which we utilize PARPD as our template to hold PD. The teachers viewed the PD sessions as helpful because they were designed for them to come up with the problem and find a solution by conducting research based on what they believed were their needs.

The teachers found it helpful to have a safe space to be vulnerable and ask questions they did not know the answers to. They also appreciated that the conversations always addressed the obvious about race, culture, gender, and other topics in a non-threatening manner but with honesty to address their lack of knowledge to better their relationships with their students and eventually their results when teaching.

In a teachers' words, "PARPD was helpful in understanding and getting a different perspective on their Latinx students' life, including their race and culture, and how to address those differences in the classroom to better relate to them and hence understand better how they learn."

The PD in this study differentiated itself from standard faire PD in institutionalized schooling by allowing the teachers to think critically about the particular issues they face in their classroom. The problem with traditional PD in institutionalized schooling is that we try to provide ready-to-use technical skills that address an already diagnosed educational problem rather than a PD approach that allows the teachers to

adapt it to the context in which they teach. The PARPD approach allows them to question their identities and beliefs. PD should be a concerted effort from teacher preparation programs to professional settings in a progressive process.

The intervention began by providing, to teachers, a topic related to social justice in schools to allow them to understand some of the systemic issues in our district that may not have been evident to the naked eye. Once the PARPD collaborative sessions were well underway, the discussion topics grew organically from the teachers' experiences in the classroom. The topics also developed from their research and data collection throughout the intervention. My role evolved from a researcher/facilitator to a researcher/participant, during which I collaborated with other participants to solve issues and to advance social justice in our district—finding solutions based on our specific context and our backgrounds.

PARPD provided a space for relational engagement among participants as the often-uncomfortable conversations about race and other 'difficult topics' emerged through organic conversations. Through the engagement of deep analyzing and questioning of self, teachers brought up their questions and wonderings to a safe space where teachers were allowed to share as much as they felt comfortable. This engagement grew incrementally with time as the teachers learned that questions were answered and problems were solved through nonjudgmental collaboration in a nonjudgmental setting.

The participants experienced success as they determined their questions and performed their research in their classrooms. The process teachers shared was non-threatening as they conducted their own research and collected their data. The instructional decisions that some of them took felt non-threatening as they resulted from



our own observations and conclusions about what was best for their teaching practice and their students' academic success.

The non-institutional approach of PARPD to adult learning and growth provided a hopeful way to address important teaching and learning issues that were different from the frequently counter-productive approaches taken by our institutionally prescribed PD, in addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) issues. As participants in PARPD, we did not strive to learn a specific strategy or new research-based approach to teaching. Instead, we participated in collaborative sessions driven by specific issues that each teacher was facing in the classroom intended to create learning opportunities including critical thinking tied to our own emotional life and a range of dispositions.

### **Moving the study forward**

While I imagine doing a similar study to investigate further, I would have liked to spend more time with teachers going through the action research process to explore more of the wonderings we encountered in our daily educational journey along with our Latinx students. Time seemed to increase vulnerability from the participants and more in-depth critical thinking analyzing the teachers' identities. Future studies must consider results in the long term. This study left unanswered issues such as the impact on teacher attitudes towards PARPD. Scholars must consider investigating if teacher attitudes are changed if PARPD is offered instead of the traditional one-and-done approach to PD.

This study addressed if PARPD will reduce deficit thinking towards Latinx students. Scholars, policymakers, and school administrators should investigate further if this approach is as effective in reducing deficit thinking for other disenfranchised student groups such as Black, Native Americans, and other students of color.

To move this forward, teachers and administrators must become the researchers and scholars that begin producing more studies addressing PD in schools and how this PD can and is advancing equity and social justice in schools. They must. Teachers must become experts on how to conduct PAR in their classrooms. Teachers should begin questioning their identities and beliefs to determine their classroom impact. They must advocate their administrators and policymakers the importance of letting them make instructional decisions as the education professionals they are.

Districts must allow this type of PAR to be conducted in their institutions and provide teachers with the resources. This, in the end, will create an abundance of research from which other researchers, teachers, administrators, and policymakers can reference to make educational decisions that push social justice forward and benefit all students.

A collaborative research approach to PD to create cultural competence will support schools in maintaining an ongoing process that will be transformative and address the cultural mismatch they may face (Hajissoteriou et al., 2019).

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**Appendix A: Invitation to Participate in the Study**  
**Participant email**

Subject: PD for learning and improved practice

Dear Crooked Oak teacher,

Come and participate in this opportunity to engage with PD that supports an action research approach to learning, improved practice, and a quality education for your students.

Participate in this PARPD will provide for multiple modes of collaboration and reflection in your practice. It will also provide you with opportunities to build your skill set and to acquire new teaching tools to support all of your students.

Please reply to the email with a – “yes I would like to participate” in the subject line. You will receive additional information on meeting dates and times shortly after your reply.



## **Appendix B: Informed Consent Statement and Signature Page**

### **Would you like to be involved in research at the University of Oklahoma?**

I am Bianca Rose from the ELPS Department, and I invite you to participate in my research project entitled Teacher beliefs & identity: How can professional development prevent deficit thinking towards Latinx students.

This research is being conducted at Crooked Oak Public Schools You were selected as a possible participant because you are a public school teacher who serves a large percentage of Latinx students. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study.

**Please read this document and contact me to ask any questions that you may have BEFORE agreeing to take part in my research.**

**What is the purpose of this research?** The purpose of this research is to understand if participatory action professional development is the best approach to build new skills to better serve a diverse student population.

**How many participants will be in this research?** About 5 people will take part in this research.

**What will I be asked to do?** If you agree to be in this research, you will complete an attitude and belief inventory and you will attend a participatory action professional development for 4 weeks, and complete a couple of interviews.

**How long will this take?** Your participation will take four weeks, plus two days for the interviews that will last up to one hour and thirty minutes each. If a follow up is needed there will be an additional hour and thirty minutes of your participation at a separate time.

**What are the risks and/or benefits if I participate?** There are no risks and no benefits from being in this research.

**Will I be compensated for participating?** You will not be reimbursed for your time and participation in this research.

**Who will see my information?** In research reports, there will be no information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only approved researchers and the course instructor will have access to the records.

You have the right to access the research data that has been collected about you as a part of this research. However, you may not have access to this information until the entire research has completely finished and you consent to this temporary restriction.

**Do I have to participate?** No. If you do not participate, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the research. If you decide to participate, you don't have to answer any question and can stop participating at any time.

**Audio Recording of Research Activities** To assist with accurate recording of your responses, interviews may be recorded on an audio recording device. You have the right to refuse to allow such recording without penalty.

I consent to audio recording.  Yes  No

**Will I be contacted again?** The researcher would like to contact you again to recruit you into this research or to gather additional information.

I give my permission for the researcher to contact me in the future.

I do not wish to be contacted by the researcher again.

**Who do I contact with questions, concerns or complaints?** If you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research or have experienced a research-related injury, contact me at biancarose291@gmail.com or 405.850.4989 or you can contact my advisor at Frick@ou.edu

*You will be given a copy of this document for your records. By providing information to the researcher(s), I am agreeing to participate in this research.*

Participant Signature	Print Name	Date
Signature of Researcher Obtaining Consent	Print Name	Date
Signature of Witness (if applicable)	Print Name	Date

## Appendix C: Interview Protocols

### Prior to PD

#### Introduction

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate. As you know, I am interested in **learning if professional development that supports an action research approach can improve teaching practice**. Particularly, I am trying to understand **how participatory action professional development is the best approach to build new skills to better serve a diverse student population**. If the questions are general and abstract, you may volunteer any detail you wish. You also have the option of declining to answer – passing on – any of the questions. Do you have any questions before we start?

#### Interview Questions

1. Do you see yourself, a teacher, as a change agent?
2. Do you believe PD can support your commitment as a teacher working with Latinx students?
3. How do you know what is interfering with your Latino students' performance?
4. What type of considerations do you have when planning lessons for your diverse students?
5. Do you believe P.D. help you develop an understanding of the values of others and regard them in a nonjudgmental way?
6. How do you apply what you learned about cultural differences to the improvement of classroom practices?
7. What aspects of P.D. have you received that allow you to question your beliefs about Latino students in a meaningful, non-threatening, and not overwhelming way?

#### Closing

Now that we are finished, do you have any questions to ask me about this research project? If you want to contact me later, here is my contact information [biancarose291@gmail.com](mailto:biancarose291@gmail.com). Also, I may need to contact you later for additional questions or clarification. Can I also have your follow-up contact information?

## Post PD

### Introduction

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate. As you know, I am interested in **learning if professional development that supports and action research approach can improve teaching practice**. Particularly, I am trying to understand **How participatory action professional development is the best approach to build new skills to better serve a diverse student population** If the questions are general and abstract, you may volunteer any detail you wish. You also have the option of declining to answer – passing on – any of the questions. Do you have any questions before we start?

### Interview Questions

1. Do you see yourself, a teacher, as a change agent?
2. Do you believe PD can support your commitment as a teacher working with Latinx students?
3. How do you know what is interfering with your Latino students' performance?
4. What type of considerations do you have when planning lessons for your diverse students?
5. Do you believe P.D. help you develop an understanding of the values of others and regard them in a nonjudgmental way?
6. How do you apply what you learned about cultural differences to the improvement of classroom practices?
7. What aspects of P.D. have you received that allow you to question your beliefs about Latino students in a meaningful, non-threatening, and not overwhelming way?
8. What evidence allows you to know your beliefs and biases have positively impacted your teaching due to professional development?
9. What changes (if any) in your attitudes and beliefs occur during your participation in this culturally responsive professional development series?

### Closing

Now that we are done, do you have any questions to ask me about this research project?  
If you want to contact me later, here is my contact information  
biancarose291@gmail.com. Also, I may need to contact you later for additional questions  
or clarification. Can I also have your follow-up contact information?

## **Appendix D: Gender and Belief Inventory (GABI)**

Directions: Carefully read each of the following statements, choose the answer (1-4) that best represents your opinion, and write the number on the appropriate blank on the answer sheet. Some statements are purposely worded so that they represent an “extreme” point of view. Think about the statements and answer them honestly with the answer choice that most closely matches your personal opinion. After you have answered all 45 questions, refer to the instructions on the last page for scoring the GABI and understanding what your scores mean.

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<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<p>1. Gender inequality can never be eliminated because of biological differences between men and women.</p>			
<p>2. Men’s and women’s gender roles today are determined by the way that gender roles evolved for survival in hunting and gathering societies.</p>			
<p>3. A man’s first responsibility is obtaining economic success, while his wife’s first responsibility is caring for the home and family.</p>			
<p>4. Men need to be liberated from gender stereotypes as much as women do.</p>			
<p>5. Capitalism is responsible for the increased divorce rate and the general breakdown of families.</p>			
<p>6. Women are oppressed by both capitalism and patriarchy.</p>			
<p>7. Men’s control over women forces women to be the primary caretakers of children.</p>			
<p>8. Having women in positions of political power would bring about new systems of government that promote peace and cooperation.</p>			
<p>9. Women’s oppression will continue as long as women and men live together.</p>			
<p>10. Women of color face additional oppression (race and gender) in the workplace.</p>			

11. Drag performances (i.e., drag queens and drag kings) blur gender boundaries, thus revealing the true range of possible genders.
12. Natural differences between men and women determine the different gender roles men and women occupy in society.
13. The behavior that prehistoric humans needed to survive is still ingrained in our genes in men's roaming and sexual promiscuity and in women's nesting, nurturing and sexual loyalty.
14. The breakdown of the traditional family structure caused many of the evils in our society.
15. Social change for sexual equality will best come about by education and legal changes.
16. Class is more important than gender in explaining why women have not achieved equal leadership with men in society.
17. Women's low pay in "traditionally female jobs" (i.e., nursing and teaching) is a result of both gender and class inequalities.
18. Unlike women, men are not oppressed in our society.
19. Women's experience with caring for babies, cleaning, feeding people, etc. Gives them a clearer vision of reality than that of men.
20. Women's lives would be improved if they lived professionally and personally independent from men.
21. We cannot truly fight for gender equality without also fighting for racial equality.
22. Gender is not natural; it is created as we do it—in the ways we dress, talk, behave, and use our bodies.

23. Real biological differences (such as anatomy, brain “wiring,” and hormones) between men and women make traditional gender arrangements either inevitable or, at least, preferable.
24. Whereas men are interested in having many short-term sexual encounters, women are selective in choosing a long-term sexual partner.
25. Boys should be taught to be rational, competitive and self-assured to prepare them to enter the paid labor force and girls should be taught emotional qualities and sensitivity to others to prepare them for child rearing.
26. Regardless of biological differences between men and women, there should not be different gender roles for men and women because of the importance of personal choice—individual rights, such as liberty, justice and equality of opportunity.
27. Capitalism oppresses women because they are not paid for housework and childcare.
28. Women’s oppression is inseparable from class oppression; therefore, to end gender inequality, both capitalism and patriarchy must be abolished.
29. Gender stereotypes are only one symptom of the larger system of patriarchal power, which is the true source of women’s oppression.
30. The current male-oriented society should be transformed toward a more female-oriented society, which would emphasize “women’s values” such as peace, gentleness, and caring for others.
31. Strong women know when they need to live separately from men.
32. In order to understand gender roles and gender inequality in society, we must consider race, ethnicity, and social class—not only gender.



33. We should not only tolerate, but encourage difference and multiplicity (as life is constantly changing) in the possible range of genders.
34. Along with the biological fact that women give birth, women's hormones (i.e., estrogen, progesterone, and prolactin) are one of the key reasons women are the primary nurturers and caretakers of children.
35. Women choose mates who are willing and able to invest resources in them and their children in order to provide protection and other material advantages that increase their ability to survive and reproduce.
36. Families operate better if they have complementary roles, differentiated by gender—not parental androgyny.
37. Men and women should be treated in a gender-neutral way, especially under the law.
38. It is not men, but the capitalist system, that are the primary enemies of women.
39. It is both the capitalist system and men's control over women that forces women to be the primary caretakers of children.
40. Men prevent women from being leaders in government and business through men's control of political and economic institutions.
41. Bringing more women into male-dominated professions would make these professions less ruthless, aggressive, and competitive.
42. Women's bonds with one another are deeper and more intense than their bonds with men.
43. Talk about power for women overlooks the need to empower people of all races and ethnicities.

44. Equality will come when we recognize the diverse range of possible sexes, so that one can no longer be seen as inferior and the other superior.

45. I consider myself a feminist.

*GABI was created by Janice McCabe and Brian Powell, Copyright 2008. Some statements were adapted from the Feminist Perspectives Scale, Copyright 1989, 1997 by Nancy M. Henley.*

**Gender Attitude and Belief Inventory (GABI) Answer Sheet**

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>1.</b> ____	<b>12.</b> __	<b>23.</b> __	<b>34.</b> __
<b>2.</b> ____	<b>13.</b> __	<b>24.</b> __	<b>35.</b> __
<b>3.</b> ____	<b>14.</b> __	<b>25.</b> __	<b>36.</b> __
<b>4.</b> ____	<b>15.</b> __	<b>26.</b> __	<b>37.</b> __
<b>5.</b> ____	<b>16.</b> __	<b>27.</b> __	<b>38.</b> __
<b>6.</b> ____	<b>17.</b> __	<b>28.</b> __	<b>39.</b> __
<b>7.</b> ____	<b>18.</b> __	<b>29.</b> __	<b>40.</b> __
<b>8.</b> ____	<b>19.</b> __	<b>30.</b> __	<b>41.</b> __
<b>9.</b> ____	<b>20.</b> __	<b>31.</b> __	<b>42.</b> __
<b>10.</b> __	<b>21.</b> __	<b>32.</b> __	<b>43.</b> __
<b>11.</b> __	<b>22.</b> __	<b>33.</b> __	<b>44.</b> __
			<b>45.</b> __

**Steps for scoring the GABI (Gender Attitude and Belief Inventory):**

Note: Don't read these scoring instructions until after you've answered the 45 questions and recorded your responses on the answer sheet.

1. Add the numbers across the 11 rows on your answer sheet (for example, add the number in the blank for statements 1 + 12 + 23 + 34) and write the totals off to the right of each row.

2. Write the names for the theoretical perspectives beside the total for each row:

1. Physiological (1, 12, 23 & 34)

2. Sociobiological (2, 13, 24 & 35)

3. Structural functionalist (3, 14, 25 & 36)

4. Liberal feminist (4, 15, 26 & 37)

5. Marxist feminist (5, 16, 27 & 38)

6. Socialist feminist (6, 17, 28 & 39)

7. Radical feminist (7, 18, 29 & 40)

8. Cultural feminist (8, 19, 30 & 41)

9. Separatist feminist (9, 20, 31 & 42)

10. Multicultural, Multiracial or Black feminist or Womanist (10, 21, 32 & 43)

11. Post-modern feminist (11, 22, 33 & 44)

The numbers in parentheses are the question numbers that include statements for each perspective. For example, Physiological theorists' viewpoints include those stated in questions 1, 12, 23 & 34.

3. Use the following ranges to determine how closely your views align with those of these

theoretical perspectives:

- 15-16 strong alliance with the views of the theory
- 12-14 your views align with the views of the theory
- 6-8 disagreement between your views and those of the theory
- 4-5 strong disagreement between your views and those of the theory

A score of 9-11 is neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the perspective.

4. Question #45 does not fit in any of these 11 individual perspectives, but is related to all of the feminist perspectives (#4-11 in the list above). Think about and jot down your ideas about self-labeling (i.e. publicly identifying with a label) versus holding viewpoints that are consistent with those of a theory. Why might someone choose to call themselves a “feminist”? Why might they not want to claim the label?

### **Short Descriptions of Theoretical Perspectives on GABI**

Below are very brief overviews of each of the eleven theories on GABI. Two useful sources for additional information about these theories are *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction* by Rosemarie Tong and *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics* by Judith Lorber.

Physiological theorists believe that biological differences determine the social differences between men and women. They often focus on biological differences dealing with reproduction, hormones, or the brain.

Sociobiological theorists believe that men and women’s social roles have evolved over time as to best help them pass on their genes. Different strategies are beneficial to men and to women since they face different challenges to successful reproduction. This perspective is sometimes referred to as evolutionary psychology.

Structural functionalist theorists believe that society is a system of complementary parts which work to maintain the whole; gender helps to structure social life by providing complementary roles for men and women. Boys and men are socialized to be instrumental while girls and women are socialized to be expressive. It is efficient for society that these different roles are present in each (heterosexual) family.

Each of the next eight theories (i.e., the feminist theories) refers to “inequalities” rather than “differences,” as the first three theories did. They all believe gender is an important distinction in society, men and women are unequal in society (in other words, sexism and patriarchy exist), and these inequalities can and should be changed; however, they differ in important ways as explained below.

Liberal feminists believe that men and women both are disadvantaged by society’s gender expectations. They advocate working within institutions to “level the playing field” through changing laws, education, and socialization to bring about gender equality.

Marxist feminists believe that the oppression of women stems primarily from capitalism, which exploits women’s labor and is upheld through women’s unpaid domestic labor. They believe that economic inequalities are the most central form of inequality. Therefore, eliminating capitalism would get rid of gender inequalities. Socialist feminists believe that women’s oppression is inseparable from class oppression. Therefore, to bring about gender equality, we must work to eliminate both capitalism and patriarchy.

Radical feminists believe that women are oppressed by our patriarchal society. They do not believe that men are oppressed. They seek a fundamental reorganization of society because our existing political and social organization is inherently patriarchal.

Separatist feminists, like radical feminists, believe that women are oppressed by our patriarchal society. They, however, believe that we can’t get rid of this problem if women and men are together. In order to achieve equality, women need to separate

themselves from men. Some believe this is a temporary stage while others see this as a permanent goal.

Cultural feminists, like radical feminists, believe that women are oppressed by our patriarchal society. They, however, focus on empowering women through valuing, emphasizing, and encouraging the positive qualities traditionally associated with women, such as nurturance, caring, cooperation, relationships with others, childbirth, morality, peace, pureness, and women's connection to nature and the earth.

Multicultural feminists believe that many inequalities are important in society today, not only gender. In addition to gender inequalities, they focus on race, ethnicity, and class—and sometimes also add sexuality, nationality, age, disability, and others. They believe that people experience gender differently depending on their location in the structures of race, ethnicity and class. Therefore, there is no universal female experience. This perspective is sometimes referred to as black feminism, multiracial feminism, or womanism.

Post-modern feminists believe that gender and sex are multiple, constantly changing, and performed by individuals. There are many (i.e., more than two) genders and sexes. They focus on creating social change through challenging the existence and blurring the boundaries of these categories. This perspective shares many ideas with queer theory.

*GABI was created by Janice McCabe and Brian Powell, Copyright 2008. Some statements were adapted from the Feminist Perspectives Scale, Copyright 1989, 1997 by Nancy M. Henley*

### **GABI validity and reliability**

The GABI instrument was investigated in a study highlighting its use in a college classroom. It has been subjected to statistical analysis providing initial reliability and validity. It demonstrated to be consistently reliable in acquiring results of interests and measuring what the survey purports to measure. (McCabe., 2013). The first type of analysis used in the study analyzed how students found the GABI interesting, helpful, and enjoyable. The study showed no significant differences in any of the measures by the contexts it used, such as university, semester, section, instructor, or year. The second gauge of the GABI's effectiveness comes from direct measures of students' learning. The study also found ease in adapting the instrument for use in other courses. Further, McCabe's (2013) article was cited in other studies exploring feminism and its impact in the classroom (Fitch et al., 2021; Flores et al., 2020; Herring et al., 2016).



# Appendix F: Data Coding Process

	Theme	Category	Code	Data
Feminist Teacher	Teacher background	Understanding of Latinx culture	Childhood experiences	Grew up in Houston with high hispanic population
		To-Counsel-Te-Teenagers	I think I have a lot more just understanding because I kind of grew up with the culture...I was surrounded by it	
		Special-Education-not-influence	My mom... finds people of different cultures to become friends with... so I had very diverse friends	
		Provide-extra-help-all-students	I've kind of grown up, you know with divorced parents, single mom, we didn't always have things... I am able to see that point of view	
		Poverty-main-influence-achievement	I think that definitely like my environment has played a big part on like not being judgemental	
			I've been in a lot of different careers, I've been around the world. I was in the military	
			Maybe because I was exposed to mostly African American culture and no so much Latino culture.	
			I am from rural Oklahoma	
			I think having the background of being around diverse groups makes me more open... culturally curious... trying to be more empathetic	
			Personally-exposed-to-diverse-pi...	
			...my upbringing... my dad's catholic and my mom is an atheist.	
			My parents are from different countries... So I had a lot of things that were not matching with others. I feel like that has maybe help me not judge others	
			My experiences since that is what makes me that is the only way I am going to accept PD	
			I went to HS in California, we were about maybe 50% white, 30% Asian, 20% Hispanic	
			When I worked in California everybody I worked with was Hispanic... So I've always worked around Hispanic/ Latino culture	
		Amy-brat-special-ed-background	I am an army brat and we traveled everywhere... So I think that gives me more empathy to people that are new or don't understand a different culture.	
			We were not well off when I was raised, we were pretty low income	
			...it made me think of things in a different light to see.	
		Teacher as change agent	Changing-view-Latinas	We are changing their lives... We change how they view adults... older generations
			Change-view-elders	I think we change their outlook on life too, and education
			Change-view-adults	Give them more opportunities, things they didn't know they could do
		Good change v/To-be-Change-Agent	Changed-view-Latino-community	...Every teacher has to be some type of change
				I think so I hope I make a difference
				I've had students over the years that have told me... [] inspired them to continue with their careers or presented possibilities to them that they were not aware of in their lives.
		Personal-belief-responsible-for-ch-		In the middle school... I really feel that is where the kids get the most change
		tangible vs. intangible change		I shape young minds
				I think change agent like someone who comes in and wants to create positive change
		Vocation	First career choice	Learn-student-cultures
				When I went into teaching I had the same idea of helping [students] more than just their education
				increases-sense-of-belonging
			Personally-changed-view-people	
			Is that my intention to be necessarily a change agent? No, but probably am of some type unintentionally or intentionally	
			Teacher-buys-extra-supplies	
			I partly became a teacher to be an change agent	
			I love from a very young age	
		Teaching as second career	That's actually why I love teaching. I get to shape that formative time in their lives	
			I always wanted to be a teacher	
			Keupen	
	Role model	Provide-more-than-education	You have some type of influence on em	
		Personal-value-not-judgemental	If you coach somebody for four years and you're a good role model, I think you are a great change agent	
			I feel like I'm more of a positive attitude for just everybody in the HS just to be happy.	
		Personal-empathy-for-others	Sometimes, I am one of their only influences in their lives	
			I consider myself a pretty good role model	
			...I want our future generation to like have those positive role models	
	PD needs assessment	Cultural mismatch	Keupen	
			Learning more about [cultural differences] can help you support the students in like academic pursuits, but also, acquiring academic language	
			Ahmed	
			I think it can... because of the community that we are involved in.	
			Bateman	
			I try to take advantage of all that. And specially with Latino culture... there's a lot of things... that I have no idea, no exposure to...	
			Waterman	
			I would like more specific [PD] on Latinos and poverty, Latinos and their family... what I think would be real information and real help and real perspective.	
			Roldan	
			Many PD's I feel are aimed more at the general population... I feel they generalize too much. While it would be too difficult to make a very specific Latinx PD it will be more beneficial.	
			Smith	
			I think it can. I am not a huge fan, but when it comes to Latino students, I would agree it would [be beneficial] because hey, I'm not Latino. I'm not part of that culture.	
			Garnett	
		Teaching strategies	Bateman	
			I think it is formative for me, begin technically a novice teacher, I need all the help I can get. Anytime someone's able to, give me better, tips, techniques and strategies	
			Waterman	
			PD is anything that it's helping me in my classes and working with my students and with my peers.	
			Strong	
			I think so... seeing [strategies], saying it, actually doing it, the hands on part of it, so yes I learned things.	
	Assessing What Interferes Latinx student performance		Garnett	
			I try to figure out if it's something that's going on at home, something that I am not doing correctly for them	
			Smith	
			The biggest thing for me is effort. Trying. If you set the expectation out there, this is not about getting it all done or even getting it right. This is about just giving it a try.	
			Strong	
			It can be their behavior. That's usually the first thing that I notice. And so their behavior is really what reflects if it's something, you know traumatizing or something from home that.	
			Roldan	
			Because they tell me, sometimes they tell me is a language barrier. Sometimes they tell me there is no time left in the day	
			Waterman	
			Well, I don't know if it's a personal, most of the time that could be interfering with it... I've taken away a lot of doing things at home because I feel like so much is going on. They are	
			Bateman	
			I'm not sure if I know what's interfering or not	
			I can be... conscious of the struggles they are having, I can try to get one alone, but it's hard for me to get into their shoes.	
			I am trying to see what external factors are losing them one way	
			Ahmed	
			Sometimes I'm like, I don't know if it's language or I don't know if it's like not understanding. I'm not really sure on that.	
			Keupen	
			I think it depends on a lot of observation, talking to them... is it understanding?	
			Testing whether or not they can write in English	

