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The Cultural Inability of Me: A Conceptual Framework for Accommodating the Roadblock in the Mirror

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The Cultural Inability of Me

A Conceptual Framework for Accommodating the Roadblock in the Mirror

Benterah C. Morton, Kaitlin M. Jackson, & Melvin J. Jackson

Abstract

Teacher education programs focus heavily on content knowledge and pedagogical skills, but less often acknowledge the teacher's identity and ability to meet the cultural needs of their students. Teachers lacking the ability to understand their own and their students' racial, cultural, and ethnic needs may encounter challenges in the classroom that can result in academic, behavioral, and social-emotional implications for students. This article presents a framework for continually examining the self to uncover beliefs that are unknown to others and us that directly impact our decision-making, thoughts, and actions and ultimately our leadership and teaching.

Introduction

In an effort to focus on student progress, teacher education programs have been working to produce teacher candidates that know the subject matter and can teach it effectively, (Wenglinsky, 2000) often through the accreditation process of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and

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others. Despite the reality that these goals are being met and the content knowledge of teacher candidates is increasing steadily, there has been relatively little change in K-12 student outcomes (USDE, 2016). Many scholars have theorized why there has been little change in student achievement levels across the past few decades (Fasching-Varner & Mitchell, 2013; Fasching-Varner, Mitchell, Martin & Bennett-Haron, 2014; McGrady & Reynolds, 2013). A few of the diagnoses include racial mismatch (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013), educational realism (Fasching-Varner, et al., 2014), and lack of cultural proficiencies (Gay, 1977, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 2006). Building upon key works of Gay (1997), Ladson-Billings (1992, 1995a, 2006), and Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell (2003), this article develops a conceptual framework for accommodating the roadblock we see in the mirror—ourselves. It begins by exploring relevant literature leading to a detailed definition and common practical examples of the cultural inability of me (CIM), then provides three strategies for educators to use on their journey to accommodate for the cultural inability that prevents them from fully engaging with students and families from diverse cultures in educational excellence.

Review of Literature

Without question, when the majority of students in public schools are students of color and only 18 percent of our teachers are teachers of color, we have an urgent need to act.

—Education Secretary John B. King, Jr.

Demographic Trends

In 2016, the United States Department of Education (USDE) published *The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce*. This USDE report outlined the state of public schools in the United States in relation to racial diversity and serves as a foundation for developing a framework for accommodating for the cultural inability of me in education. The report begins by establishing that, “diversity is inherently valuable,” and “recognizing that teachers and leaders of color will play a critical role in ensuring equity in our education system,” while highlighting that, “diversity in schools, including racial diversity among teachers, can provide significant benefits to students” (p. 1). Further, the USDE report noted that 82% of public school teachers identify as White—a slight decline from 2000 when 84% identified as White.

While the trend of racial mismatch (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013) persists in P-12 teachers and students, it is also representative of P-12 principals and students: “in the 2011-12 school year, only 20 percent of public school principals were individuals of color” (USDE, 2016). Further, only 6 percent of public school superintendents in 2011 were individuals of color, which suggests that the higher the position within a school district, the less likely that the position will be held

by a person of color (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). The prognosis of racial mismatch is not positive. USDE (2016) suggests that by 2024 students of color will make up 56% of the public school population yet the teacher workforce will remain predominantly White. This level of homogeneous teacher and leader workforce provides challenges to the levels and quality of standards, advocacy, and relationship building developed between educators and diverse populations of students (Villegas & Irvine, 2010).

Racial Mismatch

Racial mismatch (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013; Morton et al., 2017; Skiba, Horner, Chung, Rausch, May & Tobin, 2011; Renzulli, Parrott, & Beattie, 2011; Warren, 2015) describes the phenomenon of educators working in environments in which their race or ethnicity is inconsistent from the pupils they teach. This phenomenon is pervasive in American society and has been directly correlated with a vast number of negative impacts on students of color across the globe. The scholars referenced in this section have addressed racial mismatch as an issue rooted in a dichotomy between students of color and White educators. There is immense value in examining the interactions of White teachers with non-White students, as over 82% of public educators identify as White whereas students of color makeup 49% of the students in public education (USDE, 2016). However, there is also value in exploring the interactions of *all* teachers and their workings with students who are culturally/racially/ethnically inconsistent from them. Doing so furthers the understanding that racial “mismatch effects vary across types of mismatch” (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013, p. 14) including but not limited to cultural, socio-economic, ethnic, and religious mismatch. Likewise, the cultural inability of me affects all teachers who interact with students through racial mismatch. Furthermore, providing tools for *all* teachers to minimize the negative impacts that racial mismatch has on students expands their singular view to a more pluralistic, equity-based view.

Academic implications. One of the more examined effects of racial mismatch is lowered expectation of success for students of color from White educators (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2016; McGrady & Reynolds, 2013) when compared to the expectations of success for White students from White educators. This type of lowered expectation often results in students of color being taught to a modified standard thus performing to the lower standard. These students are, in turn, given fewer opportunities to learn new material, fewer opportunities to answer stimulating questions, less response time, less praise, and less informative feedback. Naturally, the reduction in opportunity for learning leads to less acquisition of new knowledge for students of color, keeping them at a lower learning level.

Gershenson, Hart, Lindsay, and Papageorge (2017), viewing racial mismatch as a contributor to academic achievement gaps between students of color and their White counterparts, set out to determine if same-race teacher/student interactions

provided any long-run impacts on student achievement. They found that, “Black students who are as good as randomly assigned to a Black teacher at least once in the third, fourth, or fifth grades are more likely to aspire to college and less likely to dropout of high school,” (Gershenson et al., 2017, p. 2) cutting dropout rates by 39%. These findings support previous short-range studies touting the benefits of same-race teacher/student pairings including increased scores on standardized tests (Dee, 2004), and increased attendance and decreased suspensions (Holt & Gershenson, 2015).

Behavioral implications. Racial mismatch also impacts the response educators have toward student behaviors. In some cases, students of color are penalized more harshly or more frequently than their White counterparts for similar violations (McFadden, Marsh, Prince, & Hwang, 1992; Shaw & Braden, 1990; Skiba et al., 2011) while other students are simply rated lower on behavior than their White counterparts (Downey & Pribesh, 2004). Providing harsher disciplinary action to students of color directly impacts academic instruction as well, in part due to reduced classroom instructional time (Drakeford, 2004). The disproportionality of disciplinary actions (e.g., suspensions and removal from the classroom) has been heavily studied as part of the research on the school-prison pipeline, which has been found to affect students of color in their academic, behavioral, and social/emotional growth.

Seeking to Understand Cultural Differences

It is common in settings of racial mismatch that issues of cultural competence develop into barriers to student successes and teacher triumph (Milner, 2007). To seek to understand an unfamiliar culture is to operate on a continuum of cultural competency with cultural destructiveness on one end and cultural proficiency at the other (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2003). As an individual seeks to understand an unfamiliar culture, they must employ cultural considerations in order to structure exchanges between individuals from dissimilar cultures who seek to have positive dealings with each other. For pedagogues teaching in settings of racial mismatch, working towards cultural competence and cultural proficiency is essential in realizing success for all involved stakeholders (Sy & Jackson, 2018). In contrast, *becoming* culturally competent and *attaining* cultural proficiency are processes (Benishek, Bieschke, Park, & Slattery, 2004) that are impossible to actualize for every segment of cultural diversity. However, simply engaging in reflective practices and dialogue (Milner, 2007) about interactions situated on the continuum are meaningful beginnings to working in settings of racial mismatch. Jerome Hanley (1999) defined cultural competence as, “the ability to work effectively across cultures in a way that acknowledges and respects the culture of the person or organization being served” (p.1). Understanding, promoting, and attaining cultural competence towards proficiency reinforces an educator’s ability to be successful in the classroom (Sy & Jackson, 2018).

Building one's cultural competence towards proficiency is most commonly sought after by educators who belong to dominant groups that teach in classroom settings with large populations of underrepresented peoples (Landa, 2011). Cultural competence is measured on a continuum (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989; Goode & Harrison, 2004; Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2003). Hanley (1999) established a five-stage model for the continuum including: destructiveness, incapacity, blindness, pre-competence, and competence. Lindsey, Roberts, and Campbell-Jones (2013) later added a sixth stage (cultural proficiency) to the continuum in relation to pedagogues. The six stages each represent a milestone towards the goal of reaching cultural proficiency. The stages within the continuum are characterized by achieving certain levels of aptitude.

The Cultural Proficiency Continuum provides a frame of reference for all educators to use to evaluate their actions toward and interactions with others. This reflective evaluation along with continuous discussion and open conversations assists in determining one's hidden beliefs, thereby providing a tool to interrogate one's implicit bias. While this continuum appears linear, educators may find themselves in multiple categories simultaneously. Additionally, educators may move through any sequence of the continuum including skipping components on the way up or down the continuum. While the continuum is a more dated idea, it is a low-level access point to begin the process of interrogating the congruence of one's actions and beliefs.

Implicit Bias

The conscious mind receives information as input, analyzes the information, and through personal interpretation and individual experience it makes a judgement (Staats, 2016). As individuals, we develop innate preferences that guide our decision-making and influence our biases. Thoughts and preferences that individuals make with their unconscious mind are considered to be implicit thoughts. These thoughts are activated and engaged without the individual's active awareness and are influenced through personal experiences and established preferences (Kang & Lane, 2010). Implicit bias is an unconscious discriminatory preference commonly associated with the assigning of negative stereotypes or typecasting of individuals based on factors including: race, religion, gender, socioeconomic status, and other descriptors (Riegle-Crumb & Humphries, 2012).

In an educational setting, implicit bias is commonly seen through teachers entering learning spaces with preconceived unconscious beliefs regarding the educational ability of their students (Staats, 2016). These educators believe that the student is deficient in ability to learn and attribute the inability to the student's race, religion, gender, socioeconomic status, etc. (Jackson et al., 2017). Teachers who may have little to no experience working in settings of racial mismatch unconsciously allow for stereotypes about their student populations to lead their

understanding and comprehension of their abilities or inabilities (Milner, 2007). In racial contexts, implicit bias from teachers has the potential to lead to the over-disciplining of students of color because of an innate belief that these students are guilty until proven innocent. The implications of teachers' implicit bias results in students of color receiving suspensions two to three times more often than their White counterparts and even more commonly in schools with higher percentages of students of color (Drakeford, 2004). Further, students of color are more frequently subjected to harsher disciplinary measures, such as corporal punishment or zero tolerance policies, even when less harsh measures are available and offered to their White peers (Drakeford, 2004). Implicit bias among teachers and administrators handling the disciplinary actions for students of color often results in a Black student getting suspended for "appearing threatening" or "disrespect," (Drakeford, 2004) whereas a White student may receive a suspension for more serious offenses often involving drugs or weapons. The social and academic implications of over-disciplining students of color speak for themselves: reduced time in the classroom means missed instructional opportunities and potentially lower academic achievement, while increased time out of school means increased opportunities for social stigmatization due to disciplinary measures.

What is the Cultural Inability of Me?

Teaching is a challenging profession that consistently requires its members to deny themselves and make intentional efforts to pursue equity in opportunity and success for all students. We expect teachers to willingly challenge ALL children and to do what is best academically for the students instead of doing what is easier for the teacher.

—Morton (2016)

Morton et al. (2017) first introduced the cultural inability of me (CIM), as the cultural disability of whiteness. They describe the cultural disability of whiteness this way:

Despite good intentions, White female teachers' lack of prolonged interactions with people of color often causes them to develop misinformed cultural perspectives of racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students. The cultural disability of whiteness hinders the ability of White female teachers to engage non-White students and families in educational excellence. We believe good intentions carried out with misinformed cultural perspectives are a cultural disability of whiteness. (p. 8)

Concurrent with the cultural disability of whiteness, the cultural inability of me (CIM) describes the inability of teachers and other educators to engage students and families with different cultural experiences and values in educational excellence (Morton et al., 2017). By contrast, CIM is the diagnosis of *any* educator or person that works in an environment of racial mismatch (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013) or with pupils that are inconsistent from them in any of the many dimensions of human identity.

The CIM is a phenomenon that arguably impacts all educators and their interactions with students. Like implicit bias (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998), CIM is rooted in the stereotypes, attitudes, and self-esteem of educators. These roots have been growing in the educator, below the surface, since conception and birth. They have been, and are being nurtured by their family's culture, values, socio-economic status, religion, experiences, abilities, social connectedness, ethnicity, race, national origin, sexual orientation, language, etc. Consider a plant growing in nature: the roots begin growing downward from the seedling, seeking nutrients from the surrounding soil. As it secures itself in the soil, the seedling's shoot begins to reach up out of the soil toward the sun. Once above the surface the plant begins to interact with the surrounding environment, and begins making its own food, all the while being assured that its spreading root structure will keep it secure and stable. In this example, the educator is the seed. The soil is the cultural foundation in which the educator plants roots and adheres to for nourishment, strength, and stability. The educator, like the seed, has no say about the type of soil in which it is planted. However, both are directly influenced by the composition of their foundational soil. The plant does not directly recognize the composition of the soil in which it grows. Yet, the quality of the fruit produced by the plant is a direct result of the nutrients it extracts from the soil. Likewise, an educator's fruit is a direct result of their cultural foundation.

While CIM is tenaciously linked to implicit bias, there is contradictory scholarship that purports that unconscious prejudice has little impact on conscious behavior (French, 2017). Based on the results of the Implicit Association Test administered over several studies, this contradictory scholarship suggests that despite the evidence that people are more likely to relate "bad" words or images with people of color, there is little evidence that connects this implicit bias to observable, measurable behavior (French, 2017). One premise for this argument centers on the human tendency to explain away undesirable behaviors, despite the invisible nature of the unconscious mind. Coupled with centuries of outward, explicit racially discriminatory behaviors, this school of thought remains fueled by the lack of evidence that the unconscious mind controls conscious behaviors (French, 2017). Despite this body of scholarship, there is little room for prejudicial behavior in classrooms with the next generation at stake.

Exploring the Cultural Inability of Me

Culture-Created Inability

The culture-created inability of me regularly manifests as mental or cognitive, limiting a person's ability to engage authentically with persons with varying degrees of cultural difference. Authenticity, in this context, is more in tune with the synonym faithful, calling to its roots in loyalty, whereas, loyalty to a person's

culture, their egocentrism and ethnocentrism, creates a roadblock to interacting with persons outside the culture. These roadblocks, expressed as prejudice and bias, are present throughout the population, and are the roots of the culture-created inability. The culture-created inability therefore, is as plenteous and pervasive as there are cultures. CIM seldom manifests in ways that limit physical activity; instead, it impacts speaking, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, and communicating—all aspects of effective social interactions, and thus effective teaching. If one's ability to interact with others socially is impaired due to bias in thinking and communicating, one's ability to teach will also be impaired, as teaching requires constant social interaction.

CIM in the Classroom

A large majority of preservice and current teachers are taught the basics of curriculum, assessments, and content-related material, with relatively little emphasis on behavior management, classroom culture, and relationship building (Freeman, Simonsen, Briere & MacSuga-Gage, 2014). Without formal training on these procedures, CIM can more easily become a substantial problem in a classroom where racial mismatch exists, often unintentionally it manifests itself both implicitly and explicitly.

Implicit manifestations. Implicitly, CIM becomes problematic in the way of classroom climate, evidenced by simple acts such as smiling, nodding, making eye contact, and maintaining physical proximity to students. In some cultures, children are taught not to look into the eyes of adults, whereas other cultures find it disrespectful to avoid eye contact. CIM is seen when teachers—using their own cultural experience—mandate students to acquiesce to requests for or against eye contact that is inconsistent with the cultural understanding of the child. These small, everyday actions are extremely telling of classroom relationships between the teacher and students, teacher and families, and the classroom and larger school community. Another implicit manifestation can be seen in teacher output, ranging from teacher speech, including feedback, praise, and criticism, to responsiveness expectations (Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007). Additionally, teachers often give more feedback, give more varied feedback, and encourage greater responsiveness to students from whom they expect more (Jackson et al., 2017).

Explicit manifestations. Teacher engagement strategies can expose CIM in more explicit ways, such as student instructional grouping based on teacher expectations and beliefs (Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010), curriculum-related tasks and materials (Lyons-Moore, 2014), and student motivation and engagement strategies (Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Lyons-Moore, 2014). An example of an explicit manifestation can be seen in a teacher's interactions with students identified as English Language Learners. In this instance, the teach-

er situates the students' limited exposure to English as a cognitive deficit and assigns the students to lower ability groups. CIM is especially problematic, because its impacts directly affect student outcomes, whether or not the teacher is aware of their biases or differences in student treatment (Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007).

Accommodating the Cultural Inability of Me

An Example of the Cultural Inability of Me

Imagine a second-year teacher who recently relocated from a major metropolitan Northern California city to Louisiana. With one year of experience and a degree in early childhood education, she comes from an upper-middle class, White, non-denominational family and attended private schools for elementary, middle, and high school. She is assigned to a kindergarten class in a rural school, where 99% of students identify as Black and qualify for free/reduced lunch.

With advice from her peers to spend the first few weeks building classroom culture and focusing on behavior management, she sets out to build relationships with her students and families by conducting home visits for each child. Despite her good intentions to get to know her students, a few families commented on her affect as a well-dressed, middle-class White woman. While the racial mismatch was obvious, the teacher chose to acknowledge the truth in the families' statements but also to focus on their partnership and shared goal of student progress. During the first semester, the California native became familiar with rural Louisiana vernacular, continued to focus on family relationships by making positive phone calls home, and used data and artifacts to demonstrate student progress. In a situation of such cultural and racial differences, this teacher could have had a different experience. However, her dedication to family relationships and open communication allowed her second year of teaching to result in 100% of her students ending the year on grade level.

Now, imagine this same teacher is a fourth-year teacher who has just made an international move from Louisiana to a large Middle Eastern city. With a recently completed Master's degree in special education, she is placed in a classroom working with preschool students with autism, where 100% of the students are of Arab descent and Muslim heritage. Despite the teacher's experience in settings of racial mismatch, the mismatch here extends beyond ethnicity to include culture and religion.

In an effort to remain proactive, the teacher used several resources, including reaching out to friends who lived in the city, to learn more about the culture. She arrived a couple of weeks prior to her start date in order to become better acquainted with culturally appropriate procedures and routines. Intentionally learning about the new culture she paid close attention to the mandatory school trainings for new staff. By learning information in an objective manner, the teach-

er closed herself off from the influence of others, including the media, and ill-informed individuals back home. These intentional accommodations allowed the teacher to begin to build relationships with students and families in a culturally appropriate manner, which ultimately set her up for success and a positive, progress-filled year.

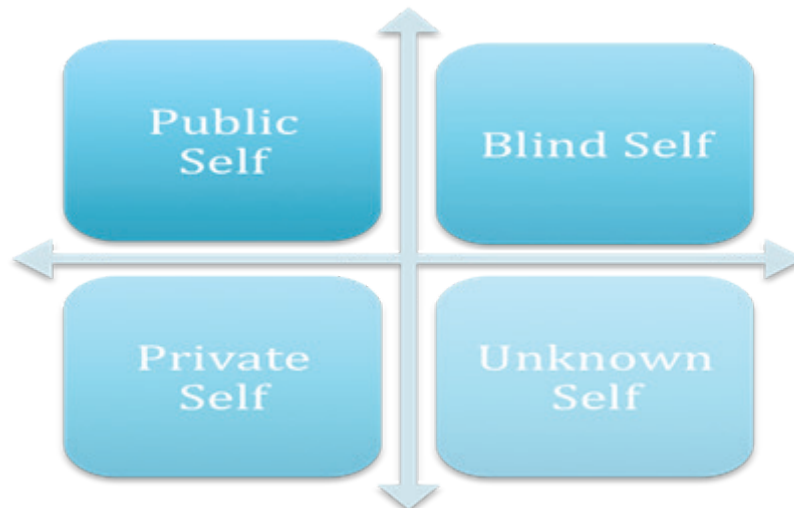
Consider this example of the cultural inability of me in action. While the example chronicles the experience of an upper-middle class White woman, changing the socioeconomic or ethnic/racial demographic of the teacher does not negate the necessity for accommodating for the cultural inability of me. Plainly stated, the cultural inability of me directly impacts the ability of *all* educators, when interacting with students with differing areas of diversity, to meet the needs of students at the highest levels of excellence. As seen in the vignette above, if actions had not been taken to accommodate for CIM, the potential of student development and success could have been depressed (Emdin, 2016; Gay, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2009; Milner, 2007). The lasting result can be seen through an evaluation of educational outcomes of the 20th century. Since the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision in 1954, the United States has spent multiple billions of dollars to support educational ideals. During the 1950's and 1960's, legislation was drafted and passed that mandated education for diverse populations of students through public education. For President Lyndon B. Johnson, improving educational opportunities would directly support his war on poverty, leading to the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (Lessow-Hurley, 1990). From this legislation, reauthorizations every five years, and others (e.g., Bilingual Education Act—1968, IDEA—1990, 2004; NCLB—2000, Race to the Top—2010), the federal government has worked to provide equitable educational opportunities for all students. However, very little change in educational outcomes for diverse populations of students has resulted from the provisions of these multi-billion dollar legislations (Fasching-Varner & Mitchell, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006). For example, the National Assessment of Educational Progress results from 2007-2017 show that students of color consistently score significantly less than their White counterparts, 26 points in fourth-grade reading, 24 points in eighth-grade reading, 22 points in fourth-grade math, and 27 points in eighth-grade math (Education Commission of the States, 2017).

The following framework for accommodating the cultural inability of me responds to the need for teachers across the globe to flourish when teaching in diverse environments. These theoretical and practical accommodations focus on addressing the conscious and unconscious beliefs of educators and providing educators with tools to continue the process of developing themselves to be more culturally aware and culturally proficient. The framework is arranged through application of these three ideas: Evaluation & Critique of Personal Beliefs; Active Journey Toward Personal Development; and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Evaluation & Critique of Personal Beliefs

Exploring, evaluating, and critiquing one's personal beliefs is an uncomfortable challenge. Discomfort often comes in the form of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957; Gorski, 2009; Zapeda, 2006), a byproduct of the contradiction of a person's belief system by evidence that conflicts with established systems of truth. Experiencing cognitive dissonance causes a disquietedness that prompts one of two responses: discredit the evidence in favor of established beliefs or accept the evidence and work to adjust beliefs to more closely align with evidence. Therefore, problematizing one's belief system poses the immense challenge of doing so at the risks of discrediting family, culture, and way of life. The Johari Window (Beach, 1982; Luft & Ingram, 1961) can be used to illuminate the complexity of the challenges to be overcome when interrogating one's belief system. The Johari window (see Figure 1) is arranged in four quadrants of knowledge about the self. The top half of the window represents ideas that are visible to the public. Quadrant one, blind self, identifies things that are blind to the self yet known by others while quadrant two, public self, hosts ideas and beliefs known by the self and others. Ideas housed in the public self are crafted in such a way as to represent the person just as others see them. Simply stated, a teacher wears a red shirt and students recognize the teacher as wearing a red shirt. By contrast, with the blind self, the teacher thinks that students see his/her red shirt as clean and pressed, but the students see the shirt as pink and wrinkled. The bottom half of the Johari window represents ideas that are not visible to the public. The self is aware of and intentionally masks thoughts and ideas in quadrant three whereas; quadrant 4 is hidden

Figure 1
The Johari Window



from the self and others. The unconscious thoughts of the self reside in quadrant four (Beach, 1982; Luft & Ingram, 1961). Following the simple, red shirt, example, the private self would be represented by a teacher wearing a red shirt and his/her students seeing the red shirt, however the students are not aware that the red shirt was a gift from the teacher's parents. The teacher's unknown beliefs and ideas about the red shirt are housed in the unknown self. Educators seeking to accommodate for the cultural inability of me would benefit greatly from activities and experiences outside their own cultural sphere of influence. These experiences alone are not enough to interrogate the *unknown self*. However, coupled with intentional self-reflection and thoughtful discussion (Hatton & Smith, 1995), these experiences can begin to scratch the surface of pulling items from the unknown self to the private self, and beyond.

Lindsey, Robbins, and Terrell (2003) provide a wealth of activities and guidelines for experiences that assist teachers facilitating processes to interrogate their unknown self. Two activities in particular can be used as a catalyst to begin such self-exploration: The Cultural Proficiency Continuum and My Culture. The Cultural Proficiency Continuum, adopted and adapted by Love, Stiles, Mundry, and DiRanna (2008), provides a definition for six components of the cultural proficiency continuum and uses those components to situate the actions of educators from culturally destructive to culturally proficient. Cultural proficiency is "an *approach* to responding to the issues that emerge in a diverse environment" (Lindsey, Robbins, & Terrell, 2003, p. xvi). It is further described as "a way of being that enables both individuals and organizations to respond effectively to people who differ from them." (Lindsey, Robbins, & Terrell, 2003, p. 5). Cultural proficiency is a journey, not a destination. As noted earlier, this journey is not always linear, as components may be may be displayed both concurrently and individually depending on the experiences of the individual.

The second activity developed by Lindsey, Robbins, and Terrell (2003), My Culture, requires participants to grapple with their name and cultural identity. It then asks two basic questions: How do I see or experience this aspect of my culture and how I believe others see or experience this aspect of my culture. Through these two questions participants are challenged to situate their cultural identity within themselves and the surrounding community. As discussed earlier, simply completing these activities alone is not enough to facilitate changes in behavior. However, offering skillfully crafted professional developments integrating these activities has shown some movement in the positive direction of teacher attitudes (Morton, Unpublished Results). These professional developments should be followed up with multiple opportunities for participants to reflect on their behaviors as it relates to the cultural proficiency continuum and their own culture. Continuous reflection is key to grappling with one's belief system (Beach, 1982; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Luft & Ingram, 1961) and transitioning items from the unknown self to the private self and beyond.

Active Journey Toward Personal Development

After teachers who experience racial mismatch acknowledge their implicit bias, it is imperative that they continue personal development in order to accommodate for their own cultural inability. Teachers also must remain cognizant that these steps address every stakeholder within education, beginning with students in the classroom and moving outward to the community as a whole. The journey toward accommodating the cultural inability requires action at each of these levels, ranging from relationship building to culturally responsive decision-making.

In the classroom. Regardless of a teacher's cultural identity or those of his/her students, there are intentional measures all teachers should take in order to ensure and maintain high expectations for all students. Teachers should be mindful of response opportunities, by providing an equitable number of opportunities to respond, individual help, adequate wait time, and probing higher-level questions. Teachers should also provide specific feedback that affirms or corrects responses, praises student performance and effort, provides a reason for the earned praise, and listens attentively to student efforts (Drakeford, 2004). Similarly, teachers should pay close attention to student voice, by providing opportunities to participate in decision-making, making room for student input and interests in content, and offering choices of how to demonstrate learning (Morrison, 2008). Internally, teachers must maintain a growth mindset of their students' potential, which translates to teachers believing that any student can, and will, learn and grow regardless of where they started, rather than maintaining a fixed mindset (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015) that smart children are smart always (and less intelligent children will remain less intelligent). Perhaps the most important proactive measure teachers must take is building and maintaining positive, personal relationships with students and families (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a). Positive relationships based on trust, mutual understanding, and respect, and shared goals are absolutely crucial in student learning and classroom culture, and will also help to minimize the impact of issues related to CIM.

In the school. To continue the journey toward personal development in order to reduce the impact of cultural inability on students, teachers must extend their practices to the greater school community. Principals should maximize professional development opportunities and incorporate diversity training, perhaps by way of training on culturally relevant teaching or the above recommended classroom practices. Professional development can also provide teachers with the opportunity to learn more about their teaching community, the demographics of their students, and their students' culture. Professional development should also include data analysis of disaggregated student data based on demographics, as teachers may be alarmed to see the academic implications of the cultural inability and racial mismatch (Love, Stiles, Mundry & DiRanna, 2008). Guest speakers can

also be beneficial in providing supplemental instruction on culture from a more personal perspective, as well as providing narratives of teachers who have made gains in accommodating for the cultural inability of me. Hosting school-wide book studies of texts written by diverse authors and containing content that discusses diverse contexts can also help teachers to better understand the narratives of people unlike themselves, and the impact of underrepresentation of diversity in literature on their students. Teachers' work does not end in the classroom alone; therefore it is important that their work toward educational and racial equity extend to the entire school and the surrounding community.

In the community. As the journey toward personal development progresses, teachers need to recognize their place within the broader community and recognize the community as a source of support and collaboration (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Members of the community constitute the members of the families that teachers serve, therefore building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with community members is a crucial step in personal development. Teachers cannot build relationships based solely on what they provide for parents; they must engage in a relationship that realizes what parents have to offer them in terms of cultural learning. A key component in building and maintaining these positive relationships is valuing the experience and knowledge that the community has to offer (Ladson-Billings, 2009), which requires teachers to truly maintain an open mind when venturing out into the community. Community members, a frequently untapped resource, offer a rich history of the area's culture and history, which can provide unique insight into students' personalities and challenges outside of the classroom. Members of the community may also serve as experts in different non-degreed and/or certification fields, which can provide unique insight into the complexity and abilities of the adults surrounding the students in the neighborhoods. These individuals are abundant with social capital (Delpit, 2006) and can help teachers gain an inside view into the community, as they engage in the personal journey to reduce the impact of implicit bias and accommodate for the cultural inability of me.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Helmer, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009; Scherff & Spector, 2010) can be applied as best practice when seeking to meet the educational needs of culturally diverse student populations. Ladson-Billings (1995a) describes CRP as a guide to the collective empowerment, not the individual empowerment, of students (1995a, 1992), and situates it within three basic propositions: "(a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (Ladson-Billings,

1995a, p. 160). Working within this framework, teachers are to be able to encourage students to interact with their surrounding culture in a meaningful and lasting way. Students are also afforded the right and provided the opportunity “to grapple with learning challenges from the point of strength and relevance found in their own cultural frames of reference” (Gay, 2002, p. 114). The possibilities of CRP utilization are boundless to encourage culturally diverse populations of students to develop critical stances that interrogate and antagonize social inequities (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1992; Helmer, 2010; Scherff & Spector, 2010).

The three broad propositions about the actions of culturally relevant teachers occur concurrently in practice: the conceptions of self and others, the manner in which social relations are structured, and their conceptions of knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009), therefore application of CRP impacts both students and teachers. While criticism that CRP is a tool that can be applied methodologically to produce excellent teachers is unfounded, it does represent a “range or continuum of teaching behaviors” (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 478) that teachers can work toward as they seek to become more effective with their students. It is “designed to problematize teaching and encourage teachers to ask about the nature of the student-teacher relationship, the curriculum schooling, and society” (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 483). Answering these questions on a continual basis is a necessity when accommodating for the cultural inability of me, as they provide a pathway for evaluating the influences of attitudes, values, and behaviors that teachers bring to the instructional process.

Accommodating the cultural inability of me is not an easy or comfortable task. From cognitive dissonance caused by interrogating one’s personal beliefs through the voluminous time applied toward the journey to personal development to the complexities of meaningfully implementing culturally relevant pedagogies on a consistent basis, the challenges persist. Yet, the proposed benefits are boundless for teachers and students. For teachers, these benefits include increased knowledge of the self, acceptance of the complexities of diversity, and increased consistency in application of high standards for all students. These proposed teacher benefits directly influence student outcomes by allowing students to engage activities that are more culturally relevant in environments that intentionally minimize distractions caused by racial mismatch.

Implications and Conclusions

The cultural inability of me is a culture-created inability that primarily manifests as mental or cognitive limitations to a person’s ability to engage authentically with persons with varying degrees of cultural difference. CIM does not have a panacea. Instead, the authors offer accommodations to potentially lessen the impacts of implicit bias and racial mismatch on students by prompting educators to

focus on addressing their conscious and unconscious beliefs and providing them with tools to continue the process of developing themselves to be more culturally aware and culturally proficient. Accommodating the cultural inability of me begins with an evaluation and critique of personal beliefs and continues through an active journey toward personal development that leads to the ability to meaningfully teach through a culturally relevant pedagogy.

The development of a framework for accommodating the cultural inability of me supposes that educators identify that they are one of the key obstacles impeding their students' academic success. This theorization implies that all teachers are impacted by their own cultural inability, thus all students are affected. While Morton et al. (2017) implied that CIM was a concern solely affecting White middle class women teachers, it is evident that CIM impacts all teachers regardless of race, ethnicity, or cultural history simply because of the diversity within each race, ethnicity, and culture. The number of differences between students and their teachers further complicates the ability to overcome CIM forcing the necessity to make accommodations to lessen its impact on students. Lessening the impact of CIM on students should be a primary goal of teachers and school leaders. All too often, microaggressions resulting from bias and intolerance toward diversity cause teachers and leaders to act in ways that do not provide multiple opportunities for students to experience success continually.

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